

**Independent International Commission of Inquiry  
on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel**

**Public hearings on the closure orders and terrorism designation  
of a number of Palestinian human rights organizations**

**Geneva – 7-11 November 2022**

*Opening remarks by Navi Pillay, Chairperson of the Commission of Inquiry*

This is a public hearing conducted by the COIOPTEJI. I would like to welcome everybody warmly to the first set of public hearings of this Commission of Inquiry. My name is Navi Pillay, and I am the Chair of the Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel. I am here with the other two Commissioners, whom you can see in the room: Chris Sidoti and Miloon Khotari. I apologise that I am participating remotely, but my colleagues will also be chairing.

The Commission of Inquiry was established by the UN Human Rights Council in May 2021 to investigate in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and in Israel of all alleged violations of international humanitarian law and all alleged violations and abuses of international human rights law leading up to and since 13 April 2021, and to investigate all underlying root causes of recurrent tensions, instability and protraction of the conflict, including systematic discrimination and repression based on national, ethnic, racial or religious identity.

The Commission reports to the Human Rights Council and to the UN General Assembly on an annual basis. The Commission has already released two reports. Its first report was presented before the Human Rights Council in June 2022 and the second report was presented 10 days ago before the Third Committee of the UN General Assembly.

Within the scope of its investigations, the Commission has scheduled its first set of public hearings on two topics: one: the closure orders and terrorism designations of a number of Palestinian NGOs, and two: on the incident surrounding the killing of the journalist Shireen Abu Akleh. Victims, witnesses, civil society organizations, and legal representatives will be invited to provide relevant testimony to the Commission in this forum.

The fact that the Commission will focus the hearings on these occurrences does not mean that it considers them as more important than others. The Commission had to prioritize as these hearings are unfortunately limited in time. The Commission will also only be able to hear a limited number of CSOs' representatives, witnesses, and victims this week. The Commission may organize another sets of hearings at a later stage as its investigation progresses.

We the Commission are very grateful to those who have agreed to participate in these public hearings which will be broadcast live in English. The proceedings and the publicity given to the testimonies have been explained to the witnesses, and they have agreed to testify in public of their own free will. They know that what they say is being broadcast and recorded. They are also free to decline to answer any question put to them. The hearings are not judicial. The Commission is not a court, nor a truth and reconciliation commission. During the hearings, questions may be put by the three Commissioners. The aim is to allow victims and survivors on all sides to speak for themselves to the international community in a formal, but comfortable

setting. In that way we hope that their concerns will be better understood by a worldwide audience and especially in the region where the events have taken place.

The Commission has also invited the concerned States to provide all documentary evidence and information in their possession or under their control pertinent to the designation of the Palestinian NGOs and/or the killing of Ms. Shireen Abu Akleh.

Today's hearings will focus on the closure orders and terrorism designation of a number of Palestinian NGOs.

During your testimony the commission would like to hear from you on who you are, what you do, the closure orders, and more broadly the treatment of CSOs in the OPT and Israel.

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