

17 May 2016

Mr. Charlie Flanagan TD  
Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade  
80 St. Stephen's Green  
Dublin 2

Dear Minister Flanagan

I am contacting you to express our concern about the recent action Israel has taken to impose an effective travel ban on Omar Barghouti, one of the founders of the Palestinian movement for boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS). This follows explicit threats made against him by Israeli government ministers.

Israel has officially refused to renew Barghouti's travel document, a move that the Palestinian BDS National Committee (BNC) said "amounts to a travel ban and is an escalation of its attacks on Palestinian human rights defenders who non-violently advocate for Palestinian rights under international law."

Amnesty International has also expressed its concern at this development and spoken out in defence of "campaigns to hold Israel accountable for human rights and other international law violations," The human rights body has also raised fears over "the safety and liberty of Palestinian human rights defender Omar Barghouti.....including of physical harm and deprivation of basic rights."

Congress shares the view that Israeli authorities must end their long-standing attacks on Palestinian human rights defenders (HRDs) and halt the intimidation of HRDs in Israel and in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT).

The Israeli authorities must take immediate steps to provide the necessary protection for HRDs in Israel and OPT to carry out their work freely and without fear of attacks and harassment. Attacks and threats against HRDs must be investigated and those responsible must be held to account.

As a leading volunteer with the BDS movement, Mr. Barghouti regularly travels internationally to raise awareness about Israel's violations of Palestinian human rights and to advocate for BDS as an effective strategy to end Israel's regime of occupation and apartheid. Congress hosted Mr Barghouti at a conference on the region, which we held in Dublin Castle in 2010, a conference that also featured speakers from Israel, Europe and the United States. Mr Barghouti has many friends in the Irish trade union movement as a result of that visit and subsequent contacts.

It is the view of Congress that the Irish Government should take this opportunity to reaffirm its support for the basic democratic principle that BDS is a civil society movement and that the work of these bodies should not be frustrated or hampered in any way by official or government action.

I look forward to hearing from you on this important matter.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Patricia King', written over the typed name below.

Patricia King  
General Secretary