



**Policy Brief**  
**27 July 2018**

**Australian aid cuts to Palestinian NGOs**

Just prior to Foreign Minister Julie Bishop's 2<sup>nd</sup> July decision to withdraw all Australian aid to the Palestinian Authority (PA) based on speculative claims that it could be enabling the funding of politically motivated violence, the Australian government suspended part of its contribution to Palestinian NGOs and civil society development organisations via the Union Aid Abroad-APHEDA charity following the 'disclosure' that the MA'AN Development Centre (one of its main Palestinian partners) employed someone belonging to a designated terrorist organisation.

The employee in question, Mr Ahmed Abdullah al-Adine, was a non-permanent contractor for MA'AN's Gaza branch, which largely focuses on assisting Palestinian farmers and development in the agricultural sector. He belonged to the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), and was killed in May during the Israel-Gaza border protests.

Given this reality, accusations that MA'AN (and by extension APHEDA) is funding terrorism are incredibly weak and poorly substantiated considering Mr al-Adine's position and his distance from central and key roles in the organization. While his political affiliation was with a party that the West considers a terrorist organization, it is unreasonable to expect that MA'AN should vet every individual involved in its projects at the grass-roots level. Even if such a process were possible, it would be near impossible to ascertain the honest affiliations of all of them, especially considering the political sensitivities on the ground and a willingness by many to conceal their true allegiances. Further, groundswells of support in Gaza and the West Bank for parties that Israel and the West consider unacceptable mean that some of these parties' supporters will inevitably be involved in such aid and development projects, especially in labor-intensive contracting work.

To invest so much effort and time into 'revealing' this link, which is indirect and inconsequential, and to then suspend its aid contribution to APHEDA as a result, indicates that Australia is playing its role in a broader, lobby-fueled agenda to disempower independent and successful Palestinian NGOs and civil society organizations.

