

Attorney General

Jerusalem

December 12, 2017

Document No.: 004-99-2017-025810

To:

MK Naftali Bennet

The Minister of Education

Dear Sir,

Re: Cancellation of participation of the Ministry of Education at the Conference of the Association for Civil Rights in Israel

Reference: Letter from the Chairman of the Pedagogical Secretariat dated 3/12/17
Appeal by the Director General of the Association for Civil Rights in Israel dated 28/11/17
My letter to the Legal Advisor for the Association for Civil Rights in Israel dated 19/9/17

On November 28, 2017, the media reported that you had ordered the cancellation of your office's participation in a conference on labor rights that was supposed to take place the following day in cooperation with the Association for Civil Rights in Israel and the Center for Educational Technology. This is due to requests made by "Im Tirtzu" organization and an organization representing bereaved families, who expressed their objection to the cooperation of the Ministry of Education with the Association for Civil Rights in Israel.

In light of the requests received in my office on this issue, consulting and legislation officials approached the Ministry of Education to clarify the facts of the matter.

On December 3, 2017, a response was received from the Chairman of the Pedagogical Secretariat, detailing the allegations made against the Association for Civil Rights in Israel due to their legal activity to prevent the annulment of the civil status of Alaa Ziyud, Subhi Abu Halifa and Shuruk Dweiyat, who were convicted of terrorist offenses; as well as regarding the legal advice extended by the Association for Civil Rights to promote the rights to academic studies for other individuals convicted on terror offenses (Karim Yunis, Salah Sa'id and Fuad Sultani).

In response the Chairman of the Pedagogical Secretariat wrote that "due to the request of the families the Ministry decided to cancel its participation in the conference so as not to offend the feelings of the bereaved families. In addition, the Minister of Education instructed the Ministry's staff to conduct an in-depth examination into the cooperation with the Association for Civil Rights, including examining whether the organization's actions are consistent with the fundamental values and goals of the Israeli educational system, that strengthen the bond with the state."

In this regard, I would like to draw your attention to my letter dated September, 19, 2017 in the reference, in which I stated: "I attach great importance to the existence of a meaningful and constructive dialogue between civil society organizations and the state authorities, including through the participation of senior public officials in various conferences and events. Such activity benefits and promotes the public interest."

The Association for Civil Rights in Israel is a veteran civil society organization, that has been active for decades in promoting the protection of human rights for all. The organization operates in a wide range of areas, and its activities have contributed and still contribute significantly to protecting human rights in Israel. The prime evidence for that is that the conference in question deals with labor rights, an issue that no person disputes its importance.

As for the concrete claims against the Association directed by those who applied to you, I would like to draw your attention to the response of the Director General of the Association in her referenced letter: "The Association for Civil Rights in Israel has been defending the entire range of human rights for more than forty years ... in doing so the Association defends the right to Citizenship, including of those who committed serious offenses; The human rights of prisoners whoever they may be, and the right of family members of those who committed crimes not to lose their homes. We defend the rights of all human beings, whether it is prisoner Yigal Amir's right to marry, or the right of prisoner Karim Yunis to study at the university. This has been the way of the association since its inception, and we are proud of it."

In view of all the above, I find it difficult to make a prompt decision to prevent your office from participating in the conference, which was planned in advance to be held with the Association for Civil Rights in Israel.

I would also like to encourage you to reconsider your intention to conduct an in-depth examination regarding future cooperation between the Ministry of Education and the organization. Insofar as you deem it appropriate to conduct such an examination, I shall request that it be done in cooperation with consultation and legislation officials, which, if necessary, will also bring the matter for my consideration.

Respectfully,

Avihai Mandelblitt

Copies:

Mr. Avi Licht, Deputy Attorney General (Administration and Special Functions)
Ms. Dina Silber, Deputy Attorney General (Public-Administrative Law)
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