



EURO-MEDITERRANEAN HUMAN RIGHTS NETWORK  
RÉSEAU EURO-MÉDITERRANÉEN DES DROITS DE L'HOMME  
الشبكة الأوروبية - المتوسطية لحقوق الإنسان



INTERNATIONAL  
COMMISSION  
OF JURISTS

## Israel Must End Detention of Human Rights Defender Ameer Makhoul and Cease Harassment of Organizations

19 May 2010

The undersigned organisations today call on the Israeli authorities to immediately release Mr. **Ameer Makhoul**, a prominent human rights defender, and the Director of Ittijah - Union of Arab Community-Based Associations in Israel.

On 6 May 2010, at 03:10 a.m., 16 members of the Israeli General Security Services (GSS) and the Israeli police force raided the family home of Mr. Ameer Makhoul. During the raid Mr. Ameer Makhoul was detained; until Monday night 17 May 2010 he was held in incommunicado detention and denied fundamental due process rights, including access to his lawyer.

Previously, on 21 April 2010, the Israeli Ministry of the Interior had imposed a travel ban on Mr. Makhoul, preventing him from leaving Israel.

On 17 May 2010, the Petah Tikvah Magistrate Court extended Mr. Makhoul's detention until 20 May. This court hearing was the first time that Mr. Makhoul was granted access to his lawyers. Previously, Mr. Makhoul had not been allowed to attend court hearing and on one occasion his wife was forcibly removed from the hearing for "obstructing the proceedings".

Mr. Makhoul was checked by a prison services doctor at the Petah Tikvah interrogation centre where he is being held. The doctor confirmed that he is suffering from pains in the head. After meeting him last night, Mr. Makhoul's lawyers confirmed that he was suffering from exhaustion - as a result of sleep deprivation - and that he had been subjected to various forms of intensive interrogation, raising fears of possible torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment; such abuses are more likely to occur during periods of incommunicado detention.

The GSS claims that Mr. Makhoul has been 'meeting a foreign agent' and 'spying'. Adalah - The Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel – the organisation representing Mr. Makhoul together with Attorney Hussein Abu Hussein – remarks that such charges “allow the GSS to criminalize almost any Arab who establishes legitimate relations with political and social activists in the Arab world.” Mr. Omar Saeed, a political activist with the National Democratic Assembly - Balad, has also been detained based on the same accusations since 24 April 2010. During the initial stages of his detention, Mr. Saeed was subjected to sleep deprivation and other forms of ill-treatment.

The undersigned believe that Mr. Makhoul's detention is arbitrary and amounts to harassment that appears intended only to sanction his activities as a human rights defender.

We further highlight that this harassment takes place in a context of an escalating campaign of arbitrary restrictions placed by Israeli authorities against human rights defenders in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory. In recent months, a spate of legislation has been introduced in the Knesset to impose severe restrictions on human rights organizations. One such bill, supported by the government, seeks to ban foreign government funding to human rights organizations, while another bill, led by the opposition Kadima party, seeks to shut down organisations that cooperate with foreign entities on human rights issues and to suppress credible evidence relating to the commission of war crimes or other international crimes by Israeli political leaders and/or military officials.

Human rights defenders play a critical role in society. They represent an essential safeguard against the abuse of State power, including the denial of fundamental due process rights, and are an essential component in the fight to uphold the rule of law.

The undersigned call on the Israeli authorities to:

- Ensure that all charges against Mr. Makhoul be dropped and that he is released immediately;
- Guarantee in all circumstances the physical and psychological integrity of Mr. Makhoul and to protect him from any torture, or inhuman or degrading treatment;
- Ensure that all detainees' due process rights - including access to a lawyer - are respected;
- Respect and protect the legitimate work of human rights defenders;
- Ensure that all court proceedings are conducted in accordance with international standards, in particular those contained in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights;
- End the current campaign of intimidation and any kind of harassment directed at human rights defenders and human rights organisations;
- Conform in all circumstances with Israel's obligations under international law, including under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the UN Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, as well as the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Defenders and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Signed:

- Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network (EMHRN)
- Front Line, International Foundation for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders
- International Commission of Jurists
- The Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, a joint programme of the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) and the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT)