

URGENT ACTION

DROP ALL CHARGES AGAINST AHMAD KHALEFA

Ahmad Khalefa, a Palestinian citizen of Israel, is a lawyer, human rights defender, community organizer, and newly elected city council member. On October 19, 2023, Israeli police violently arrested him along with ten other demonstrators from a peaceful protest in his native town of Umm al-Fahm in northern Israel. He was subsequently charged with “incitement to terrorism” and “identification with a terrorist group,” for chanting slogans against the war in Gaza. After nearly four months in prison, Ahmad Khalefa was put under house arrest under strict terms, including electronic tagging. Israeli authorities must immediately and unconditionally release Ahmad Khalefa from house arrest, allow him to resume his work without intimidation, and drop the baseless charges against him.

TAKE ACTION:

- Write a letter in your own words or using the sample below as a guide to one or both government officials listed. You can also email, fax, call or Tweet them.
- [Click here](#) to let us know the actions you took on **Urgent Action 25.24**. It's important to report because we share the total number with the officials we are trying to persuade and the people we are trying to help.

Adv. Amit Aisman
State Attorney
The Office of the State Attorney
Email: State-attorney@justice.gov.il

Embassy of Israel in the United States
Ambassador Michael Herzog
3514 International Drive, NW, Washington DC 20008
Email: info@washington.mfa.gov.il
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Dear Amit Aisman,

I am gravely concerned over the indictment, silencing, and intimidation of Palestinian human rights lawyer, **Ahmad Khalefa**, under the cover of Israel's discriminatory counterterrorism law. A Palestinian citizen of Israel, Ahmad Khalefa is a prominent human rights defender, community organizer, and an elected member of the Umm al-Fahm city council. On October 19, 2023, Ahmad Khalefa was violently arrested, along with ten other protesters, including four children, in Umm al-Fahm, during a peaceful demonstration against the Israeli military offensive in the occupied Gaza Strip. Despite injuries sustained from his arrest, Ahmad Khalefa was denied medical treatment and transported directly to Megiddo Prison.

On November 6, 2023, Ahmad Khalefa was charged with "incitement to terrorism" and "identifying with a terrorist organization" solely for leading a peaceful protest and for chanting peaceful, nonviolent slogans against the Israeli occupation. During the nearly four months he spent in prison, Ahmad Khalefa was subjected to torture and other ill-treatment. On February 8, 2024, Ahmad Khalefa was put under house arrest, but he continues to face extreme restrictions, including electronic monitoring, being banned from using the internet, and spending the house arrest outside his hometown of Umm al-Fahm, where his children study.

I therefore urge you to act swiftly to drop all charges against Ahmad Khalefa and to immediately and unconditionally release him from house arrest and lift all associated restrictions of his rights. He must be allowed to resume his vital work and activism without reprisals or intimidation.

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Ahmad Khalefa, 42, is a Palestinian citizen of Israel and human rights defender from Umm al-Fahm, a Palestinian city in northern Israel. As a human rights lawyer, he has been tirelessly defending the rights of Palestinians in Israel and the occupied territories, including administrative detainees, communities at risk of displacement in the Negev/Naqab and students facing criminalization over issues related to freedom of expression. Newly elected to the Umm al-Fahm city council, Ahmad Khalefa is also a prominent community organizer and a founding member of al-Herak al-Fahmawi, a local grassroots movement that campaigns against organized crime and gender-based violence within Palestinian communities in Israel.

In November 2023, Ahmad Khalefa was charged with "incitement to terrorism" and "identifying with a terrorist organization" under Article 24 of Israel's 2016 Counter-Terrorism Law, a law that contains numerous repressive and draconian measures designed to stifle dissent and consolidate Israel's apartheid system against Palestinians. The indictment is based on slogans that Ahmad Khalefa chanted in a peaceful protest, and which have been commonly chanted by Palestinians for decades. These include: "Gaza shall not surrender; to the tank or to the gun"; "There can be no other solution, except for an end to occupation."

Ahmad Khalefa spent nearly four months in prison. In one of the court hearings, he testified to the cruel and inhumane prison conditions inside Megiddo prison, describing systematic food deprivation, lack of clothing, and degrading abuse at the hands of prison wardens. On January 15, 2024, the Haifa District Court decided to detain Ahmad Khalefa until the conclusion of all proceedings, deeming him "too ideologically dangerous" to be released from prison in light of the security situation.

On February 8, following a joint appeal submitted by Ahmad Khalefa's legal team, the Israeli Supreme Court overturned the Haifa District Court's decision and put him under house arrest, citing his clean criminal record. His wife Lina was assigned as his guarantor, tasked with ensuring his compliance with the conditions of the house arrest, which also include ban from using the internet, electronic tagging, and residing outside their hometown. The couple were forced to rent a house in Haifa, separating them from their three children and forcing Lina to take an open-ended leave from her job.

Following Ahmad Khalefa's indictment, the disciplinary committee in Israel's bar association initiated procedures to revoke his license. The arrest and indictment of Ahmad Khalefa and the procedures to disbar him are part of a severe and unprecedented crackdown on the right to freedom of expression of Palestinian citizens of Israel and Palestinians from occupied East Jerusalem. Since the beginning of the war, the state of Israel has filed hundreds of indictments against Palestinians for expression-related offenses under the Counter-Terrorism Law. A recent report to the Knesset's Constitution, Law, and Justice Committee on February 5, 2024, notes that 394 investigations based on allegations of incitement to terror have been initiated since October 7, 2023, the vast majority of them against Palestinian citizens or residents.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: English, Hebrew, Arabic, or your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: July 11, 2024.

NAME AND PRONOUN: Ahmad Khalefa (He/him).