

November 19, 2014

Honorable Gershwin Drain  
United States District Judge  
U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Michigan  
231 West Lafayette Street  
Detroit, Michigan 48226

Re: *United States v. Rasmea Odeh*, Cr. 2:13-cr-20772

Dear Judge Drain:

On behalf of the National Lawyers Guild, Jewish Voice for Peace, the Center for Constitutional Rights, Palestine Solidarity Legal Support, National Students for Justice in Palestine, and the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee, we write respectfully to request that the Court reconsider its denial of bond pending sentencing, which Ms. Rasmea Odeh requested pursuant to 18 U.S.C. § 3143(a)(1).

Ms. Odeh's submissions in support of reconsideration are substantial and, we submit, would surely sustain her burden of proof, if reconsidered:

- This Court has already found that Ms. Odeh poses no risk of danger to persons or the community.
- While the Court found that Ms. Odeh failed to sustain her burden of proof that she presents no risk of flight because she has no family in Chicago, Ms. Odeh has shown, in her reconsideration papers, that she has close family in Chicago, including two nephews, with whom she has lived and helped to raise.
- Additionally, Ms. Odeh has shown exceptionally strong and credible non-family ties to her home community of Chicago – ties far stronger than most U.S.-born Americans are able to show:
  - She rejected a plea offer that would have guaranteed no term of imprisonment, because it would have required her to leave Chicago and the United States to avoid the risk of deportation. In other words, it was more important to her to be able to stay in Chicago and continue her social work there than it was to risk imprisonment and deportation.
  - Two hundred and sixty-one Arab and Arab American women immigrants to Chicago have signed a poignant plea to this Court to allow Ms. Odeh to return to her home community pending sentencing. These women are members of the Arab Women's Committee of Chicago, and they are calling themselves her family:

“She organizes visits to our homes when we are celebrating or mourning. She attends our children’s weddings. She gives us advice about our families, our jobs, and our lives every time we call for it. The woman has and will do anything for us.” DE#133-3, at pages 1-24.

Ms. Odeh’s attorneys have documented that her creation of the Arab Women’s Committee has won awards and has been recognized nationally as a successful model for the assimilation of Arab women immigrants into large urban communities and a profoundly different cultural environment than they left behind in their countries of origin.

- Ms. Odeh would not be able to duplicate her success with the Women’s Committee in Chicago elsewhere, because her effectiveness rests, in essential part, upon her familiarity with the Chicago area, its culture, and individuals in the community. Attempting such work elsewhere would likely take years, as she would first need to master the new environment and create the essential human ties and support networks required for such work to be effective. As a 67-year-old immigrant, Ms. Odeh would surely be overwhelmed by attempting to repeat this lengthy process in a new place.
- Long-established Chicago attorney James Fennerty, who is one of Ms. Odeh’s attorneys and has known her since 1984, has offered to vouch personally for her continuing presence in Chicago, pending sentencing.
- Ms. Odeh’s attempt to escape Israeli prison decades ago was an attempt to escape a continuing, sustained pattern of unspeakably brutal torture, including rape. Any person in her position who was capable of attempting escape would have done the same. She should not be faulted for an attempt to escape torture.

The organizational signatories to this letter dedicate much of their time and resources to educating the people of the United States about the brutality of the Israeli occupation. Israel’s torture of Palestinian men, women, and even child prisoners is well-documented by human rights organizations, including the human rights NGOs, B’tselem, in Israel,<sup>1</sup> and Addameer, in the occupied West Bank.<sup>2</sup>

- Because she has lived in this country for the past 20 years, Ms. Odeh’s ties to this country are far stronger than her ties to any other. She has made a deeply cathartic and rewarding life for herself and her community in Chicago, one that she has risked her personal liberty to maintain. She has shown by clear and convincing evidence that she has powerful personal motives to remain there, at any personal cost.
- Ms. Odeh has an exemplary personal history in all respects, except for the nonviolent offense of making a false statement on her naturalization application. She has suffered extraordinarily, but succeeded in transforming her suffering into an unquenchable energy to help others. In Chicago, she has steadfastly lived an exemplary life of public service.

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<sup>1</sup> See, e.g., [http://www.btselem.org/torture/201308\\_etzion](http://www.btselem.org/torture/201308_etzion)

<sup>2</sup> See, e.g., <http://www.addameer.org/files/Reports/torture-eng.pdf>

By all accounts, including the statements of church-affiliated groups in Chicago and the 261 Arab women immigrants in Chicago who have informed the Court that they rely on Ms. Odeh heavily in trying to lead successful lives themselves, she is a great asset to the community of Chicago.

- Ms. Odeh has offered to undertake a variety of additional security measures, as well, as detailed in her motion, to secure her presence at sentencing.

For all of these reasons, we respectfully ask that you reconsider your decision to deny bond pending sentencing.

Respectfully submitted,

s/ Azadeh Shahshahani, Esq., President  
National Lawyers Guild

s/ Rebecca Vilkomerson, Executive Director  
Jewish Voice for Peace

s/ Maria LaHood, Esq., Senior Staff Attorney  
Center for Constitutional Rights

s/ Samer Khalaf, Esq., National President  
American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC)

s/ Dima Khalidi, Esq., Executive Director  
Palestine Solidarity Legal Support

s/ Andrew Dalack, Esq. [not yet admitted to practice]  
Ad Hoc Steering Committee, National Students for Justice in Palestine