

**Urgent Appeal for the Release of Ms. Shatha Odeh Abu Fannouneh, Palestinian I.D.
937893063, Director of the Health Work Committees (HWC)**

Date: 9 July 2021

Submitted by Odeh and Abu Fannouneh Families

For the attention of:

The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ms. Michele Bachelet Jeria

1. Introduction

Ms. Shatha Odeh Abu Fannouneh, a 60-year-old mother of three, was forcibly and arbitrarily removed from her house in Ramallah, Palestine in the early hours on 7 July 2021. She has since been detained. Ms. Odeh is a nurse by profession and currently serves as the Director of the Health Work Committees (HWC), a Palestinian non-governmental organization that promotes health rights and provides health services for thousands of Palestinians, especially in remote areas outside the reach of the Palestinian authorities. Ms. Odeh is a dedicated healthcare provider, who has worked tirelessly throughout the COVID-19 outbreak.

Ms. Odeh is currently being held in the women's section at Hasharon Prison. This prison is located south of the line extending between Tulkaram and Netanya, outside the occupied Palestinian territory in violation of international humanitarian law. Family members are thus unable to reach Ms. Odeh, because travel to Hasharon Prison requires security permits to be issued by the Israeli authorities. Since her detention, Ms. Odeh has been interrogated twice for an overall period of 18 hours. During the whole duration of her detention, she was allowed to make one phone call to a lawyer but not to be formally assisted during interrogations nor to consult with them privately and in person. The interrogation takes place in 'Ofer' Military Camp in Ramallah, which is over an hour's drive from Hasharon Prison.

Ms. Odeh is in poor health, and her arbitrary detention will likely have serious and irreversible consequences on her health.

On 9 June 2021, the HWC was violently raided and shut down for six months by Israeli forces. On 7 July 2021, the same day as Ms. Odeh's arrest, Israeli forces raided and forcibly closed the offices of the Palestinian organization Union of Agricultural Work Committees. The family believes that the arbitrary detention of Ms. Odeh is part of Israel's systematic policy targeting Palestinian civil society organizations and intimidating Palestinian human rights defenders to hinder their work promoting Palestinians' health and human rights.

In light of the imminent threat to Ms. Odeh's health, and Israel's ongoing and systematic policy of arbitrary detention, our family sends this urgent appeal to immediately intervene, including by

calling on Israel to immediately release Ms. Odeh, and all Palestinian political prisoners arbitrarily detained. We call for an end to Israel's systematic and arbitrary detention of Palestinian human rights defenders, and an end to Israel's targeted attacks on civil society organizations that provide necessary, life-sustaining services to Palestinians, like healthcare and the COVID-19 public health awareness campaigns Ms. Odeh has led in the midst of a global pandemic.

This urgent appeal calls on the United Nations Commissioner for Human Rights to remind the international community, and particularly the High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention, of their legal obligations to protect Palestinian human rights and enforce the implementation of international humanitarian law; urging them to take immediate, effective, and concrete actions to put an end to Israel's impunity.

2. Facts of the Case

2.1 The Raid on HWC Office

On 9 June 2021, Israeli forces raided HWC's office in Ramallah, confiscated its computers and vandalized its premises. They additionally fixed a military order on the outside door after sealing it, closing the organization for six months on the basis of 'security reasons' without providing further details. This was the fourth raid on the organization's office since 2019.

Since 2019, the Israeli authorities arrested three HWC employees, including a Spanish national residing in the West Bank.

2.2 The Arbitrary Detention of Ms. Shatha

Ms. Odeh is a nurse by profession and currently heads the Health Work Committees (HWC), which is a Palestinian non-governmental organization that promotes health rights and provides health services for thousands of Palestinians, especially in remote areas outside the reach of the Palestinian authorities. Ms. Odeh is a dedicated healthcare worker, who was tirelessly working during the COVID-19 outbreak to provide services to thousands of Palestinians across the West Bank. Ms. Odeh is also the Head of the Palestinian NGOs Network, which is an umbrella organization of Palestinian non-government organizations in the Palestinian territories, formed to enhance coordination, consultation, and cooperation between member NGOs and to strengthen Palestinian civil society and contribute to the establishment of a Palestinian State.

On 7 July 2021, around 2:00 am, about 15 Israeli soldiers raided Ms. Odeh's house in 'Ain-Musbah, Ramallah, West Bank, Palestine, forcibly detaining her and terrorizing the family. The Israeli soldiers confiscated Ms. Odeh's mobile phone (that she uses for personal and professional communication), seized the keys of the organization's car, and confiscated the car itself. During the raid, other family members were kept in the living room while Ms. Odeh was allowed to get dressed. She was then taken, against her will, to 'Ofra' Israeli Military Camp in Ramallah. Ms. Odeh and her family were informed that she would be subjected to interrogation. No further explanation was provided. A 9-hour interrogation ensued on the day of her arrival.

Ms. Odeh's lawyers at the Addameer Organization, informed the family that she would be moved to Hasharon Prison that has a women's section. This prison is located south of the line extending between Tulkaram and Netanya, outside the occupied Palestinian territory in violation of international humanitarian law. Family members are thus unable to reach Ms. Odeh because travel to Hasharon Prison requires security permits to be issued by the Israeli authorities. Since her detention, Ms. Odeh has been interrogated twice for an overall period of 18 hours. During the whole duration of her detention, she was allowed to make one phone call to a lawyer but not to be formally assisted during interrogations nor to consult with them privately and in person. The interrogation takes place in 'Ofer' Military Camp in Ramallah, which is over an hour drive from Hasharon Prison.

On 8 July, Ms. Odeh attended her first military court hearing, where the court extended her detention until 14 July 2021, citing a need for further investigation. Only two family members were allowed to attend the hearing, Ms. Odeh's husband and one of her daughters. No physical interaction was allowed.

Ms. Odeh's health is extremely compromised, her condition is critical. She is diagnosed with numerous chronic illnesses including Hypertension, Hyperlipidemia, Diabetes Mellitus, and Irritable Bowel Syndrome. She is currently prescribed a vast array of medications (1) Cartia (1 per day), 2) Concor 10 mg (1 per day), 3) Crestor 10 mg (1 per day), 4) Pepticum 20 mg capsule (1 per day), 5) Creon 10,000 IU capsule (1 per day), 6) Glucophage 850 MG (2 per day), 7) Exforge 160 slow release (1 per day), 8) Dee Dense 2000 IU (1 per day)). But she is not receiving these necessary medications, in their proper dosage and frequency.

The lawyer informed the family that the Israeli Prison authorities denied Ms. Odeh's request to have underclothing and access to one of her medications (Creon 10,000 IU capsule (1 per day)).

While detained. Ms. Odeh is considered to be at a high risk and needs continuous observation and monitoring. She will not endure her arbitrary detention. (Please refer to the annexed medical certificate of 7 July 2021).

3. Conclusion and Recommendations

In light of the above, we urge you to intervene immediately, and specifically to:

- i. Call on the Occupying Power, Israel, to immediately release Palestinian detainee Ms. Shatha Odeh Abu Fannouneh, whose health is compromised, and guarantee her right to liberty and freedom from arbitrary arrests and detention;
- ii. Call on Israel to ensure and uphold Palestinian detainee Ms. Odeh's right to the highest attainable standard of health and mental health, as well as the right to life; and
- iii. Call on Israel to put an end to the systematic and ongoing practice of targeting of Palestinian civil society organizations, including HWC and intimidating Palestinian human rights defenders, including Ms. Odeh, contrary to international law.

The family of Odeh and Abu Fannouneh
9 July 2021

