



National Lawyers Guild International Committee www.nlginternational.org

May 23, 2011

Dear Mr Walles and Mr Sutphin,

The National Lawyers Guild and its International Committee and Free Palestine Subcommittee have written in the past to the State Department to bring to your attention the cases of Palestinian human rights defenders being imprisoned, prosecuted and targeted for their human rights advocacy; we have written in the past regarding the cases of Ameer Makhoul and Abdallah Abu Rahma. We write today with great concern about the cases of Naji and Bassem Tamimi, two committed nonviolent Palestinian protest organizers from the West Bank village of Nabi Saleh who have been indicted for "incitement" and "organizing unpermitted marches". The two, who have been arrested on March 6th and 24th, respectively, have been placed under arrest for the duration of their trials.

The case against Naji and Bassem Tamimi is largely based on the coerced confessions of two minors, 14 and 15 year-old, who were arrested at gunpoint in the middle of the night, beaten and questioned unlawfully, without being allowed sleep, denied legal consul and the right to have their parents present. In the case of the 14 year-old, it had already been proven in court that he was also not informed of his right to remain silent during questioning, but rather told that "It will be best to tell the truth". According to the many reports of Defense of Children International – Palestinian section, such coercive questioning by Israeli authorities of Palestinian youth, often rising to the level of torture, is systemic. This practice has been the source of inquiry by various UN agencies, including the UN Committee Against Torture.

The persecution of the Tamimi cousins clearly mimics the recent politically motivated judicial witch-hunt against Abdallah Abu Rahmah from the village of Bil'in in both the charges and methods employed. Nabi Saleh has recently become a focal point of West Bank peaceful, unarmed protest against Jewish-only and illegal settlement expansion. As a result, the village has also become the target of increasingly aggressive disproportionate military repression by the Israeli army. Since demonstrations in the village began on December 2009, more than 70 protest related arrests have been carried by the Israeli military, affecting roughly a staggering 10 percent of the village's 500 residents, men, women and children.

As an organization representing thousands of lawyers, law students and legal workers who have consistently been involved in human rights struggles both at home and abroad, we cannot sit idly by as Naji and Bassem Tamimi and their fellow villagers are denied even the basic right to protest the illegal theft of their land. We hope you share our concern and will act accordingly. We therefore respectfully request that your office investigate the arrest and prosecution of Naji and Bassem Tamimi, including the use of coerced testimony by minors, and will use its



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considerable diplomatic influence to bring to overturn his conviction and have him released, and to ensure that in the future, Israel, a leading recipient of US military and economic aid, complies with its commitment under US law and international legal norms.

The National Lawyers Guild, founded in 1937, is the oldest and largest public interest/human rights bar organization in the United States. Its headquarters are in New York and it has chapters in every state.

Sincerely,

Jeanne Mirer, Susan Scott and Azadeh Shahshahani
Co-Chairs
National Lawyers Guild International Committee