

Arab American Anti-Discrimination Committee, Chicago Chapter
Chicago, Illinois

February 2, 2015

Honorable Judge Gershwin Drain,

On behalf of the Arab-American Anti-Discrimination Committee, Chicago Chapter, I am writing to request leniency from you in the March 12 sentencing of Rasmea Odeh, who we know as community leader. Founded in 1980, the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC) is the largest Arab American grassroots organization committed to protecting civil rights, promoting mutual understanding, and preserving the Arab American cultural heritage.

Rasmea Odeh has been a long-time community leader who has worked tirelessly for immigrants, women, and the under-privileged, not just in her community but for all those in Chicago. Most of us on the ADC Chicago Board have known and respected Ms. Odeh for many years, and throughout that time she has always shown a sense of caring for all those she has come in contact with.

She 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 now have a place to gain empowerment and community, and call home.

After the court ruling in November 2014, Ms. Odeh was detained for a month immediately following the verdict, including almost 3 weeks in solitary confinement, which was extremely difficult for her. As a survivor of torture in the past and now a 67 year old woman, the recent incarceration in the St. Clair County Jail was a great hardship and may have retriggered her Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). We feel compassion in her sentencing will serve justice in this case, and urge you to please consider leniency.

If Rasmea loses her appeal, she will likely lose her citizenship and face deportation. This will end life as she knows it, cutting her ties with family and community in Chicago. This punishment alone is so devastating, we hope that it would not be compounded by adding a prison term.

Also, keeping her out of prison during her appeal would allow her to continue as a contributing and productive person, during the work that is so critical to hundreds of immigrant and refugee women in Chicago's Arab and Muslim community.

Respectfully yours,

Abder Ghouleh
ADC Chicago Board Member

