



American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee

October 1, 2014

VIA FIRST CLASS MAIL

Hon. Eric H. Holder
Attorney General
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20530

Re: Rasmea Odeh Indictment

Dear Attorney General Holder:

I am writing to express the concerns of the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC) regarding the criminal prosecution of Rasmea Yousef Odeh. Ms. Odeh is being charged with Unlawful Procurement of Naturalization in the Eastern District of Michigan. ADC is the largest grassroots Arab-American organization committed to protecting civil rights, promoting mutual understanding, and preserving Arab American cultural heritage.

ADC demands that you put an immediate stop to the criminal proceedings and drop the indictment against Ms. Odeh. ADC has a strong respect for the judicial system and process; however the merits of this case are baseless. Further, this case plays into the belief and perception that the U.S. Federal Government is intentionally targeting and prosecuting Arab American activists.

Rasmea Odeh is an exemplary citizen and a well-respected leader in the Chicago Arab-American community. Ms. Odeh has dedicated 40 years of her life to the community, working with women on issues ranging from promoting literacy and political education to addressing domestic violence and anti-Arab sentiment. Ms. Odeh is currently the Associate Director of the Arab American Action Network, a social services organization that provides human and civil rights training. Ms. Odeh provides programming to help women learn English, understand American culture, and assimilate into American society.

Ms. Odeh was charged with immigration fraud for allegedly not reporting a “conviction” by an Israeli military court in 1969. The charges should be dropped as Ms. Odeh was never convicted of any crime in Israel. Rather, her confession was illegally obtained by torture and sexual abuse while she was detained in Israel and denied due process.¹ Torture is illegal under both U.S. and

¹ The president of the Israeli West Bank’s military courts, Col. Natanel Benishu, admitted that the Israeli courts “systematically deny Palestinians the right to a fair trial.” Chaim Levinson, *West Bank military courts systematically deny Palestinians the right to a fair trial*, HAARETZ, Aug. 15, 2013. Amnesty International and several human rights organizations have reported that Palestinians are denied due process in the Israeli judicial system. See *Annual Report: Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories*, AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL (2012). The

international law.² Ms. Odeh should not be further punished in America because of an injustice that she was subjected to in another country. As a result of the torture Ms. Odeh suffers from PTSD, which is the reason she did not discuss her ordeal initially. By bringing forward these charges, Ms. Odeh is being prosecuted for being a victim of torture, which has caused decades of trauma and forced her to live her daily life with the effects of post-traumatic stress.

ADC strongly believes that the indictment of Ms. Odeh is part of a systematic effort to intimidate and silence effective advocates for Arab American communities who speak out for Palestinian rights in the Chicago area. Three years ago, 23 anti-war and Palestinian rights activists in Chicago were subpoenaed to testify before a Grand Jury and several of their homes were raided by the FBI. Since 2010, there have been no indictments against the 23 activists.

Further, ADC is outraged that the federal law enforcement agencies continue to waste resources by targeting nonviolent social activists such as Ms. Odeh, but have yet to bring charges against the Israeli suspects in the terrorist attack that killed Palestinian-American Alex Odeh in 1985. No one has been indicted for this terrorist attack on U.S. soil, in spite of the fact that the FBI identified members of the Jewish Defense League (JDL), Robert Manning, Keith Fuchs, and Andy Green, as suspects shortly after the attack. This double standard is antithetical to the American system of justice. Partisan politics should play no part in either the bringing of charges or the timing of charges. ADC urges the Justice Department to stop holding Palestinians and Israelis to a separate standard.

The continued prosecution of Ms. Odeh, and similar tactics against Arab-American activists, will continue to disintegrate any remaining trust the Arab-American community has with law enforcement. The indictment of Ms. Odeh has forced the community to reexamine how we interact with government agencies, including the FBI, U.S. Attorney's offices and the Department of Justice as a whole.

ADC demands you to drop the indictment against Ms. Odeh's because her confession in Israel was illegally obtained by torture, and the current charges against her are the product of illegal investigations targeting the Arab-American community. ADC strongly encourages you to give the matter serious attention. I can be contacted directly at 202-244-2990, or via email to president@adc.org.

Sincerely,



Samer E. Khalaf, Esq.

CC: Barbara McQuade, U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of Michigan

military courts routinely bypass all but a modicum of due process, deny access to lawyers, and justify holding individuals without charge or trial for months and years, often in abusive conditions and subject to torture. *See id.*

² Laurie Kellman, *Mukasey Disavows Torture Memo*, THE WASHINGTON POST, Oct. 17, 2007; United Nations Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, December 10, 1984, 1465 U.N.T.S. 85.