

Ittijah General Director Ameer Makhoul Arrested by Israeli Authorities
Palestinian Human Rights Organizations Condemn Arrest as Arbitrary and Seek
Immediate International Intervention



[Ramallah, 6 May 2010] This morning at 3:10 a.m., Israeli Security Agency (ISA) agents accompanied by Israeli police raided Ameer Makhoul's family home in Haifa and arrested him. Mr. Makhoul is a human rights defender and serves as the general director of Ittijah – The Union of Arab Community-Based Associations and as the Chairman of the Public Committee for the Defense of Political Freedom in the framework of the High Follow-up Committee for the Arab Citizens of Israel.

The 16 ISA agents and police officers immediately separated Mr. Makhoul from his family, including wife Janan and daughters Hind, 17 and Huda, 12, and conducted an extensive search of the home. According to Janan, the police confiscated items including documents, maps, the family's four mobile phones, Ameer and Janan's laptops, the hard drives from the girls' two desktop computers, a camera and a small tape recorder containing un-transcribed oral histories Janan collects as part of her work. At one point during the police search, Janan says, one officer violently restrained her, twisting her arm and pushing her when she attempted to leave the home's living room to observe the confiscations. The security forces also refused to identify themselves and showed her a warrant authorizing Mr. Makhoul's arrest only after she repeatedly insisted. The order was signed on 23 April 2010 and cited unsubstantiated "security" reasons as the grounds for Mr. Makhoul's arrest.

Meanwhile, approximately 40 minutes after their arrival, a group of the security forces left with Mr. Makhoul in custody. At around the same time, the Israeli authorities raided the Ittijah office and confiscated documents and the hard drives from all of the organization's computers.

A hearing in Mr. Makhoul's case was held at the Petah Tikva interrogation center later that morning, and his detention was extended for six days. Reports also indicate that Mr. Makhoul has been banned from meeting with an attorney for at least two days.

This arrest comes shortly after Israeli Interior Minister Eli Yishai signed an administrative order prohibiting Mr. Makhoul from exiting the country for a two month period. In the order, which was signed on 21 April and is based on Article 6 of the 1948 emergency regulations, Yishai states, "I have reached the conviction that the exit of Ameer Makhoul from the country poses a serious threat to the security of the state, and therefore I issue this order to prevent him from leaving the country until the 21st of June, 2010".

However, Mr. Makhoul's case is only one example amidst a recent escalated campaign by Israeli authorities against Palestinian human rights defense and civil resistance. In addition to arbitrary arrest and detention, Israeli authorities have met Palestinian human rights activism in recent months with a variety of measures, including raids, deportations, travel bans, visa denials and media attacks against NGOs. Moreover, Palestinian communities involved in grassroots human rights defense efforts are frequently levied with collective punishment measures in the form of curfews, sieges, and destruction of property, threats to individuals and the community as a whole, beatings, the use of lethal and "non-lethal" ammunition,

including 40mm high velocity tear gas canisters, denial of permits, tear-gassing, army incursions and intentional injury and killings.

The undersigned organizations view these measures as deliberate violations of fundamental freedoms, particularly freedoms of movement, expression, association and non-violent assembly, and of the special protections owed under international law to human rights defenders. Furthermore, as Mr. Makhoul's arrest warrant and travel ban order are based on emergency regulations and "secret" information that is never disclosed to the defense, the undersigned consider them to be arbitrary political actions in violation of fundamental due process principles and human rights standards.

The undersigned organizations therefore strongly condemn Mr. Makhoul's arrest and travel ban and call for his immediate release and the ban's immediate suspension.

The undersigned also call upon the international community to take a strong stand in opposition to the Israeli campaign against human rights defenders, and to intervene with Israel for:

- Ameer Makhoul's immediate release and the lifting of the travel ban against him;
- An end to the Israeli practice of arbitrary detention and deportation of human rights defenders; and,
- Full adherence to and respect for relevant international standards, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the UN Declaration and EU guidelines on Human Rights Defenders, as applied to the Palestinian population in the OPT and Israel.

Signed,

Addameer Prisoner Support and Human Rights Association

BADIL Resource Center for Palestinian Residency & Refugee Rights

Ensan Center for Democracy & Human Rights

Al-Haq

Defence for Children International - Palestine Section (DCI-Palestine)

Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling

Institute for Policy Studies

Palestinian Centre for Human Rights (PCHR)

Palestine Solidarity Committee - South Africa

The Jerusalem Legal Aid and Human Rights Center

Habitat International Coalition

The Centre for refugee Rights /AIDOUN-Lebanon

The World Court of Women

The Asian Women's Human Rights Council

El Taller International