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PHROC Condemns Israel's Latest Deportation of Eminent Dutch Human Rights Defenders, Lydia de Leeuw and Pauline Overeem

The Palestinian Human Rights Organizations Council (PHROC) strongly condemns Israel's refusal to allow two human rights defenders to enter the country. Lydia de Leeuw and Pauline Overeem, are both esteemed senior legal researchers for the Centre for Research on Multinational Corporations (SOMO) in the Netherlands, who work on business and human rights. Although travelling separately, both were detained and deported from Ben Gurion Airport. De Leeuw was deported on the afternoon of 20 July 2018, while Overeem was held overnight and deported on 21 July 2018. These incidents are indicative of Israel's continued attempts to silence both international and domestic non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and individuals that are critical of Israeli policies.

Israel alleges that both de Leeuw and Overeem violated the anti-boycott, divestment, and sanctions (BDS) provision of the Entry into Israel Law that bars foreign nationals from entering Israel if they "knowingly publish a public call to engage in a boycott against the State of Israel."¹ "Boycott," in this instance, is defined as the intentional abstention of interaction with an entity "solely because of a link to the State of Israel [or] one of its institutions...."² Recently, Israel has used this law as the basis to deny entry or revoke the visa of several prominent and respected human rights defenders, such as Ariel Gold³ from Code Pink and Omar Shakir⁴ from Human Rights Watch. In May, [Vincent Warren](#), Executive Director of the Center for Constitutional Rights in the U.S., was also barred from entering Israel; no explanation was given for why he was denied entry.⁵

¹ *Israel: Prevention of Entry of Foreign Nationals Promoting Boycott of Israel*, Library of Congress: Global Legal Monitor, available at: <http://www.loc.gov/law/foreign-news/article/israel-prevention-of-entry-of-foreign-nationals-promoting-boycott-of-israel/>.

² *Id.*

³ Noa Landau and Yotam Berger, *Israel Denies Entry to U.S. Jewish BDS Activist*, Haaretz (2 July 2018, 9:16 AM), available at: <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium-israel-bars-entry-to-u-s-jewish-bds-activist-1.6224713>.

⁴ *PHROC condemns Israel's order to deport Human Rights Watch Director Omar Shakir as a grave violation of the right to freedom of expression and a systematic shrinking of civil society space*, Al-Haq (23 May 2018, 2:07 PM), available at: <http://www.alhaq.org/advocacy/topics/human-rights-defenders/1259-phroc-condemns-israels-order-to-deport-human-rights-watch-director-omar-shakir-as-a-grave-violation-of-right-to-freedom-of-expression-and-systematic-shrinking-of-civil-society-space>.

⁵ *Al-Haq condemns Israel's entry denial and deportation of Vincent Warren and Katherine Franke of the US-based Center for Constitutional Rights*, Al-Haq, 2 May 2018, available at <http://www.alhaq.org/advocacy/topics/human-rights-defenders/1225-al-haq-condemns-israels-entry-denial-and-deportation-of-vincent-warren-and-katherine-franke-of-the-us->



Israel's mistreatment of foreign nationals due to baseless allegations should be of great concern to the international community. De Leeuw was detained for over 4 hours while she was explicitly denied access to the Dutch Embassy or any other legal assistance. Her phone and other belongings were taken from her, and her repeated requests to contact the Dutch Embassy and a lawyer were denied. She was also strip searched.

Overeem was detained for nearly 24 hours before being deported. She was handcuffed and subjected to verbal abuse, including threats that the Israeli authorities would use force against her. When she enquired about the legal grounds for her arrest and for an explanation on why she was being singled out for such extreme treatment, she was ignored. During this time, Overeem was not offered consular or legal assistance.

De Leeuw's case is of particular concern as it appears to be a well-orchestrated action between the Israeli government and Israeli media. At around the time that de Leeuw was being taken for the first interrogation, both the Jerusalem Post and the Times of Israel published articles about de Leeuw being deported, and noted that the decision was administered by the Minister of Interior under the recommendation of Israel's Strategic Affairs and Information Minister, Gilad Erdan.⁶ This suggests that the decision to deny her entry was made before she even landed in Israel. For example, de Leeuw was handed a ready file at the start of the interrogation, notifying her that she had been denied entry by the Minister of Interior. The document had been already typed up with her details already inserted, rendering the outcome of the interrogation moot. Therefore, the treatment de Leeuw received at the airport, including her interrogation, was solely inflicted to harass and humiliate her.

PHROC stands with Lydia de Leeuw, Pauline Overeem, and SOMO and condemns Israel's continued attacks and harassment against human rights defenders. The deportations are the latest action taken by Israel to silence human rights defenders and their organizations and to systematically prevent the monitoring and documentation of Israel's ongoing human rights violations in the occupied Palestinian territory. PHROC calls on the international community to condemn these latest deportations, and to take steps alongside UN institutions, to ensure that human rights defenders are able to access the occupied Palestinian territory.

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[based-center-for-constitutional-rights](https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium-two-leading-u-s-human-rights-activists-deported-from-israel-1.6052515); Dina Kraft, *Two Leading U.S. Human Rights Activists Refused Entry to Israel, One for BDS Ties*, Haaretz (3 May 2018, 1:01 PM), available at: <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium-two-leading-u-s-human-rights-activists-deported-from-israel-1.6052515>.

⁶ Juliane Helmhold, *Dutch BDS Activist Denied Entry into Israel at Ben Gurion Airport*, Jerusalem Post (20 July 2018, 1:59 PM), available at: <https://www.jpost.com/Israel-News/Dutch-BDS-activist-denied-entry-into-Israel-at-Ben-Gurion-airport-563017>; see also *Israel prevents entry of Dutch activist, citing BDS support*, Times of Israel (20 July 2018, 2:19 PM), available at: <https://www.timesofisrael.com/israel-prevents-entry-of-dutch-activist-citing-bds-support/>.

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Hurriyat- Centre for Defence of Liberties and Civil Rights

Jerusalem Center for Legal Aid and Human Rights

Ramallah Center for Human Rights Studies

Independent commission for Human Rights (Observer)

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Palestinian Human Rights Organizations Council



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Palestinian Human Rights Organizations Council comprising:



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General Director



Aldameer Association for Human Rights
Hala Jaber
General Director



Al-Haq
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Issam Younis
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General Director



The Palestinian Centre for Human Rights
Raji Sourani
General Director