



July 26, 2010

VIA FACSIMILE (202) 647-1579

Secretary of State Hillary Clinton
US Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20520

Re: Intervention of State Department on Behalf of Human Rights Defender, Ameer Makhoul

Dear Secretary of State Hillary Clinton:

As human rights advocates and representatives of nongovernmental organizations working to promote internationally recognized human rights standards in the US and around the world, we welcomed the important message you delivered to the Community of Democracies in Krakow on July 3rd, 2010. We wholeheartedly agree that civil society is an essential element in a free nation and plays an important role in identifying and eradicating injustices. As you rightly noted, it was through the critically important work of human rights activists and civil society that the U.S. was able to be put on the path of racial equality.

Because of the commitment you expressed in Krakow and that you have demonstrated during your tenure with NGOs working on behalf of vulnerable constituencies, we wish to bring to your attention a troubling development not highlighted in your July 3rd remarks. Particularly in the last six months, we have watched with dismay as both real and figurative walls close in on civil society and human rights defenders in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories. The most recent case of this is that of human rights defender, Ameer Makhoul, an Israeli citizen and head of Ittijah—the Union of Arab Community Based Organizations. Headquartered in Haifa, Ittijah operates as an umbrella organization for civil society member groups working for the advancement of political, cultural, social and economic rights of the Palestinian minority in Israel. At 3:00 am on May 6th, 2010, Mr. Makhoul was arrested at his home, and both his home and the Ittijah office were searched and personal items, office equipment, documents and databases were seized. Mr. Makhoul was held for two weeks *incommunicado* while a strict gag order was imposed on the case, and while, according to his lawyers, he was subjected to torture including sleep deprivation and stress positions.

Three weeks after his arrest and detention, Mr. Makhoul was charged with espionage, contacting a foreign agent and other trumped up security charges. Mr. Makhoul denies the charges against him and maintains that his statements were obtained under coercion. His lawyers also contend that their meetings with Mr. Makhoul have been wiretapped by prison authorities. Not only is this a violation of Israeli law, it deprives Mr. Makhoul of a vigorous, unfettered defense.

According to Phillip Luther, Deputy Director of Amnesty International's Middle East and North Africa Program, "Ameer Makhoul is a key human rights defender, well-known for his civil society activism on behalf of the Palestinian citizens of Israel" and "his arrest and continued detention smacks of pure harassment, designed to hinder his human rights work". Likewise, the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, a joint program of the World Organization Against Torture and the International Federation for Human Rights, has also stated that it seems that his arrest is only aimed at sanctioning his human rights activities. We believe Mr. Makhoul is being prosecuted for his human rights advocacy on behalf of Israel's Palestinian community and especially for his non-violent activism seeking to hold Israel accountable for war crimes and other gross violations of human rights.

Madame Secretary, in light of the following, we respectfully request that your office investigate the arrest, unlawful treatment, and detention of Mr. Makhoul and use its considerable diplomatic influence to bring an end to his arbitrary detention and to ensure that Israel, a leading recipient of US military and economic aid, comply with its commitment under US law and international legal norms. We also ask that the State Department call on Israel to cooperate with the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders in its investigation of the case of Ameer Makhoul.

We thank you for the leadership you have shown on the issue of the protection of human rights defenders and the pledge of the US State Department to work to develop initiatives that support civil society and strengthen governments committed to democracy. Please let us know how we may be of service to you in your investigation of the case of Mr. Makhoul.

Sincerely,

National Lawyers Guild
New York, New York

Center for Constitutional Rights
New York, New York

International Association of Democratic Lawyers
Brussels, Belgium

Grassroots International
Boston, Massachusetts

Rachel Corrie Foundation for Peace and Justice
Olympia, Washington

Justice First Foundation, Inc.

CODEPINK
Greater Boston, Massachusetts

Israeli Committee Against Home Demolitions—
USA

Jewish Voice for Peace
USA

Resource Center for Non-Violence
Santa Cruz, California

UC California
Hastings Chapter
National Lawyers Guild
San Francisco, California

Citizens for Justice in the Middle East
Kansas City, Missouri

Chicago Faith Coalition for Middle East Policy
Chicago, Illinois

Cincinnati Palestinian Rights Meet-Up
Cincinnati, Ohio

Corvallis-Albany Friends of Middle East Peace
Corvallis, Oregon

International Jewish Anti-Zionist Network

International Solidarity Movement
Northern California

Progressive Democrats of America
Israel/Palestine Action Group

Middle East Peace Advisory Committee

Middle East Peace Now—Minnesota

Middle East Peace Committee
Los Angeles, California

St. Louis Palestine Solidarity Committee
St. Louis, Missouri

Free Palestine Movement

Utahns for a Just Peace in the Holy Land

Virginians for Middle East Peace

Coalition for Palestinian Rights—Minnesota

Way to Jerusalem
Washington, D.C.

Individuals (American)

Susan M. Akram
Clinical Professor
Boston University
School of Law*
Boston, Massachusetts

Huwaida Arraf, Esq.
Human Rights Activist

Ajamu Baraka
Executive Director
US Human Rights Network*

Medea Benjamin
Co-founder
Global Exchange and CODEPINK

Phyllis Bennis
Institute for Policy Studies*
Washington, D.C.

George Bisharat, Professor
Hastings College of Law*
University of California
San Francisco, California

Audrey Bomse, Esq.
Legal Coordinator
Free Gaza Movement

Helena Cobban
Owner and Manager
Just World Publishing, LLC
Charlottesville, Virginia

Cindy and Craig Corrie
Rachel Corrie Foundation for Peace and Justice
Olympia, Washington

Jamil Dakwar, Esq.
Human rights advocate
New York, New York

State Rep. Rod Driver President
Justice First Foundation
West Kingston, Rhode Island

Norman Finkelstein
Writer and lecturer
Brooklyn, New York

Linda Frank
Tacoma, Washington

Elizabeth Geschiere
MN Break the Bonds*
Minneapolis, Minnesota

Rabbi Lynn Gottlieb
Shomer Shalom Network for Jewish
Nonviolence*
Stonypoint, NY

Julianne H. Gustafson-Lira
Human Rights Activist
Houston, Texas

Najib Joe Hakim
San Francisco, California

Zaha Hassan, Esq.
Human Rights Advocate
Portland, Oregon

Nadia Hijab
Author and Human Rights Advocate,
Washington, D.C.

Susan K. Jacoby
Jewish Women for Justice in Israel/Palestine
Boston, Massachusetts

Michael Lerner
Editor, Tikkun Magazine*
Chair, The Network of Spiritual Progressives*
Rabbi, Beyt Tikkun Synagogue*
Berkeley, California

Marilyn Levin
United for Justice and Peace Coalition
Palestine Task Force
Boston, Massachusetts

Joseph Levine
Department of Philosophy*
University of Massachusetts
Amherst, Massachusetts

Peter Miller
Human Rights Activist
Portland, Oregon

Jeanne Mirer, President
International Association of Democratic Lawyers
New York, New York

Dr. Nancy Murray
Boston Coalition for Palestinian Rights
Boston, Massachusetts

Alice Rothchild, MD
Co-Chair
American Jews for Just Peace
Boston, Massachusetts

Azadeh Shahshahani, Esq.
Co-Chair
International Committee
National Lawyers Guild
Atlanta, Georgia

Dianne Shammas, Ph.D.
Laguna Beach, California

Richard Silverstein
Tikkun Olam
Seattle, Washington

Salena Tramel
Grassroots, International
Boston, Massachusetts

The Rev. Richard K. Toll Chair, Friends of
Sabeel--North America
Portland, Oregon

Rebecca Vilkomerson
Jewish Voice for Peace
USA

Peter Weiss
Vice President
Center for Constitutional Rights
New York, New York

Mona Younis, Ph.D.
Human Rights Advocate
North Bethesda, Maryland

Individuals (international)

Hossam Bahgat
Executive Director
Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights

Dr. Kathleen Cavanaugh
Irish Center for
Human Rights*
National University of Ireland
Galway, Ireland

Dr. Jeff Handmaker
Assistant Professor International Institute of
Social Studies
Erasmus University*
Rotterdam, The Netherlands

Bahey Eldin Hassan
General Director
Cairo Institute for Human Rights
Cairo, Egypt

Dr. David Heap
Associate Professor and Graduate Chair
French Studies Dept. & Linguistics Program*
University of Western Ontario
London, Ontario, Canada

Joseph Schechla
Coordinator
Housing and Land Rights International
Cairo, Egypt

*For identification purposes only.
Cc: Asst. Sec'y Michael Posner, PosnerMH@state.gov