



Re: The Joint Working Group Between Israel and the Gates Foundation on Climate Change

Date: 22 November 2021

Dear Mr. Bill Gates,

As a leading Palestinian human rights organization, Al-Haq has been promoting and protecting human rights of the Palestinian people since 1979, in compliance with internationally established standards of human rights and humanitarian law. Further, Al-Haq documents and reports Israel's human rights violations before local, regional and international bodies and accountability mechanisms. At a time when the Gates Foundation has announced partnering with Israel in climate innovation, we deem it essential to recall the implications of such cooperation for international law standards, including the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. Contrary to the core values and principles of human rights, Israel's innovation and tech industry has been premised upon systematic violations of the Palestinian people's rights, throughout 73 years of land appropriation, racial oppression and the ongoing entrenching of an apartheid regime to which appropriation and exploitation of Palestinian natural resources is key.

While we need zero-carbon solutions for all people and protection of our shared environmental resources, Israel pursues its settler-colonial project over Palestinian lands. Israel may be a leading actor in water innovation, but it also illegally exploits 87 percent of Palestinian water resources in the occupied Palestinian territory, through a combination of policies and practices ranging from discriminatory zoning and planning, corporate over-extraction, curtailment, policing and resale of water resources, amounting to the commission of the [war crime of pillage](#) under international criminal law. Israel may ambition to become a world leader in solar energy innovation, but it also systematically demolishes solar panels in Area C of the occupied West Bank – solar panels which are often the only source of energy for Bedouin communities.

Israel may have planted more trees in Palestinian 1948 lands than before the turn of 20th century, but its afforestation has in fact constituted a fundamental pillar of its greenwashing of international crimes, as more forests planted by the Jewish National Fund over the past few decades have served to cover the remains of Palestinian villages and rural towns destroyed and ethnically cleansed during the Nakba in 1948. Further, Israel uprooted more than 2,5 million trees in the occupied Palestinian territory since 1967, under veneered pretexts ranging from land appropriation for security purposes, to the construction and expansion of the apartheid wall and settlements, and government-sponsored settler violence.

In the occupied Palestinian territory, Israel's oppression is the main cause of climate injustice. Israel's [ecological apartheid](#) policies and practices have rendered the Palestinians more affected



by adverse climate change impacts than Israelis. Palestinian women and girls, in particular, are more [vulnerable](#) to climate change-related floods, droughts and heatwaves, due to their essential productive, reproductive and community-managing role within households that makes them increasingly sensitive to natural resources shortages. The imposed siege over the Gaza Strip has accelerated the degradation of living and environmental conditions of Palestinians. Gaza's freshwater resources are pumped at an unsustainable pace, and 95 percent of water resources are considered undrinkable as a consequence of pollution and seawater intrusion. In August 2012, the United Nations [predicted](#) that Gaza will not be livable by 2020. As part and parcel of its apartheid, Israel's sustainability pledge is only viable for its Jewish citizens.

The green industrial revolution that humanity needs must include vulnerable communities living under colonial oppression, apartheid, and military occupation. Indigenous communities and the respect for their human rights must be placed at the very core of climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies. Further, such strategies must serve to empower peoples to seek new adaptation opportunities that respect and buttress their relationship to their lands, and their identities. Through its land appropriation and access restriction policies in the occupied West Bank, Israel has been depriving local herding communities of their main sources of living, and reducing community-based adaptation to ever-shrinking grazing areas.

Israel is branding itself as the 'start-up nation' in an attempt to normalize its systematic and institutionalized regime of domination over the Palestinian people and their lands, and it is further reinforced by Israel's pledges for climate sustainability.

Al-Haq deeply regrets the establishing of a joint research and development venture with Israel, as such usage of the Gates Foundation's resources and influence will effectively serve the interest of Israel's oppressive apartheid regime. As we commend and stand with your commitment to achieving affordable and universally accessible zero-carbon alternatives, we urge you to reconsider your association with Israel, and to make our global struggle against climate change, a revolution for our common humanity.

Yours sincerely,

Shawan Jabarin
General Director, Al-Haq

