



# Priests of the Sacred Heart

Provincialate Offices, United States Province  
7373 S. Highway 100, P.O. Box 289  
Hales Corners, Wisconsin 53130-0289

General Phone: 414-425-6910  
Fax: 414-425-2938

Mark Peters  
Director of Justice, Peace and Reconciliation  
Priests of the Sacred Heart, United States Province  
7373 S. Lovers Lane Road  
Franklin, WI 53132

January 26, 2015

Honorable Judge Gershwin Drain,

I am writing to request leniency from you in the March 12 sentencing of Rasmea Odeh, a community leader I have come to know through her work with the 8<sup>th</sup> Day Center in Chicago. I became involved with 8<sup>th</sup> Day in my capacity as the justice and peace coordinator for a men's religious order which has been affiliated with the center since the 70's.

Our order has been very involved in the issue of immigration, having many members who themselves are immigrants from Europe and Asia, and serving working with immigrants in Texas for decades. I heard Rasmea speak at the 8<sup>th</sup> Day Center last year and was impressed with her humanity, compassion, and willingness to speak out on behalf of others who suffer. She used her time of freedom to work for the betterment of her community in Chicago, and because of that work, immigrant and refugee women from countries facing war and political crises – like Iraq, Palestine, Yemen, Syria, and beyond – now have a place to seek support and gain empowerment and community.

Rasmea, 67, is a survivor of torture, and the isolation she endured while incarcerated was a great hardship and may have retriggered her Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). After her November 2014 conviction, Rasmea was detained for a month immediately following the verdict, including almost 3 weeks in solitary confinement, which was extremely difficult for her. The St. Clair County Jail, where she was held, lacks medical services and accommodations for senior citizens. I ask for compassion in her sentencing, which would serve justice in this case.

If Rasmea loses her appeal, she will likely lose her citizenship and face deportation. This would end life as she knows it, cutting all her ties with family and community in Chicago. I understand that there is a possibility of her conviction being overturned on appeal, so keeping her out of prison would allow her to continue as a contributing and productive person, doing the work that is so critical to hundreds of immigrant and refugee women in Chicago's Arab and Muslim community. Her friends have argued that this engagement is critical to her emotional health. Prison is not the place for her, and it would not benefit anyone to put her there. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully yours,

Mark Peters  
Director of Justice, Peace and Reconciliation, POSH/USA

