

16 August 2016

### **OPT/Israel – Death threats against staff members of Al Mezan organisation**

On 10 August 2016, a staff member of **Al Mezan Centre for Human Rights** received an email from an anonymous person threatening him and his family with death. This is a part of a systematic campaign of incitement, pressure and intimidation against the organisation.

[Al Mezan Centre for Human Rights](#) is a Gaza-based organisation which promotes accountability, access to justice and monitors human rights abuses committed by Israeli authorities and Palestinian entities. Al Mezan carries out a wide range of programmes including documentation, awareness and capacity building, legal support, representation of prisoners, research and training sessions to different groups including human rights defenders.

Al Mezan has repeatedly faced harassment as a result of its engagement in the defence of human rights in Palestine. On 10 August 2016, a staff member of Al Mezan received an email from an anonymous person threatening him and his family. The email included photos of their house taken from a close view. The threat was reported to the police. Other similar threatening phone calls and posts on social media occurred since late 2015 and throughout the month of August 2016. The threats against the organisation have recently witnessed an acute increase, and appear to be related to its engagement in international litigation and advocacy, including reporting the ongoing human rights violations in the Occupied Palestinian Territory to the Office of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court. While there is no solid evidence as to who stand behind these acts, the organisation has reason to believe that they are carried out by the Israeli security service.

In April 2016, a partner of the organisation received a phone call from a person claiming she was from a security service, and outlining that Al Mezan is being investigated due to its affiliation with a terrorist group. In May 2015, one of Al Mezan's partners received a phone call in which suspicious questions were raised about financial issues.

Front Line Defenders expresses strong concern about the threats and repeated acts of harassment and intimidation against staff members of Al Mezan, which it believes to be directly motivated by their peaceful and legitimate human rights activities.

#### **Front Line Defenders urges the relevant authorities to:**

1. Immediately take all necessary measures to ensure the physical and psychological security of staff members at Al Mezan and their families, and launch a full and impartial investigation into the threats made against it, with a view to publishing the results and bringing those responsible to justice in accordance with international standards;
2. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in the Occupied Palestinian Territories are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions.