

PRESS RELEASE - THE OBSERVATORY

ISRAEL and the OPT: Human rights defenders Mohammad Othman and Jamal Juma' finally released !

Geneva-Paris, January 15, 2010. *The Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, a joint programme of the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT) and the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), welcomes the release of Messrs. Mohammad Othman and Jamal Juma', respectively volunteer and Coordinator of the "Palestinian Grassroots Stop the Wall Campaign".*

On January 13, 2010, Messrs. **Mohammad Othman** and **Jamal Juma'** were finally released from Israeli detention. While Mr. Juma' was released without any conditions, Mr. Othman was released on a 10,000 NIS bail. His bail conditions ensure that he cannot leave the West Bank and needs to report to the police whenever summoned for interrogation until the investigation of his case is over.

The Observatory recalls that Messrs. Mohammad Othman and Jamal Juma' were being detained respectively since September 22 and December 15, 2009 without charges and without being able to know the reason for their arrest. Both men were being detained on the basis of "secret evidence", and their detention seemed to merely aim at sanctioning their human rights activities. On November 22, 2009, the Military Court of Appeals had ordered to release Mr. Othman on bail, but at the same time it had given the military commander 25 hours to decide whether or not he wanted to issue an administrative detention order against him. The military commander had ordered the issuance of such an order until January 12, 2009, and Mr. Othman was therefore released on bail.

"We welcome the release of Messrs. Mohammad Othman and Jamal Juma'. However, we regret the ongoing obstacles and acts of harassment faced by human rights defenders in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory and we call upon the Israeli authorities to put an immediate end to any kind of harassment against them", said today Eric Sottas, OMCT Secretary General.

"We further recall that the long-standing practice of administrative detention of civilians including human rights defenders violates international human rights standards and deprived them in particular of due legal process and basic rights", said Souhayr Belhassen, FIDH President.

The Observatory urges the Israeli authorities to release all human rights defenders arbitrarily detained, to put an immediate end to any kind of harassment against them, and to conform in all circumstances with the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as well as international human rights instruments ratified by Israel.

The Observatory also calls upon European Union (EU) Member States to urge the Israeli authorities to comply with the relevant international norms and standards, including the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, in order to create an environment where human rights defenders can operate freely.

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