

SABEEL AUSTRALIA

Friends of Sabeel Australia Inc.

IA32173

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29 April 2022

Committee Secretary
Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

pjcis@aph.gov.au

Dear sir or madam:

[Criminal Code \(Terrorist Organisation—Hamas\) Regulations 2022](#)

I write on behalf of Friends of Sabeel Australia Inc to request that our views on the designation of the entirety of Hamas as a terrorist organisation be considered by the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security.

The Sabeel Australia community comprises members and supporters of the Sabeel Ecumenical Liberation Theology Center in Jerusalem (www.sabeel.org). Friends of Sabeel Australia Inc is a not-for-profit voluntary association registered with the Office of Fair Trading in Queensland.

Sabeel is a Christian organisation established to promote the principles of liberation theology as a non-violent pathway (*sabeel* in Arabic) to justice, reconciliation and peace in Palestine/Israel. As well as being an ecumenical Christian organisation, Sabeel also works closely with Jewish and Muslim partners in Israel/Palestine.

This submission should not be misunderstood as expressing support for Hamas, and particularly its historical commitment to armed struggle. While all parties to the long-running conflict in Palestine have at times engaged in violence, the Sabeel organisation embraces non-violent resistance as the core of its response to occupation, displacement and systemic harassment by Israel.

Our concerns with the recent listing of Hamas in its entirety as a terrorist organisation are:

1. the decision was based on incomplete information available to the Minister at the time;
2. the decision reduces the options for Hamas to engage more positively with Israel and the global community; and
3. the possible unintended consequence of this listing on humanitarian activities within the Gaza territories currently controlled by Hamas.

Our submission will focus especially on this last matter as it is one with which we have some direct experience.

In partnership with the [Palestine Israel Ecumenical Network](#) and [Palestinian Christians in Australia](#), Sabeel Australia recently hosted a series of [online events](#) during the Christian season of Lent. Participants were invited to make a small donation to assist with the work of Al Ahli Arab Hospital in Gaza and \$500 was raised for that purpose.

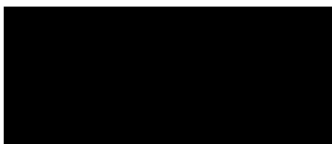
There was already some uncertainty within the faith-based aid and development agencies through whom we would normally channel such assistance to the Christian hospital in Gaza as to whether they could transfer these funds, and we anticipate that this will become even more difficult should the proposed listing of Hamas as a terrorist organisation be confirmed. It is possible that no charity registered in Australia will be able to direct funds towards the Al Ahli Arab Hospital or other similar NGOs in Gaza.

The Christian population in Gaza is very small. Recent estimates suggest around 1,300 Christians in a total population of just over two million people. The well-being of this small Christian community in Gaza, as well as their capacity to offer education and health care to their Muslim neighbours, very much relies on support from Christians in Australia and elsewhere in the Western world.

This all seems to be at risk if the whole of Hamas is listed as a terrorist organisation.

As an Australian organisation with close connections to Christians, Jews and Muslims in Israel and Palestine, we urge the Parliamentary Joint Committee to disallow the listing of the whole of Hamas as a terrorist organisation and to restrict that listing to the al-Qassam Brigade.

Yours faithfully,



The Revd Dr Gregory C. Jenks
PRESIDENT