



To:

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The Palestinian Non-Governmental Organizations Network

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Rijnstraat 8  
2515 XP Den Haag  
Postbus 20061  
2500 EB Den HaagThe Hague  
Nederland  
[www.rijksoverheid.nl](http://www.rijksoverheid.nl)

Contact  
[DAM@Minbuza.nl](mailto:DAM@Minbuza.nl)

Date 13/08/2020

Onze referentie  
Min-BuZa.2020.5584-35

Date 13/08/2020

Re Response to 27/07/2020 letter by PNGO to Minister Kaag

Dear 10 2 e

Thank you for your letter addressed to Minister Kaag in which you express the views of the Palestinian Non-Governmental Organizations Network on the review into possible links between UAWC and PFLP by the Netherlands, the consequences such an investigation could have for UAWC and its beneficiaries, and the shrinking space for civil society organizations operating in the Palestinian Territories. I would like to respond to the issues you raise.

Agriculture is one of the main economic sectors on which the Netherlands' development cooperation programme in the Palestinian Territories has focused over the years. The importance of this sector cannot be overstated in terms of employment and opportunities for growth, and as an essential economic pillar for a future Palestinian state. For this reason the Netherlands has cooperated with a number of Palestinian civil society organisations, including UAWC. This has successfully increased incomes and access to land and water for many Palestinian farmers, including those working and living in Area C.

As you are aware, in October 2019 two UAWC employees were arrested by Israel on suspicion of involvement in a deadly bombing carried out in August 2019. Thus far, there has been no verdict in this case. Regarding Mr S. Amid being taken into custody and his subsequent hospitalisation, we share your concerns about the reports of his alleged ill treatment. The Netherlands underscores the importance of a fair trial in accordance with international standards and will monitor the proceedings in the case.

When it became clear that both individuals suspected of involvement in the bombings had received a salary as part of overhead costs paid by the Netherlands in its ongoing project with UAWC, a decision was taken to suspend financing the project for the time being. Given the gravity of the accusations against the suspects, the Netherlands has decided to conduct an external review focused on clarifying possible links between UAWC and PFLP and the implementation of UAWC's own guidelines prohibiting its employees from being politically active. The

Netherlands' Representative Office in Ramallah is in close contact with UAWC on this matter.

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Funding agreements prohibit the use of Dutch funding for any activity that is incompatible with the Netherlands' foreign policy. The Netherlands takes great care to ensure that our partner organisations are aware of and understand this policy. Funded activities are closely monitored. Partner organisations, including UAWC, have to provide narrative and financial reports and submit to an external audit annually to comply with Dutch regulations. In this specific case further investigation is deemed necessary as a consequence of the events described above. Of course, earlier reviews by other donors will be taken into account.

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We share your concerns with regard to the shrinking space for civil society in the region and have raised this issue with both the Israeli government and Palestinian Authority on several occasions. The Netherlands feels strongly about the importance of an independent and vibrant civil society and an open civic space, which it considers essential to the development of an inclusive democratic society. We will continue to stress the importance nationally and internationally. Therefore, we are committed to supporting civil society organisations working in the Palestinian territories.

Please do not hesitate to contact me, or the Netherlands' Representative Office in Ramallah, should you have further questions regarding ongoing cooperation between the Netherlands and civil society organisations in the Palestinian Territories.

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Geoffrey van Leeuwen  
Director for the Middle East and North Africa Region Department