



32 Nassau Street, Rm. 922 New York, NY 10038 + [nlginternational.org](http://nlginternational.org) + [international@nlg.org](mailto:international@nlg.org)

January 6, 2016

H.E. Dr Riyad Mansour  
Ambassador, Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations  
115 East 65th Street  
New York, NY 10065

Re: Case of Omar Nayef Zayed in Bulgaria

Dear Dr. Mansour,

We write today on behalf of the Palestine Subcommittee of the National Lawyers Guild (NLG), formed in 1937 as the United States' first racially-integrated bar association to advocate for the protection of constitutional, human and civil rights, regarding the case of Omar Nayef Zayed, a Bulgarian resident for the past 22 years and a Palestinian former prisoner in Israeli prisons today facing extradition. He has taken refuge in the Palestinian embassy in Sofia to preserve his life, health and safety.

The Bulgarian government has received an extradition request from the State of Israel, and has indicated its willingness to comply with this request, under the European Convention on Extradition, to which Bulgaria and Israel are both parties. Indeed, Bulgarian police entered Zayed's home with the intent to arrest him and extradite him to Israel. While Zayed's extradition is not legitimate or lawful under the European Convention, as it excludes cases of "political offenses" – and Palestinian political prisoners are surely a political matter – the Bulgarian state has pledged a quick extradition.

In light of this dire situation, Zayed has taken refuge inside the Embassy of the State of Palestine in Sofia, Bulgaria. Under the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, the Palestinian embassy is inviolate and may not be entered by Bulgarian security forces in an attempt to arrest Zayed. The State of Palestine and the Republic of Bulgaria are both signatories of the Vienna Convention, and Bulgaria has recognized Palestine's sovereign statehood since 1988. Inside the Embassy, Zayed is protected from unjust pursuit, imprisonment, and extradition.

We are disturbed by reports that pressure has been repeatedly exerted on Zayed and his family members for him to leave the embassy, the one secure place for him in Bulgaria at this time. While we are pleased to see reports that a special crisis team at high levels of the Palestinian Authority and Palestine Liberation Organization has been appointed to address Zayed's case, as

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*Jeanne Mirer*  
co-chair

*Suzanne Adely*  
co-chair

*Jordan Winquist*  
co-chair

well as a public statement by the Foreign Ministry that Zayed will not be put at risk by the Embassy, we share concerns expressed by Zayed's family members that they are not included in the crisis team and that they continue to receive pressure to leave the embassy, through verbal statements and actions such as denying Zayed permission to use the kitchen in the embassy.

It is a fundamental right and duty of the State of Palestine, and its representative the Embassy, to protect Palestinian citizens facing persecution and unjust imprisonment. The case of Zayed, a former political prisoner in Israeli jails, has repercussions not only for himself but for other former Palestinian prisoners and long-time Palestinian strugglers living in Europe today.

We express our strongest support for the Palestinian cause, for the freedom of Palestinian prisoners, and for the ongoing provision of sanctuary and support for Omar Nayef Zayed. We urge that the State of Palestine dedicate all resources and support for Zayed's legal defense and representation, and that the strongest possible political pressure be mobilized in order to ensure that the Republic of Bulgaria rejects the illegitimate extradition request by the Israeli state and that the life, health and safety of Omar Nayef Zayed and his family are fully secured at all levels.

Sincerely,

Audrey Bomse, Andrew Dalack and Amanda Ghannam  
National Lawyers Guild  
Palestine Subcommittee

Cc: Dr. Ahmad Al-Madbuh, Ambassador of the State of Palestine to the Republic of Bulgaria