



LPHR and Addameer significant update on Israel's military detention and prosecution of three female Palestinian students from Birzeit University



Layan Kayed; Ruba Asi; Elyaa Abu Hijla

London and Ramallah, 16 June 2021 - Lawyers for Palestinian Human Rights (LPHR) and Addameer Prisoner Support and Human Rights Association (**Addameer**) provide a significant update on the arbitrary military detention by Israel's military authorities of three young female Palestinian Birzeit University students.

Layan, Elyaa and Ruba have each received criminal convictions and varying excessive sentences by an Israeli military court on the basis of having exercised their basic human rights by participating in and affiliating with a democratic student association at Birzeit University. They also received suspended sentences on each of their charges for a period of five years.

- **Ms Layan Kayed (23-years-old) was sentenced to 16 months of imprisonment and fined 6,000 NIS (approximately \$1,820) on 21 March 2021. Layan has now been in continuous military detention for over a year, following her arrest on 8 June 2020.**
- **Ms Elyaa Abu Hijla (21-years-old) was sentenced to 11 months of imprisonment on 23 December 2020 and fined 1,500 NIS (approximately \$500). Elyaa was released on 10 May 2021, after over ten months in military detention since her arrest on 1 July 2020.**
- **Ms Ruba Asi (20) was sentenced to 21 months of imprisonment and fined 3,000 NIS (approximately \$1,000) on 3 May 2021. Ms Ruba Asi has now been in continuous military detention for close to a year, following her arrest on 9 July 2020.**

Guilty plea bargains were accepted by Layan, Elyaa and Ruba due to Israel's military courts lacking basic fair trial rights, as clearly indicated by its [conviction rate of over 99 per cent](#). LPHR and Addameer notes their trial dates were frequently postponed without the opportunity of a bail hearing; thereby increasing a further factor of arbitrariness into their military detention.



By way of background, all three female Birzeit University students were arrested within a month of each other and subsequently charged with participating in and affiliating with a student association. From the beginning of the military occupation in June 1967 through to July 2019, Israel's Defence Ministry has classified 411 organisations as "hostile," "unlawful" or "terrorist" associations under the Defence (Emergency) Regulations (1945). Members of designated organisations can be criminally charged for their membership in or affiliation with the group. Among the organisations so classified are all major Palestinian political parties, including the ruling Fatah party. University student groups have also been so designated.

In September 2020, LPHR and Addameer submitted a [complaint](#) to the United Nations Working Group for Arbitrary Detention on the Israeli military authorities ongoing unlawful arbitrary detention of Layan, Elyaa and Ruba. A decision from the UN Working Group is imminent.

The criminal convictions against Layan, Elyaa and Ruba are part of an [intensifying pattern](#) of the Israeli military authorities arbitrary detention of Palestinian university students for peaceful exercise of their basic human rights of freedom of assembly, association and expression. The use of arbitrary military detention and punishment appears purposeful to intimidate and deter other students from exercising their fundamental civil and political rights.

LPHR and Addameer emphasise that Layan, Elyaa and Ruba have been criminalised and received varying excessive sentences for exercising fundamental freedoms guaranteed by international human rights law. They have not had engagement with Israel's military authorities in the past. The effect of these sentences, lengthy and in harsh prison settings, will have a major impact on these young female students. We are deeply concerned about their well-being.

LPHR and Addameer will continue to work on aiming to protect Palestinians university students from ongoing illegitimate targeting and punishment, which appears to be widespread, systematic and in clear violation of basic international human rights law protections. LPHR has established a [Student Protection Project](#) to consolidate our work and focus on this specific human rights issue, with more details to follow soon.

About Lawyers for Palestinian Human Rights (LPHR)

[LPHR](#) is a UK legal charity that works on key projects to protect and promote Palestinian human rights.

About Addameer Prisoner Support and Human Rights Association (Addameer)

[Addameer](#) is a Palestinian non-governmental, civil institution that works to support Palestinian political prisoners held in Israeli and Palestinian prisons.