

« PNGO board criticises Presidential Decree cancelling registration of NGOs »

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Press release

PNGO - Palestinian Non-Governmental Organisations' Network
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PNGO board criticises Presidential Decree cancelling registration of NGOs, calls for an emergency general assembly Monday 25 June 2007 to take actions to protect the Palestinian Fundamental Law and Palestinian democracy.

Saturday morning 23/06/2007, the Palestinian non-governmental organizations network (PNGO) held an emergency meeting of its board of directors in the West Bank and Gaza Strip (through video conference), to discuss the Presidential Decree aiming at cancelling all the registrations of associations and calling for a new licensing with the Ministry of Interior within a week.

The board expressed concern over the future of civil society institutions and highlighted that this Decree is in violation of the fundamental rights and freedom guaranteed by the Fundamental Law. PNGO decided to prepare a legal memorandum for the Office of the President and for the Cabinet, and will organize a series of meetings with stakeholders.

This Presidential Decree violates the law governing societies and organizations (Law N. 1 of 2000). It will restrict the work of associations and institutions and put them under Palestinian Authority's control without legal justification or practical procedure. The fact that this decree requires to apply for a new license within a week of its issuance practically means the cancellation of the legal status received by all the associations under the Associations Act N. 1. Hundreds of civil organisations providing services to the Palestinian people would be adversely affected by this seismic shift in their legal standing.

The board members of PNGO also remarked that the current law provides for the registration of associations with the Ministry of Interior and other relevant actors, and does not require a license issued by the Ministry of Interior. This modern and democratic process contributes to the strengthening of the Palestinian civil society. But the new decree cancels the principle of registration and requires associations to submit a license application with the Ministry of Interior, which is contrary to the letter and spirit of the law. The new decree is not necessary since the current law guarantees control mechanisms and sets legal standards and due process for the applicants.

The board calls for a General Assembly of all the PNGO members on Monday 25/6/2007 to discuss this decree and its legality. This meeting will also consider actions that communities and civil society groups will

take to protect fundamental freedoms and to defend the right of association guaranteed in the Fundamental Law.

PNGO states strongly that the Fundamental Law must not be compromised in any of the substantive rights under emergency laws.

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