

Do not silence free minds and critical voices in Palestine, urges DROI Chair

In response to Hebron district court's decision to detain Palestinian human rights defender Issa Amro, the Chair of EP Subcommittee on Human Rights, P. A. Panzeri (S&D, IT), stated:

“I am dismayed by this decision. It is a real disappointment to see that a respected human rights defender been arrested for expressing his opinion online. The rightful place for Issa is certainly not behind bars but outside, with his family, friends and supporters.

Criticizing public authorities should never be considered a criminal offence but rather the strongest signal of a dynamic society which plays a central role in building strong democracy, transparency and accountability.

The “Electronic Crimes Law” recently adopted by the Palestinian Authority blatantly flouts international law is a blow to the longstanding diversity of free expression for which Palestinian society is well known.

Chair Panzeri added: “I urge the Palestinian authorities to cease harassing free minds, journalists and dissident voices and to repeal this law which does not live up to the Palestinian Authority's ' international commitments.

The European Parliament is committed to addressing consistently this alarming global trend of shrinking space for civil society. We will continue to make clear our expectations to our friends, neighbours and partners in particular those enjoying strong economic ties with and financial support from the EU.”

Background information

Issa Amro, coordinator of [Youth Against Settlements](#), a peaceful group that documents violations and organizes protests against Israeli policies in Hebron, was [arrested on 4 September for posting comments on Facebook critical of the Palestinian authorities](#). In a closed hearing on 7 September 2017 the Hebron district court charged him with disturbing “public order” under the recently adopted Electronic Crimes Law, as well as “causing strife” and “insulting the higher authorities” under the 1960 Jordanian Penal code which is still enforced in the West Bank. Mr Amro is also facing judicial proceedings in the Israeli military court.

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