



public committee against
תורת אדם
In Israel



14 June 2012

Dear representatives of
The COHOM working group;
The MaMa working groups;
Members of the Israel, OPT, Human Rights Desks and Middle East Division of the EEAS;
EU Delegation, Ramat Gan
EU Representations, East Jerusalem and Ramallah

Re: Adoption of a Local Human Rights Strategy and priorities for Israel: Input from civil society organizations in Israel

In the wake of the recent publication of the ENP country report on Israel in May 2012, and in view of the upcoming adoption of the country human rights strategy for Israel, which will identify the priorities for EU action on human rights and democracy for the next three years, the undersigned organisations, as leading members of the human rights community based in Israel, would like to make the following observations and recommendations.

→ **For the local human rights strategy**, we wish to highlight the importance of giving priority to matters that are relevant to current developments on the ground. These include, among other issues:

- ⤴ Human rights of prisoners and detainees held in Israel and in Israeli facilities, including issues relating to Torture/CIDT, impunity, oversight and accountability, and specific practices including, but not restricted to administrative detention, solitary confinement, access to legal counsel, medical care and fair trial, and family visits.
- ⤴ Human rights of the Arab-Palestinian minority in Israel, including threats on the legislative level, retrogressive measures by law enforcement authorities and the judiciary, incitement by political and religious leaders and street violence. In particular, threats to the indigenous Arab Bedouin population of the Naqab/Negev desert, following the government's decision known as the 'Praver Plan' and its forthcoming introduction as a law in the Knesset.
- ⤴ Human rights of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants, especially those arriving in Israel from African countries via the Egyptian Sinai, after suffering torture and ill-treatment at the hands of middlemen. In particular, the lack of any social or medical services for this population, the lack of access to individual examination of their asylum claims, the recent 'Anti-Infiltration' law to enable their prolonged detention without trial, and steps taken for their mass detention and deportation without access to fair process. Moreover, recent racially-motivated incitement on the part of members of the legislature and the government and resultant street violence.
- ⤴ Protection of human rights defenders and of the freedom of association, expression and assembly. In particular, recent threats to democratic norms as expressed through retrogressive legislation against civil society actors (e.g., the NGO foreign funding law and other proposed legislation, and the attempts to open parliamentary inquiry committees) and journalists, public incitement by politicians and the excessive use of force against peaceful demonstrators by law enforcement authorities.
- ⤴ Human rights of Palestinians in the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt). Israeli obligations in the oPt, including the West Bank, East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip, under international humanitarian law (IHL) and international human rights law (IHRL), have recently been underlined in a letter to COHOM and MaMa members, sent by EMHRN, APRODEV and CIDSE (the letter is available at <http://www.euromedrights.org/index.php?news=11924>). We refer you to this letter and endorse its components.

We would like to emphasise the need to address this issue via the bilateral relations between the EU and Israel, as distinct from and irrespective of the relations between the EU and Palestinian authorities.

→ In **the ENP country report for 2011**, we have observed that three particular human rights issues were singled out for special attention: Settler violence in the oPt, the excessive use of administrative detention, and the free functioning of Israeli civil society. We view it as important that these three issues should be echoed in the priorities to be followed by the EU mission in Ramat Gan, among others. We were surprised that the issue of the escalating threats against the human rights of the Arab minority, and particularly to the indigenous Arab Bedouin population in the south of Israel was not singled out for similar attention, although the report includes some detail on the subject.

→ **As an overarching principle**, we believe consistency should be achieved between the content and priorities marked out by the annual ENP country report and its recommendations, and the priorities set for the local human rights country strategy for Israel, in order for local missions and local civil society organizations to be able to follow up, intervene and report on current human rights issues in a coherent manner and in concert with Brussels-based processes.

We hope that a coherent EU strategy for reporting and intervention on human rights issues will contribute to the protection of all people living under Israeli jurisdiction and effective control.

Sincerely

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