

Levantine Cultural Center  
5998 W. Pico Blvd.  
Los Angeles CA 90035

January 14, 2015

Honorable Judge Gershwin Drain,

I am writing to request leniency from you in the March 12 sentencing of Rasmea Odeh, who I know as a professional colleague and community leader. We met as members of the National Network of Arab American Communities, a project of ACCESS and the Arab American National Museum, in Dearborn, Michigan. I direct the Levantine Cultural Center in Los Angeles, where for over 13 years, we have served the greater Los Angeles area by presenting arts and education programs on the Middle East and North Africa. Welcoming people of all nations and religions, the Center fosters friendship and open dialogue, fights ignorance and intolerance, and forges a stronger, more diverse American society through programs and services that bridge political, cultural and religious divides.

The community-building and women's empowerment work that Rasmea Odeh has been doing in the Chicago area is absolutely exemplary and vitally needed. She is an individual of magnificent character, whose past has indeed come back to haunt her. I feel that the harm already done to Rasmea in this case has been egregious and unjust, and kindly request your understanding and leniency in her case.

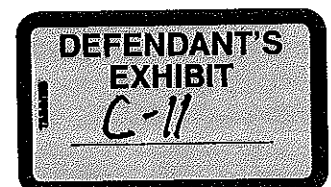
As a 67-year old woman, Rasmea's health suffered under the cold, damp, and uncomfortable conditions in the St. Clair County Jail, and should she lose her appeal, she would likely lose her citizenship and face deportation as well, effectively ending life as she knows it, cutting all her ties with family and community in Chicago. This punishment alone is so devastating, it should not be compounded by adding a prison term.

Rasmea is an award-winning leader of Chicago's immigrant community who has dedicated 50 years of her life to serving refugees wherever she has lived. In Chicago, she built the Arab Women's Committee, with some 600 members. Because of Rasmea's work, immigrant and refugee women who came to the US from countries facing war and political crises – like Iraq, Palestine, Yemen, Syria, and beyond – now have a place to seek support, gain empowerment and community, and call their home.

Respectfully yours,

**Jordan Elgrably**  
Executive Director

Levantine Cultural Center



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