



# General Assembly

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## Human Rights Council

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**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,  
political, economic, social and cultural rights,  
including the right to development**

## **Written statement\* submitted by Maat for Peace, Development and Human Rights Association, a non- governmental organization in special consultative status**

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[7 February 2019]

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\* Issued as received, in the language(s) of submission only.



## Human Rights Defenders Situation in the Middle East

### Preface:

Maat for Peace, Development and Human Rights Association (Egypt) delivers this report to observe and analyse the human rights defenders' situation in the middle east, since they are facing variable forms of suppression and obstacles to suspend their work despite the covenant on rights of HRDs which the UN GA has adopted on 1998 explicitly acknowledged the role of individuals and groups in promoting human rights.

### First: Israeli authorities continue to target human rights defenders:

The number of systematic violations against HRDs committed by the occupying Israeli forces has highly raised. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> of June 2018; "Aref Jaber" a human right defender, has been

On 2 June 2018, human rights defender "Aref Jaber" was subjected to intimidation and physical assault by Israeli soldiers in the southern West Bank city of Hebron. They said they would kill him if he continued to document actions against the Palestinians by the Israeli army and settlers in Hebron. On 24 July 2018, Israeli forces detained human rights defender "Lama Khater" from her family's home in Hebron and they took her to an unknown location.<sup>1</sup>.

On 22 March 2018, "Ahd El Tamimi" was sentenced to eight months' imprisonment and a fine of 5,000 shekels (\$ 1,437). Noor al-Tamimi, who was charged with "incitement to social media," and sentenced to 8 months' imprisonment and a fine of 6,000 shekels (\$ 1,725), both of which were released on July 29, 2018, after eight months of imprisonment. The human rights defender- "Ahd al-Tamimi, 16 years old, was arrested by Israeli forces during a military incursion into her house on 19 December 2017. When her mother, Nariman Tamimi, went to the Binyamin detention center to search for her child, the soldiers also detained her<sup>2</sup>.

On November 14, 2018, the Ofer military court sentenced human rights defender "Abdullah Abu Rahma" to four months' imprisonment and a 2000 shekel fine. In addition, the Court issued a suspended sentence for an additional four months in prison. "Abdullah Abu Rahma" was arrested on 23 January 2017 by the Israeli occupation forces while he was present at a court session for the detainees "Lima Nazih" and Mohammad Khatib, who were arrested while participating in a peaceful demonstration against illegal settlement construction in Bab al-Shams, East of Jerusalem.

The Israeli authorities also used a series of measures inside Israel and in the occupied Palestinian territories to target human rights defenders who criticized Israel's continued occupation. In March 2017, the Israeli Knesset approved a Law amendment regulating entry into Israel. It forbade anyone working in an organization that Issued or promoted calls to boycott Israel or Israeli entities, including settlements, from entering Israel or the occupied Palestinian territories. The authorities continued to prevent attempts by human rights workers to document the situation by preventing them from entering the occupied Palestinian territories, including the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the occupied Palestinian territories. An Amnesty International staff member was denied access after questioning about the organization's work with respect to the settlements.

As well; Palestinian NGOs, including Al Haq, Al Mezan and Al Dameer, have also faced increasing harassment by the Israeli authorities. Such authorities have opened tax investigations with "Omar Barghouthi", a prominent lawyer for the campaign to "boycott Israel and, withdrawing investments and imposing sanctions on them "In an attempt to suspend his campaign. Israeli human rights organizations also were subjected to variable

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<sup>1</sup> 'Israel / OPT: Detention Of Writer And Human Rights Defender Lama Khater' (Front Line Defenders, 2018) <https://www.frontlinedefenders.org/en/case/detention-lama-khater>

<sup>2</sup> 'OPT/Israel – 16-Year-Old Human Rights Defender Ahd Tamimi Arrested And Mother Nariman Tamimi Detained' (Front Line Defenders, 2018) <https://www.frontlinedefenders.org/en/case/israeli-soldiers-arrest-16-year-old-human-rights-defender-ahd-tamimi>

forms of intimidation. For example; Breaking the Silence, Gisha, B'tselem organizations faced stigmatization and threats <sup>3</sup>.

## **Secondly: Qatar's blockade of civil society**

Human rights defenders working in Qatar face many obstacles and difficulties due to government harassment, restrictions on travel and arbitrary detention. Qatari national authorities do not allow the work of independent human rights NGOs. On February 8, 2017, the government banned the travel of "Najib al-Nu'aيمي" - A lawyer in the field of human rights and a member of the Advisory Council of the Arab Program for Human Rights Activists and the former Minister of Justice, without any reasons or charges against him. The decision included a general statement states that he should be included in the travel ban list and appear before the prosecutor. His freedom of movement within the country have been banned before; after the outbreak of the Gulf crisis, in relation to his tweets.<sup>4</sup>

Al-Nuaimi was the main lawyer to all Qatari government opponents in recent years. In 2012, Naimi was the legal representative of the poet Mohammed al-Ajmi in a case brought against him by the Qatari government. He was charged with "inciting to coup". Lawyer al-Ajmi was sentenced to life imprisonment in a secret court, but the prince issued a pardon included him in March 2016 and was released after the commutation of his prison sentence. After Ajami's release, Naguib al-Nu'aيمي criticized publicly the lack of independence of the Qatari judiciary and called for the dismissal the attorney-general.<sup>5</sup>

On April 28, 2018, Naguib al-Nuaimi rejected the decision to ban him from traveling by the Qatari authorities by issuing a statement saying, "As a matter of obstruction, the Attorney-General of Qatar issued a decision to prevent me from leaving the country and then filed a malicious complaint against me. I resorted to the judiciary, which issued judgments of my innocence of slander claimed by the Attorney General, and the Court of Appeal issued a decision to cancel the travel ban. He continued "But the Attorney-General, with government approval, has continued to flagrantly violate the principles of the Constitution and Qatari laws, and the human rights which they hold international conferences on in Qatar!" "I will seek all my rights by all legal means available abroad, and I will seek all the means to obtain my rights guaranteed by the Constitution and the laws of the country," he concluded.<sup>6</sup>

As well; On May 28, 2017, Qatari authorities forcibly deported human rights defender Mohammed Abdullah al-Otaibi to Saudi Arabia while he and his wife were on their way to Norway after arresting him on 24 May 2017. The Norwegian government has exceptionally agreed to grant him and his wife two Norwegian travel documents and granted him political asylum upon his arrival in the country after he demanded international support following his departure from Saudi Arabia to Qatar.<sup>7</sup> Which is a flagrant violation of all human rights instruments as he faces arrest in his own country, and this constitutes a violation of the non-refoulement principle.

## **Recommendations**

Maat for Peace, Development and Human Rights recommends that Israeli and Qatari authorities to:

- Ensure that all human rights defenders in Israel under all circumstances are able to carry out their legitimate human rights work without fear of reprisals and without any restrictions.
- The Israeli authorities should allow civil society organizations to carry out their peaceful work in the field of human rights freely and without restrictions.

<sup>3</sup> For more, see :<https://bit.ly/2GnnxaY>

<sup>4</sup> For more, see: <https://www.gc4hr.org/news/view/1639>

<sup>5</sup> For more, see: <https://bit.ly/2Se30wy>

<sup>6</sup> For more, see: <https://www.gc4hr.org/news/view/1842>

<sup>7</sup> For more, see: <https://www.gc4hr.org/news/view/1605>

- Pressuring the Qatari government to allow national and international human rights organizations to work without restrictions.
  - The Qatari government should unconditionally cancel the travel ban imposed on human rights defender "Najib al-Nuaimi".
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