

Dear Ambassador,

We, the undersigned Israeli human rights organisations, would like to thank Prime Minister, Charles Michel, for taking the time to meet representatives from B'Tselem and Breaking the Silence during his last visit to the region. We appreciate the effort of PM Michel to hear the voices of human rights activists who are able to share their experiences and knowledge from the field.

Allow us also to thank Belgium for demonstrating its support for our work in the face of our government's attempt to silence critical voices within Israel's civil society. Israel's actions to pressure foreign governments into ceasing their support for human rights organizations is part and parcel of this worrying trend.

For the past few years the Israeli government has placed increasing pressure on anti-occupation and human rights activists who document abuses and encourage public debate regarding the reality of the occupation. This onslaught has taken the shape of legislation such as the "NGO Law" and the "Suspension Law" aimed at limiting freedom of expression and diminishing the rights of minorities and a government-supported campaign against activists.

As we reach 50 years of occupation, we fear that the already limited space in which our organizations are able to operate will shrink even further and that the safety of our staff will be increasingly jeopardized. International support such as your own is a lifeline to organizations such as ours. Ultimately, as organizations that care deeply about the societies in which we function, we strongly believe that only by ending the occupation can we ensure a better future for all.

Signing organizations:

Akevot - Institute for Israeli-Palestinian Conflict Research
Amnesty International Israel
Bimkom-Planners for Planning Rights
Emek Shaveh
Gisha
Haqel (The Field)-Jews and Arabs in Defense of Human Rights
Hamoked – Center for the Defense of the Individual
Human Rights Defenders Fund
Ir Amim
Peace now
Physicians for Human Rights - Israel
Public Committee Against Torture in Israel
Rabbis for Human Rights
Sikkuy – The Association for the Advantage of Civic Equality
DionnWatch
Yesh Din - volunteers for human rights

Sincerely,