

Brussels, 25/06/2020
A(2020)2623816–3065617

To all MEPs signatory to the “cross-party letter expressing concern on the EU Representative's statement concerning funding to Palestinian NGOs”

Dear Honourable Members of the European Parliament,

Thank you for your letter of 14 May on European Union funding to Palestinian NGOs. Please accept my apologies for the delay in replying to you.

Our commitment to the fight against terrorism has never been stronger. Fighting terrorism is a top priority for the European Union and its Member States as well as its international partners. In this regard, allegations of the European Union supporting incitement or terror are unfounded and unacceptable. All contracts involving EU funding must ensure the full respect of applicable EU legislation, including accountability, transparency and sound financial management, and aims at protecting the integrity and proper functioning of the EU funds.

To this day, the EU has not received any substantiated report indicating any suspicion of deviation of funds for terrorist purposes in the Palestinian territories. As you are aware, we have received recently a number of requests for clarification on the matter. The EU Head of Delegation to Israel and EU Representative to the West Bank and Gaza Strip have been asked to look deeply into the matter. An internal review process is ongoing. If there is any finding of concern, the European Commission will act immediately to protect the integrity and proper functioning of the EU funds.

The EU has stringent rules to screen and vet the beneficiaries of EU funds. Strict monitoring and control mechanisms make sure that all individuals involved in EU funded actions exclusively pursue the objectives and activities approved for EU funding. To this end, all recipients of EU funding are required to ensure that EU funds are not made available, either directly or indirectly, to entities, individuals or groups, which have been designated under EU restrictive measures, or to their representatives. This includes ensuring that there is no detection of subcontractors, natural persons, participants in workshops and/or trainings or recipients of financial support subject to EU restrictive measures. In addition, tender procedures and calls for proposals contain clear exclusion criteria that prevent any person or entity guilty of terrorism financing or terror related offences (including inciting, aiding, abetting or attempting to commit such offences) from receiving EU funds. Furthermore, specific clauses have been introduced in individual grant agreements, obliging every beneficiary managing EU funds to refrain from engaging in incitement to violence or hatred. These rules make the participation of entities, individuals or groups affiliated, linked to or supporting terrorist organisations incompatible with any EU funding.

The EU is proud of its support to civil society, as a contribution to peace efforts and confidence building between Israelis and Palestinians. The EU stands firm in promoting international law, human rights and democratic values. Civil society is an essential contributor to good governance and sustainable development in the EU, in Israel, in the occupied Palestinian territories and elsewhere.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of several overlapping loops and a long horizontal stroke extending to the left.

Josep Borrell Fontelles