

**BRIEFING:  
INFILTRATION OF  
CIVIL SOCIETY SPACES  
BY PFLP NETWORKS  
IN EUROPE**

Rebecca Schönenbach

# Briefing: Infiltration of civil society spaces by PFLP networks in Europe

Author: Rebecca Schönenbach

## I. Executive Summary

The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP)—a Marxist-Leninist organisation classified as a terrorist organisation by the EU since 2001—has fundamentally transformed its modus operandi in Europe.

In parallel with its armed activities in the Middle East, it pursues a targeted “**humanisation strategy**”. This involves disguising radical objectives aimed at annihilation under the guise of human rights work, medical aid and progressive activism. The aim is to gain social acceptance, secure state funding and instrumentalise European institutions for “apology for terrorism”.

## II. The methodology:

Discourse piracy and institutional mimicry: A central element of the PFLP’s strategy is “institutional mimicry”: cadres of the organisation are deliberately placed within charitable non-governmental organisations (NGOs) such as Al-Haq or the PCHR.

- **Semantic reinterpretation:** Front organisations such as Samidoun employ “discourse piracy” by adapting terms from post-colonial academic discourse—such as “settler colonialism”, “intersectionality” or “apartheid”. This enables them to align with Western movements such as Fridays for Future, LGBTQ+ groups (Queer Pride) and anti-racist initiatives in order to radicalise them and build a broad “anti-imperialist front”.
- **Radicalisation of young people:** By seizing upon emotionally charged issues, legitimate concerns are exploited to construct an enemy image of Western constitutional systems, which are delegitimised as “Zionist constructs”.

## III. Strategic ‘lawfare’ and media delegitimation

The PFLP systematically exploits the European legal system for ‘lawfare’ (legal warfare). Organisations such as Al-Haq, Al Mezan and the PCHR collaborate with renowned European partners such as the ECCHR to bring legal proceedings against Israeli citizens for alleged war crimes.

**Objective:** The focus is not primarily on securing legal convictions, but on generating media prejudice and defaming Israel as a state governed by the rule of law.

**Manipulation through visuality:** Partners such as Forensic Architecture use pseudo-scientific methods of “steering the gaze” to cement a one-sided perpetrator–victim dichotomy under the guise of objectivity and to undermine Israeli security interests.

#### **IV. Transnational alliances:**

The bridge to the “Axis of Resistance”: The network acts as a hybrid actor between European civil society and militant structures in the Middle East.

Hybridity: Organisations such as Masar Badil serve as a link between Western supporters and the Iran-led “Axis of Resistance” (Hamas, Hezbollah, Houthis). They provide sympathisers in Europe with direct access to terrorist cadres and glorify acts of violence—such as the massacre of 7 October—as “heroic”.

Iranian integration: There is a growing ideological and operational convergence with the Islamic Republic of Iran, which provides logistical support to PFLP structures and regards them as part of its transnational “resistance project”.

#### **V. Potential Threats and Security Risks**

Despite bans (as in the case of Samidoun in Germany), structures continue to operate via front organisations such as Masar Badil. In countries without consistent bans, such as Switzerland, these networks are already leading to direct acts of violence and attacks under the PFLP banner (e.g. “Commando Marc Rudin”). The failure to enforce existing sanctions—for instance regarding the provision of digital infrastructure in Germany—undermines counter-terrorism efforts.

#### **VI. Strategic Demands and Recommendations for Action**

1. Full enforcement of activity bans: Suppressing the activities of front organisations and successor structures (e.g. Masar Badil) to halt radicalisation within civil society and propaganda against the rule of law.
2. Transparency in NPO funding: Introduction of a statutory disclosure requirement for the financial sources and activity reports of charitable associations and foundations, in order to expose covert financial flows to terrorist networks.
3. Reform of non-profit law: Exclusion from tax privileges of organisations whose activities aim to delegitimise democratic constitutional states or support terrorist ideologies.
4. Raising awareness among state funding bodies: Tighter vetting of project partners in the fields of human rights and humanitarian aid for personal or ideological links to the PFLP milieu.