

Ministry of Foreign Affairs

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Contactpersoon

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Date: 20 July 2020

RE: Donations by the State of the Netherlands to the Union of Agricultural Work Committees

Dear Ms Turner,

I am writing in reply to your letter of 18 June 2020 to Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation Sigrid Kaag regarding our cooperation with the Union of Agricultural Work Committees (UAWC) on an agricultural project in the Palestinian territories. The Minister has asked me to respond on her behalf.

In your letter you indicate that you received no response to previous letters sent on 13 May 2019 and 7 May 2020. In that connection I would refer you to our response of 19 June 2019 to your letter sent on 13 May 2019 (see attachment). Please consider this current letter a response to your most recent correspondence, the letters of 7 May 2020 and 18 June 2020.

In your letters you describe a possible link between UAWC and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) based on the arrest of two former UAWC employees on suspicion of involvement in a terrorist attack on 23 August 2019.

Naturally, the Netherlands expects its partners to refrain from supporting terrorism. Funding agreements prohibit the use of Dutch funding for any activity incompatible with the Netherlands' foreign policy. We take great care to ensure that our partner organisations are aware of and understand this policy.

All organisations supported by the Netherlands have to pass an evaluation and meet certain criteria before they become eligible to receive funding. Funded activities are closely monitored. Partner organisations, including UAWC, have to provide narrative and financial reports and submit to an external audit annually. None of the monitoring conducted to date, including external audits, gives any indication that Dutch funding was used for purposes other than those agreed on.

Before starting cooperation with UAWC in 2013, we conducted extensive consultations with other UAWC donors. Since 2013, other donors have also conducted due diligence and carried out screenings, some of which took place before the bomb attack of 2019 and some after. None of these screenings concluded that UAWC should be excluded from funding. Furthermore, UAWC is not listed as a terrorist organisation by the EU or UN, nor are its board members listed as members of a terrorist group. Previous international screening and the Netherlands' own oversight of UAWC did not reveal any ties between UAWC and

organisations on any international terrorism list. Other donors of UAWC do not foresee any ground to suspend funding to the organisation.

On 3 October 2019, UAWC informed the Netherlands that one of its employees had been taken into custody by the IDF on suspicion of involvement in the attack that took place on 23 August. Later that month a second employee was arrested. Due to the severity of the allegations against both employees, the Netherlands Representative Office in Ramallah entered into dialogue with UAWC to obtain further information on the arrests and on the action taken by UAWC in response to the allegations.

The action taken by UAWC included reminding all UAWC staff of the ban on active membership of political organisations, including the PFLP. The contracts of both individuals with UAWC were also ended.

In the process of answering questions posed by members of the Dutch parliament on the issue, it emerged that the salary of the two employees accused of involvement in the bomb attack had been paid as part of the overhead costs of UAWC, which is standard practice. These costs were partly funded by the Netherlands. The employees in question were not however involved in the project management unit.

Given the seriousness of the situation, the Minister has decided to conduct an external review of the matter. Further payments by the Netherlands to UAWC are currently suspended, pending the outcome of this review.

I would invite you to address any future correspondence to the North Africa and Middle East Department (dam@minbuza.nl). I appreciate your understanding in this matter.

Yours sincerely,

Geoffrey van Leeuwen
Director, North Africa and Middle East Department

Datum

20 July 2020

Reference

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