

# UN statements on behalf of Issa Amro

## Press releases

13.08.2013

### UN experts urge Israel to stop harassment of human rights activist Issa Amro<sup>1</sup>

*A group of United Nations independent human rights experts today expressed deep concern at the alleged ongoing judicial harassment, intimidation and abusive treatment directed against Issa Amro, a prominent Palestinian human rights defender. Mr. Amro, a founder of the non-governmental organizations (NGOs) Youth Against Settlements and Hebron Defenders, was arrested and detained 20 times in 2012, and six times in 2013, without being charged. UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the occupied Palestinian territories, Richard Falk, said Mr. Amro appears to be the victim of a “pattern of harassment” ... Over the past months, Mr. Amro also received a number of death threats from settler organizations. “Among the most insidious features of the prolonged occupation of the West Bank has been the high degree of complicity linking the Israeli military administration to the violence of the unlawful settlers against Palestinian inhabitants,” Mr. Falk said in a statement, urging the Government to ensure that settlers do not harass or intimidate Palestinians with impunity ... “The right to freedom of association suggests that those exercising it are specifically protected from threats or use of violence, harassment, persecution, intimidation or reprisals,” stressed the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, Maina Kiai. “Those responsible for these unacceptable acts against Mr. Amro should be held accountable, while members of the Youth Against Settlements Centre should immediately be granted adequate protection.”*

18.12.2015

### Stop unacceptable harassment of human rights defenders in Occupied Palestinian Territory<sup>2</sup>

*United Nations independent experts today expressed grave concerns at continued reports that human rights defenders are being subjected to physical attacks, harassment, arrest and detention, and death threats, particularly in Hebron in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT), in an apparent bid by Israeli authorities and settler elements to stop their peaceful and important work. “Amidst a charged and violent atmosphere over past months in the OPT, Palestinian and international defenders are providing a ‘protective presence’ for Palestinians at risk of violence, and documenting human rights violations”*

*“The continued harassment of human rights defenders in the OPT, who are exercising their rights to freedoms of expression and association, is simply unacceptable. It should cease immediately”. “We recently addressed concerns to the Israeli Government regarding retaliatory acts by Israeli authorities against members of one organisation based in Hebron, Youth Against Settlements, after its Centre was subjected to raids and settlers allegedly called for it to be closed...The Centre has now effectively been shut down as a result of the Israeli military declaring the surrounding area a military zone ... We urge Israeli authorities to lift this military order.”*

16.12.2016

### Human rights defenders under growing legal pressure in the OPT – UN rights experts<sup>3</sup>

*The Special Rapporteurs drew special attention to the cases against Issa Amro, founder of the Hebron-based group Youth Against Settlements, and Farid al-Atrash, a lawyer from Hebron, who were arrested due to their participation in a peaceful protest in February of this year. Mr. Amro is currently facing trial in an Israeli military court on 18 charges dating back to 2010, including participation in a rally without a permit. “This relatively unusual practice of bringing up stale charges, which were not pursued many years ago, strongly suggests that Mr. Amro is being unfairly targeted due to his legitimate and peaceful human rights work,” the experts noted. “Mr. Amro has been subject to a concerted pattern of harassment and intimidation by the Israeli authorities aimed at inhibiting his work as a human rights defender,” they said recalling previous warnings from UN human rights experts. “This trial appears to form part of this same pattern.”*

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=45615>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=16906&LangID=E>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?LangID=E&NewsID=21041>

## Communications to governments

**2.08.2013:** Joint communication to the Israeli Government by the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression; the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association; the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders; the Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers; the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967; the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions; and the Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment<sup>4</sup> (Ref: ISR 7/2013)<sup>5</sup>

*Serious concern is expressed at the allegations of ongoing judicial harassment against Mr. Issa Amro and intimidation directed against him and members of Youth Against Settlement (YAS). Further serious concern is expressed at the possibility that this could be as a result of Mr. Amro's co-operation with UN bodies. Profound concern is expressed for Mr. Amro's life, physical and psychological integrity, given the seriousness of the recent attacks against him and the YAS center. Deep concern is expressed at the fact that Mr. Amro's treatment while in custody, if proven to be accurate, would amount to torture*

**28.05.2014** Joint letter to the Israeli government by: the on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression; the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association; the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders; the Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers; the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967; the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions; and the Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. (Ref: ISR 3/2014)<sup>6</sup>

*Grave concern is expressed at the alleged violent threats and intimidation, targeting members of YAS, including Mr. Amro. Further concerns are expressed that these threats are related to their legitimate and peaceful activities in documenting human rights violations.*

**08.12.2015:** Communication to the Israeli government by: Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression; the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association; the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders; the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967; the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions; and the Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment (Ref ISR 9/2015)<sup>7</sup>

*We are concerned by what appears to be a deliberate obstruction of the work of human rights defenders, intimidation and retaliatory acts, including death threats, arbitrary detention, and raids on the YAS center. We are concerned that these alleged acts would stifle the legitimate exercise of the rights to freedom of expression and association of the YAS Centre and exert a deterrent or chilling effect on its members and on other human rights organizations to exercise their rights and perform their functions*

**17.08.2016 Communication to the Israeli government by:** Working Group on Arbitrary Detention; the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression; the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association; the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders and the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967 (Ref ISR 9/2016)

*We express serious concern at the arrest and detention of Mr. Amro and Mr. Al-Atrash, which appear to be directly connected to the legitimate exercise of their rights to freedom of expression and freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, including through their human rights work with the organization Youth Against Settlement (YAS). We express further concern at the reported excessive use of force by the Israeli Army against protesters on 26 February 2016, and at the allegations that Mr. Amro was particularly targeted. We express further concern for Mr. Al-Atrash and Mr. Amro's life, their physical and psychological integrity, as well as at the continued harassment of members of YAS (as detailed in previous communications ISR 7/2013, ISR 3/2014, ISR 9/2015). We are also concerned that the criminalization of the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, and of freedom of expression, may have a chilling effect on civil society as a whole.*

<sup>4</sup> [https://spdb.ohchr.org/hrdb/24th/public\\_-\\_UA\\_Israel\\_02.08.13\\_\(7.2013\).pdf](https://spdb.ohchr.org/hrdb/24th/public_-_UA_Israel_02.08.13_(7.2013).pdf)

<sup>5</sup> [https://spdb.ohchr.org/hrdb/24th/public\\_-\\_UA\\_Israel\\_02.08.13\\_\(7.2013\).pdf](https://spdb.ohchr.org/hrdb/24th/public_-_UA_Israel_02.08.13_(7.2013).pdf)

<sup>6</sup> [https://spdb.ohchr.org/hrdb/27th/public\\_-\\_UA\\_Israel\\_28.05.14\\_\(3.2014\).pdf](https://spdb.ohchr.org/hrdb/27th/public_-_UA_Israel_28.05.14_(3.2014).pdf)

<sup>7</sup> [https://spdb.ohchr.org/hrdb/32nd/public\\_-\\_UA\\_Israel\\_08.12.15\\_\(9.2015\)\\_pro.pdf](https://spdb.ohchr.org/hrdb/32nd/public_-_UA_Israel_08.12.15_(9.2015)_pro.pdf)

# Reports

## 2013

### **11.03.2013 Report by the SR on torture A\_HRC-25-60/Add2**

*The Special Rapporteur regrets that the government of State of Israel has not responded to this communication dated 2 August 2013, thereby failing to cooperate with the mandate issued by the Human Rights Council. The communication referred to the alleged arrest, harassment, defamation and use of force employed against Mr. Issa Amro, a peaceful demonstrator and prominent Palestinian human rights defender on 20 March 2013. According to the information received, Mr. Amro was peacefully protesting when Israeli Security Forces (ISF) arrested him and other activists. It is reported that the other activist were released without bail and Mr. Amro was arrested on suspicion of inciting others to demonstrate and assaulting Israeli soldiers and an Israeli settler; Mr. Amro was released on bail the following day. The alleged facts detail multiple occasions when Mr. Amro was threatened with death and branded a terrorist, and summoned to court proceedings or for police interrogation. According to the information received, on 23 April 2013 Mr. Amro's face was spat on by an Israeli settler in the presence of an Israeli soldier that testified that Mr. Amro provoked the settler. It is further alleged that Mr. Amro's identity documents and those of a French television crew he was guiding around the Old City of Hebron were confiscated by Israeli soldiers; everyone's documents were returned except Mr. Amro's. Based on the information received, Mr. Amro complained about the non-return of his identity documents, was arrested for obstructing police work and transferred to the police station where he was beaten, including blows to the spine, until he collapsed. The information received notes that despite needing urgent medical attention, Mr. Amro was handcuffed to a stretcher and left for five and half hours before being taken to the hospital. During this time it is alleged that the ISF took pictures of and laughed at Mr. Amro while threatening that next time he would be shot. Additional allegations indicate that Mr. Amro and others were shot at with two live bullets which intentionally missed high and Mr. Amro was interrogated despite a request for postponement due to his weak condition following the police station beating.*

## 2014

### **28 February 2014 Report by the Special Rapporteur on HRDs, Ref. A\_HRC-25-55**

*The Special Rapporteur expresses serious concern at the allegations of ongoing judicial harassment against Mr. Issa Amro and the intimidation directed against him and members of Youth Against Settlement (YAS), as mentioned in the communication dated 2 August 2013. The Special Rapporteur would like to reiterate her concerns that this could be as a result of Mr. Amro's co-operation with UN bodies as expressed in the joint public statement published on 13 August 2013<sup>8</sup>. Furthermore, she reminds the Government of Israel that everyone has the right to "unhindered access to and communication with international bodies".<sup>9</sup> She would like to reiterate her concern for Mr. Amro's physical and psychological integrity, given the attacks against him and the YAS centre and the seriousness of the allegations, namely that he has received a number of death threats and that he was tortured while in custody*

### **27.08.2014 - Report of the Secretary General, Ref. A\_HRC\_27\_38**

*Issa Amro, founder of Youth Against Settlements and winner of the 2010 OHCHR Human Rights Defender of the Year in Palestine award, delivered two statements to the Human Rights Council at its twenty-third session, on 10 June 2013, and participated in a side event entitled "Human rights in Palestine" on 11 June 2013. On 8 July 2013, after his return to the country, Israeli soldiers confiscated Mr. Amro's passport and transferred him to the Israeli military police station in Hebron, where he was beaten until he collapsed, threatened with death and left handcuffed and lying on a stretcher for several hours before being taken to hospital. Mr. Amro was summoned to appear at the police station the next day and interrogated for several hours. On 25 July 2013, at least 12 Israeli soldiers allegedly invaded the Youth Against Settlements centre and harassed the persons present. The following day, Mr. Amro and three others were shot at in front of the centre and two days later several olive trees in the vicinity of the centre were set on fire.<sup>10</sup> At the time of finalization of the present report, no reply had been received*

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<sup>8</sup> "Israel must stop harassment, intimidation and abusive treatment of rights defender Issa Amro" (13/08/2013)

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=13626&LangID=E>

<sup>9</sup> A/HRC/RES/22/6/OP13

<sup>10</sup> A/HRC/25/74, case ISR 7/2013.

*from the Government to a joint communication sent on 2 August 2013 by a group of special procedures mandate holders.*

## **2016**

### **17.06.2016 Report of the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association (Ref. A/HRC/32/36/Add.3)**

*In connection with the members of the human rights organization, Youth Against Settlements, the Special Rapporteur reiterates his serious concern about their arbitrary detention and acts of intimidation, including death threats, against its members (ISR 9/2015). He reminds the Government of Israel of its negative obligation not to obstruct the exercise of the right to freedom of association and its positive obligation to ensure that civil society, including human rights defenders, can carry out their legitimate work free from undue restrictions.*

## **2017**

### **20.02.2017 – Report by the UN special Rapporteur on the situation on Human Rights Defenders, Michael Forst (Ref A/HRC/34/52/Add.1)**

*The Special Rapporteur has received a worrying number of complaints regarding human rights defenders who are arrested and, in many cases, arbitrarily detained in the OPT. He wishes to draw special attention to the cases against Mr. Issa Amro, founder of the Hebron-based group Youth Against Settlements, and Mr. Farid al-Atrash, a lawyer from Hebron, who were arrested due to their participation in a peaceful protest in February 2016. The Special Rapporteur welcomes the release on bail of Mr. Amro and Mr. Al-Atrash on 1 March 2016, however remains concerned that Mr. al-Atrash is still facing charges of participating in an illegal demonstration and attacking soldiers and Mr. Amro is facing trial in an Israeli military court on 18 charges dating back to 2010, including participation in a rally without a permit. Mr. Amro has been subject to a concerted pattern of harassment and intimidation by the Israeli authorities aimed at inhibiting his work as a human rights defender. This relatively unusual practice of bringing up stale charges, which were not pursued many years ago, strongly suggests that Mr. Amro is being unfairly targeted due to his legitimate and peaceful human rights work. In respect to this, the Special Rapporteur wishes to emphasize that charges of participation in a rally without a permit are nearly impossible to avoid for Palestinians in the West Bank who peacefully protest and oppose the occupation. The Israeli Military Order 101 (issued in 1967) effectively prohibits free association and assembly, in clear violation of the basic tenets of international human rights law. The Special Rapporteur calls upon the Government to ensure that legal proceedings are carried out in full compliance with the international guarantees of the fundamental freedoms of peaceful assembly and expression.*

### **16.03.2017 Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, Michael Lynk (ref. A/HRC/34/70)**

*Issa Amro - Founder of the Hebron-based Youth Against Settlements, a community organization advocating nonviolent action, Mr. Amro has recently been charged by the Israeli military on 18 counts including “insulting an Israeli officer” and “incitement” in connection with his work organizing peaceful protests calling for the re-opening of Shuhada Street in Hebron. Some of these charges are stale, dating back to 2010. During two of his recent arrests, he states that he was beaten by Israeli police while in custody. Amnesty International has called the charges against Mr. Amro baseless and an attempt to silence him.*