

BASSEM MOHAMMED ABD AL-RAHMAN TAMIMI

“Regardless of how just or unjust this ruling will be, and despite all your racist and inhumane practices and Occupation, we will continue to believe in peace, justice and human values. We will still raise our children to love; love the land and the people without discrimination of race, religion or ethnicity; [...] With love and justice, we make peace and build the future.” – Bassem Tamimi

Date of birth: 30 March 1967

Occupation: Deputy Head of Visa Department, Ministry of the Interior

Place of residence: Nabi Saleh

Marital Status: Married with four children

Date of arrest: 24 March 2011

Place of detention: Ofer Prison



Bassem Tamimi is a human rights defender whose trial began on Sunday 5 June 2011. Bassem is a veteran activist, protest organizer, and the coordinator of Nabi Saleh’s committee for the Popular Resistance Movement. Bassem is one of the foremost proponents of the nonviolent popular resistance movement against the Occupation today in the West Bank and is firmly committed to working with Israeli and international activists in their joint struggle to achieve peace and justice.

ARREST

Bassem was arrested on 24 March 2011 at 12:00 p.m. from his home in Nabi Saleh. Bassem had returned to Nabi Saleh from Ramallah in order to visit his mother and meet with a European diplomat in his home, who was due at 1:00 p.m. Just minutes after arriving home, however, Israeli Occupying Forces (IOF) surrounded his house. Around 25 soldiers entered his home, while nine jeeps and one tank waited outside. The soldiers did not present a warrant nor state the reason for arrest before seizing Bassem, whilst also hitting his wife and daughters, and pushing his elderly mother.

Bassem’s arrest came three weeks after the 6 March arrest of his cousin, Naji Tamimi, another leader of Nabi Saleh’s popular resistance, who has been sentenced to one year imprisonment and a fine of 10,000 shekels (\$2,914). The same night that Naji was arrested, soldiers had come searching for Bassem in his home and destroyed much of its contents when they did not find him there.

DETENTION AND TRIAL

Following his arrest, Bassem was taken to Ofer prison. He was detained for seven days before being brought before a judge for the first time. According to the transcript of his police interrogation, Bassem was accused during questioning of “consulting with lawyers and foreigners to prepare for his interrogation,” which reveals a clear disregard for due process rights, including the right to seek legal counsel. He has since been charged with incitement, organizing unauthorized marches, solicitation to throw stones, failure to report for questioning, and an excessive obstruction of justice charge for allegedly advising youth on how to act if under Israeli police interrogation. A military judge further ordered Bassem to be kept in remand until the end of legal proceedings.

After more than two months of detention, Bassem’s trial began on 5 June, during which he pleaded not guilty to the charges against him. As all the information available to the judge is undisclosed to Bassem and his lawyer, Bassem’s lawyer submitted a petition to appeal the secrecy of the file, in order for Bassem to exercise his legal right to defend all the specific charges against him. During the hearing at Ofer Military Court, Bassem read a statement describing the oppression he and his family have endured due to the Occupation and his reasons for organizing peaceful protests in Nabi Saleh. The military judge cut Bassem’s statement short and refused to submit the full version to the court stenographer. In reference to the charge against Bassem for failure to report for questioning, Bassem’s lawyer stated that it is not mandatory by law to report to the police if a request for interrogation is made by phone call, as was done in Bassem’s case, as anyone can pretend to be the police by phone. He further reiterated that Bassem refutes all the allegations against him.

The indictments against Bassem and Naji are largely based on coerced confessions of two minors, aged 14 and 15. The two youths were arrested in the middle of the night at gunpoint, beaten by soldiers, and denied legal rights during interrogation. In the case of the 14-year-old, his statement, which incriminated Bassem and Naji, was presented to him written in Hebrew, forcing him to sign a piece of paper he could not read nor understand.

A second hearing for Bassem’s case was held on 27 June 2011. No progress or changes were made during this hearing, as the judge ordered the trial to be postponed until 4 September 2011.

PREVIOUS ARRESTS

These recent events are not the first time that Bassem has been subjected to arrest, detention and harassment by the Israeli authorities in relation to his activism. On the contrary, he has been subjected to ongoing measures of harassment and intimidation in relation to his human rights advocacy, starting as far back as the First Intifada. This detention marks Bassem’s eleventh arrest by the Israeli army. He has never been convicted of any offence, and in all but one of his previous arrests he was held without



charge or trial in administrative detention. In total, he has spent almost three years in administrative detention, with the longest period lasting for eight consecutive months.

In 1993, Bassem was arrested on suspicion of killing an Israeli settler from Beit El and was later cleared of all charges. He was severely tortured under interrogation, which resulted in his collapse and put him in a coma for seven days. This episode left him with a serious brain injury and he was partially paralyzed for a brief period.

BASSEM'S FAMILY

As prominent activists and organizers of Nabi Saleh's resistance movement, Bassem and his wife, Nariman, have been targeted by the Israeli army in all facets of their lives. Nariman herself has been arrested on two different occasions. Despite being accused of obstructing soldiers and sentenced in January 2010 to six months' probation with a suspended sentence, requiring her to not take part in demonstrations, Nariman continues to document the weekly protests in Nabi Saleh and coordinate with activists throughout the West Bank.

She is also looking after their four children, who she says have suffered considerably from the trauma of their father and mother's arrests, particularly her oldest and youngest sons. Salam, only 5 years old, questions why he was named 'peace' when there is no peace around him. Waed, 14, is also deeply troubled, as there is fear that the Israeli army wants to arrest him next. Their daughter, Ahed, 10, is constantly scared of the soldiers returning to their house. All four children are active participants in the demonstrations, and Waed and Mohammed, 8, have both been hospitalized for injuries resulting from rubber-coated bullets and tear-gas projectiles fired by Israeli soldiers. Bassem's children's grades in school, like most of the children in the village, have consistently dropped. In addition, the house itself has been under a demolition order by the Israeli military since June 2010. While Bassem was detained in 1993, his sister died of a brain hemorrhage after being beaten by Israeli soldiers outside the Ramallah Military Court. Bassem's mother, Farha, wakes each night crying and screaming out for her imprisoned son and lost daughter.

Nariman is currently not permitted to visit Bassem in prison. Bassem's mother is not well enough to travel to visit him, and Nariman is afraid to send her children to visit him on their own in case they too get arrested.

But despite all that their family and the village as a whole face on a daily basis, the weekly protests still continue. Nariman comments that everyone in the village is a leader of these protests, even the children, as they all understand the shared purpose of ending the Occupation. Says Nariman: "We are a Palestinian family like all families in the world – looking for peace for our children. The army destroyed happiness for our children by arresting their mother and father. Bassem is like a knight with a weapon, who chose to throw his weapon away in order to fight for peace instead of war. We have tried to raise our children by instilling these values of peace, but we are afraid that the violence they



witness will only perpetuate more violence in their lives. Bassem is one of 6,000 prisoners in Israeli prisons and our call is for all of them to be free.”

NABI SALEH: UNDER ATTACK

Bassem’s arrest is part of a systematic attempt by Israel to silence the popular resistance movement in the village of Nabi Saleh, which has been active since December 2009. Since the beginning of weekly demonstrations protesting Israel’s expansionist policies and the creeping confiscation of their lands and water source by the nearby Halamish settlement, the 500 residents of Nabi Saleh have been subjected to arrests, regular night raids by Israeli forces, forced curfews and the use of new weaponry targeting the protestors. Arrests take place on a weekly basis, often in the middle of the night and often targeting minors. Approximately 80 people have been arrested on protest-related suspicions; at least 20 arrests occurred in the first three months of 2011, and half of these were minors. Children are the regular target of arrests by Israeli forces as the trauma of interrogation, especially in the middle of the night, often leads them to sign confessions under duress or in the belief that they will be released if they do so. These confessions are then used to incriminate the protest leaders, who are also subsequently arrested.

“**Human rights defenders**” are formally defined as persons who work, non-violently, for any or all of the rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Bassem clearly falls within the category, in that his activities are peaceful in nature and aimed at the promotion of human rights.

Addameer views Bassem’s imprisonment as a deliberate violation of his fundamental freedoms and special protections provided under international law for human rights defenders, particularly freedoms of movement, expression, association and non-violent assembly. Furthermore, as the charges against Bassem are based on coerced confessions of minors, Addameer considers the conduct of Bassem’s trial to be in violation of fundamental due process principles and human rights standards.

ACT NOW!

Here is how you can help Bassem Tamimi:

Write to the Israeli government, military and legal authorities and demand that Bassem Tamimi be released immediately, and that Israeli security authorities immediately cease their unlawful arrest and detention policies of Palestinian human rights defenders.

Contact details:



Mr. Benjamin Netanyahu, Prime Minister, Office of the Prime Minister, 3 Kaplan Street, PO Box 187, Kiryat Ben-Gurion, Jerusalem 91919. Fax: +972.2.651.2631/2.670.5475, E-mail: rohm@pmo.gov.il, pm_eng@pmo.gov.il

Mr. Yehuda Weinstein, Attorney General, 29 Salah al-Din St., Jerusalem, 91010. Tel: +972.2.646.6521/2, Fax: +972.2.646.7001

Mr. Ehud Barak, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defence, Ministry of Defence, 37 Kaplan Street, Hakiryia, Tel Aviv 61909, Israel. Fax: +972.3.691.6940, Email: minister@mod.gov.il

Mr. Avigdor Lieberman, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 9 Yitzhak Rabin Boulevard, Kiryat Ben-Gurion, Jerusalem 91035. Fax: +972.2.628.7757/ +972.2.628.8618/ +972.2.530.3367. Email: sar@mfa.gov.il

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Maj. Gen. Avi Mizrahi, OC Central Command Nehemia Base, Central Command, Neveh Yaacov, Jerusalem. Fax: +972 2 530 5741

Write to your own elected and diplomatic representatives urging them to pressure Israel to release Bassem Tamimi and to put an end to the ongoing harassment against Palestinian human rights defenders. Encourage diplomatic representatives to attend and monitor Bassem's trial hearings. Contact details for international embassies and consulates in Israel are available at: <http://www.embassiesabroad.com/embassies-in/Israel>.

For more information about Israeli arrest and detention of Palestinian human rights defenders, please visit our website www.addameer.info, or contact us directly:

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