



## **Announcement on the Israeli Defense Minister's designation of Palestinian civil society groups as terrorist organizations**

Academia for Equality is an organization of about seven hundred members of the academic community, committed to promoting a just and democratic future. Academia for Equality expresses its unreserved support for the Palestinian human rights and civil society organizations targeted by the deplorable decision of Israeli Defense Minister, Benny Gantz, to declare them as terrorist organizations in order to ban their activities by decree.

Benny Gantz, as Chief of Staff of the Israeli Defense Forces, commanded operations in which Israeli military forces have killed hundreds of Palestinian civilians, among them five hundred children under the age of 15, during the campaign known as Defensive Edge. Now, as Defense Minister, he has declared 6 prominent human rights and civil society organizations as designated terrorist organizations. The work of human rights organizations targeted by Gantz's decree, such as Addameer and DCI-Palestine, is to defend the rights of detainees arrested by Israeli security forces and held for months without trial or due process, political activists persecuted for their beliefs or political organizing, and to provide legal defense for children arrested in the small hours of the night. Other organizations targeted by Gantz's decree are the Women's Committees and Agricultural Committees – who struggle with the tasks of building Palestinian communities' social and economic infrastructure; and Al-Haq, which follows and monitors the occupation's atrocities, documents and disseminates information in Israel/Palestine and worldwide. Another targeted organization is the Bisan Research Center, dedicated to the development of an open, free and democratic Palestinian society, that has devoted decades of work to the improvement of devastated and impoverished communities by offering educational opportunities and capacities.

We at Academia for Equality, alongside our comrades from Scientists for Palestine, stood in solidarity with the Bisan Center and its director when he was persecuted and detained and when its offices were barraged by the Israeli military forces. We maintain our long-standing relations and connections with Addameer, particularly concerning the defense of Palestinian students, arrested because of their political and student activities. These six organizations constitute the civil spinal cord of the Palestinian society; a society trying to keep a proud posture of dignity and pride under the adverse condition of a brutal Israeli occupation.

Academia for Equality stands unequivocally behind and alongside the Palestinian civil society organizations. We call on the Israeli academic community to step out of its indifference, to sound the alarm bells and express active rejection and objection to the persecution of civil, human rights and community organizations. We call on the international academic community and demand their speedy intervention and to exert its pressure to cancel and recede these abject ban and declaration.