

To: Ms. Ursula von der Leyen
President of the European Commission
European Commission, 1049 Brussels, Belgium

Date: October 25, 2023

Dear Mrs. von der Leyen

We, the undersigned, have borne witness to the horrific acts of terrorism perpetrated by Hamas, an EU-designated terrorist organization, against innocent nationals of Israel, Austria, Estonia, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Portugal, Spain and other EU member states. We grieve in solidarity with the nearly 200 families whose beloved infants, toddlers, teenagers, and grandmothers are still held hostage by an organization that livestreamed its propensity for torture, rape, and beheadings.

We appreciate your recent visit to southern Israel and your condemnation of the terrorism carried out by Hamas, describing it as 'the most heinous assault against Jews since the Holocaust.' We also welcomed EU Commissioner Oliver Varhelyi's declaration on October 9th that the EU would place its entire 691 million euro Palestinian development portfolio under review before issuing new payments.

We were bewildered when this decision was inexplicably reversed just five hours later, at a time when Hamas terrorists were still butchering Israeli civilians in Kfar Aza and Kibbutz Be'eri. Equally troubling is the recent decision of the Commission to triple its funding to Gaza without establishing any effective controls to ensure the money does not end up in the hands of Hamas once again.

We support the provision of humanitarian aid to the innocent Palestinian civilians in Gaza who are also suffering under the oppressive rule of Hamas. However, Hamas presents a cynical obstacle to this support, as it has mastered four primary modes of converting humanitarian assistance into material support for terrorism:

- First, Hamas extracts "taxes" from humanitarian shipments at border crossings.
- A portion of the shipments of donated goods are routinely confiscated by Hamas and re-sold for a profit on the black market.
- Donor commodities (such as fuel) that do manage to arrive at their intended destination (such as UNRWA facilities) remain ripe for confiscation by Hamas whenever they seek to resupply their militia, as occurred on October 16th.
- Finally, Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad have advertised their propensity for dismantling humanitarian infrastructure (including water and sewage pipes) to repurpose into rockets, a significant percentage of which fall short of their targets, landing in Gaza, killing countless civilians, and endangering humanitarian workers.

In accordance with the above, it is clear that currently all funds sent as humanitarian aid to Gaza are misappropriated for the purpose of inflicting even graver harm on the civilian population in the Gaza Strip and in Israel.

A clear example of financial misappropriation of the European humanitarian aid is the case of an EU grant of €699,236 (2017-2019) that was allocated to the Palestinian organizations: Union of Palestinian Women's Committees (UPWC), Defense for Children International – Palestine (DCI-P), Health Work Committees (HWC), Bisan Center, and Land Research Center (LRC). These organizations have ties to the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) terrorist group. In December 2019, the Israel Security Agency arrested a 50-person terror network operating in the West Bank, allegedly responsible for a bomb attack that resulted in the death of a teenager in August 2019. Among those arrested were three senior employees of NGOs that were beneficiaries of this EU grant, including Walid Hanatsheh (Abu Ras), HWC's finance and administration manager; Ubai Aboudi, Bisan's Executive Director; and Iteraf Hajaj (Rimawi), who served as Bisan's Executive Director in 2017.

As the European Parliament stated in its resolution 2023/2899(RSP) of October 19th, 2023 "the EU budget must continue to provide support for building peace and stability in the region, combating hate and fundamentalism and promoting human rights."

The European Union has established procedures and mechanisms to ensure that its financial aid reaches the intended recipients. However, it has not effectively implemented these measures when it comes to the funds provided to Palestinian civilians. In fact, the European Parliament's latest resolution called again upon the European Commission to conduct a comprehensive review of all EU financial assistance to the Palestinians to guarantee that no EU funds are used, either directly or indirectly, to finance terrorism. Likewise, we support the call of the aforementioned legislative body for the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages taken by the terrorist group Hamas and the return of the bodies of deceased hostages.

We strongly call the member states of the European Union to monitor the allocation of funds for humanitarian aid to prevent diversion to Hamas and other armed groups in the Gaza Strip, and to take all necessary steps to ensure the release of all hostages currently held captive in the Gaza Strip.

CC: Olivér Várhelyi, European Commissioner for Neighbourhood and Enlargement.

Signed,



Jerusalem Institute of Justice



Acción y Comunicación sobre Oriente Medio



Alleanza Per Israele



Canadian Antisemitism Education Foundation



Canadians for Israel's Legal Rights



Club Z



Combat Antisemitism Movement



Con Israel y por la Paz



CyberWell Worldwide



Eagle's Wings



Emunah of America



End Jewish Hatred



Endowment for Middle East Truth (EMET)



European Union of Jewish Students



Federación de Jóvenes Judíos de España



Federation of Finland Israel Associations



Finnish Holocaust Remembrance Association (HUM)



Glasgow Friends of Israel



Institute for Monitoring Peace and Cultural Tolerance in School Education (IMPACT-SE)



The International Legal Forum



Ireland Israel Alliance



Israel Christian Nexus



Israel-is



Istituto Milton Friedman



Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs



JewBelong



Jewish War Veterans of the USA



Maccabi Europe



Med Israel for Fred (MIFF)



National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference (NHCLC)



National Jewish Assembly (NJA)



NGO Monitor



Palestinian Media Watch



Raoul Wallenberg Centre for Human Rights



Shurat Hadin



Solomon-osservatorio sulle discriminazioni



The Deborah Project United States



The Jewish Leadership Project



The Lawfare Project



Toward Jerusalem Council 2 Ireland



UK Lawyers for Israel



Women's International Zionist Organization



World Union of Jewish Students



Zachor Legal Institute