

February 9, 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 valued community leader in Chicago. For the past eight years, I have lived and worked in Chicago while completing a PhD at the University of Chicago. During this time, I have worked as a community organizer and adult education instructor, first with Southside Together Organizing for Power and, more recently, with the Chicago Anti-Eviction Campaign.

While working with these organizations, I've gotten to meet the Odeh family and have developed a deep appreciation and respect for their humility, generosity, and commitment to addressing the needs of those marginalized, particularly refugee immigrant women, within our society. In a city as racially segregated as Chicago, these values are in short supply and Rasmea's ability to live these values and instill them in others continues to be vitally important.

With Ramsey currently faces sentencing for a conviction of Unlawful Procurement of Naturalization, I ask that you consider leniency in determining a final sentence. The loss of citizenship and a subsequent deportation would cut all her ties with family and community in Chicago. As a person of Palestinian origin, she would be unable to return to her homeland, but would instead have to restart her life in a new country at 67-years old.

Furthermore, as an elderly woman, she would face particular hardship if sentenced to a long prison term. During the time period following the guilty verdict, her health suffered under the cold, damp, and uncomfortable conditions in the St. Clair County Jail, as they surely would in any facility lacking medical services and accommodations to provide for senior citizens.

As there is a strong possibility of her conviction being taken up on appeal, 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 immigrants, particularly refugee women, here in Chicago.

While you have a number of factors and competing interests to weigh in the course of sentencing proceedings, I hope you consider the profound impact she has had on some of Chicago's most vulnerable citizens in choosing leniency in your final decision.

Respectfully yours,

Toussaint Losier, PhD

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