

His Excellency H. Kney-Tal  
Ambassador of the State of Israel  
Buitenhof 47  
2513 AH Den Haag

Your Excellency,

As an active supporter of Israeli human rights organizations I'm concerned about the recent assaults on their activities. Political leaders and official spokesmen in Israel have expressed disapproval about activities and reports by Israeli human rights organizations. Their comments have a threatening sound and suggest that the named organizations are betraying the State of Israel.

I refer a.o. to comments made by Prime Minister Netanyahu and Israeli Defense Forces' spokesman Benayahu who denied the legitimacy of Breaking the Silence that published the testimonies of officers and soldiers about human rights violations during Operation Cast Lead. They criticized the fact that Breaking the Silence receives support from abroad. Israeli ambassadors demanded that European governments, among which the Netherlands, would stop funding the activities of the group. Deputy Prime Minister Moshe Yaalon said to an Israeli audience, referring to human rights organizations that 'your enemies will come from within'. He also called Peace Now a 'virus'. The Israeli security authorities summoned for questioning peaceful demonstrators and human rights activists and in some cases warned them to 'refrain from political activity'.

The right to criticize the government, to act as a watchdog and peacefully defend groups and persons who ask for protection is a fundamental right in any democracy. Established human rights groups in Israel, such as the Association for Civil Rights in Israel, Hamoked, B'tselem, Physicians for Human Rights- Israel, have expressed their concern that a hostile public atmosphere towards them is being cultivated and endorsed by Israeli authorities. The recent attack on the New Israel Fund as an organization that supports 'treacherous' human rights groups is an expression of this increasingly intolerant climate.

On top of this the Israeli Knesset is in the process of adopting a law to promote transparency of funding of non-governmental organizations from abroad. Human rights groups in Israel are seriously worried that as a consequence of this law their activities will be restricted and their work delegitimized. The registration as a legitimate NGO and the existing requirements for transparency about the sources of funding will not any longer be sufficient. Instead, organizations which 'aim to influence public opinion in Israel' can be delegitimized, cut off from financial support and denied tax exemption as a non-profit organization. In such circumstances civil society and democracy come under threat.

I herewith call on you to convey my concerns to your government. I ask your government to stop any attempt to restrict the activities of human right organizations, to delegitimize them or to cut them off from funding.

Sincerely yours,

Name:  
Address: