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Israeli authorities must stop targeting Palestinian human rights defenders: Special Rapporteur

GENEVA – The Israeli authorities continue to target human rights defenders in the Occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, through prolonged administrative detention without charge, humiliation and ill treatment, an independent expert said today, calling for an end to such treatment.

“UN Special Procedures experts, including myself, have raised similar concerns multiple times, and this time I want to bring to the attention of the Israeli government the recent cases of Mr. Bassem Tamimi, Mr. Omar al-Khatib, Ms. Baraa Odeh, Ms. Sumoud Mtair and Ms. Diala Ayesh,” said Mary Lawlor, UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders.

The five human rights defenders were arrested between October 2023 and March 2024, either from their home or as they returned from abroad. They were ordered to be held in administrative detention for periods ranging from four to six months, subject to unlimited renewal. Two of them have yet to be released.

Bassem Tamimi, from Ramallah, is an organiser of peaceful protests against the illegal occupation of Palestinian lands; Omar al-Khatib, from Jerusalem, campaigns against the forced eviction of Palestinian families from the Jerusalem neighbourhood of Sheikh Jarrah; Baraa Odeh, from Bethlehem promotes youth rights; Sumoud Mtair, from Hebron, is active in the Palestinian Anti-Apartheid Wall Campaign; and Diala Ayesh is a human rights lawyer who documents the detention conditions of

Palestinian prisoners detained in Israel. All but al-Khatib and Ayesh were released at the end of their administrative detention periods.

"All five human rights defenders were arrested without warrant. They were not given any reason as to why they were being detained. They were all interrogated without the presence of a lawyer. They were not allowed contact with their families," Lawlor said.

"Four of them were reportedly slapped, beaten, humiliated, sent from one prison to another in the space of one or two days, and made to sign documents in Hebrew they could not understand. The three women detainees have been held in deplorable conditions, in dirty cells and given insufficient and poor-quality meals."

The Special Rapporteur also expressed concern over the severe deterioration of Tamimi's health while he was detained. Tamimi suffers from a chronic illness and did not receive all required medication or the specialised diet to manage his illness.

Lawlor said the use of administrative detention with no charge and based on secret evidence that cannot be challenged, as well as delays in, or lack of, access to contact with lawyers and family, all point to the absence of due process rights.

"I call on the Israeli authorities to respect fair trial conditions, or immediately release the remaining two human rights defenders, as well as the dozens of other human rights defenders detained on account of their peaceful activities," Lawlor said.

She urged the Israeli authorities to ensure that detainees are treated in line with international conventions the country has signed, and in accordance with international declarations that absolutely prohibit any form of ill treatment.

The expert has been in touch with the Israeli Government on this issue.

The expert: **Mary Lawlor**, [Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders](#).

ecoi.net description:

5 Palestinian human rights defenders arrested and sentenced to administrative detention between October 2023 and March 2024; according to reports, 4 of them have been subjected to physical ill-treatment

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