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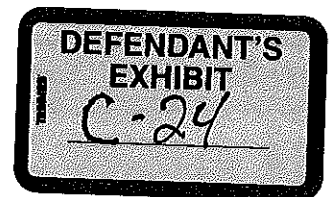
February 1, 2015

Dear Honorable Judge Gershwin Drain,

I am writing to request leniency from you in the March 12 sentencing of Rasmea Odeh. I am a senior professor at the University of Illinois, Chicago (UIC) and the chair of the Asian American Studies Program. I have extensive research and teaching experience focusing on issues related to immigrant women and women who have faced war and displacement, both in the U.S. and abroad.

I became aware of Rasmea Odeh's work over the past few years when I learned about the unprecedented leadership role she has been playing in Chicago to meet the needs of a large population of Arab immigrant women. In fact, there are few immigrant women in the United States who have positively transformed the lives of immigrant women to the extent Rasmea has. As a specialist in the study of immigrant women, I am extremely concerned that her condition of PTSD worsened while in detention and solitary confinement in November 2014 in St. Clair County Jail. I was outraged to learn of the cold, damp, and extremely unhealthy conditions within St. Clair County Jail where Rasmea's existing health conditions worsened and medical services and accommodations were sorely lacking. It is clear that Rasmea has managed and maintained her well-being and her PTSD over the past decade in the United States by establishing strong connections and ties to her community. I am deeply concerned that she will become even more ill with the isolation and conditions of imprisonment.

In fact, I have been following Rasmea Odeh's community work closely as one of my colleagues developed a project with Rasmea that allowed UIC to develop a collaboration with the Arab Women's Committee (the committee through which Rasmea has established herself as a model of community leadership and social service provision in Chicago). This project was funded by the Institute for Policy and Civic Engagement (IPCE) and allowed a UIC professor and several of our students to participate in workshops Rasmea was leading with immigrant women in Chicago. This was an incredible educational experience for our students. Many professors and students at the University of Illinois, Chicago were proud to know that our institution had the opportunity to be part of community work that assists immigrant women with their economic problems and the difficulties they face accessing the social services and language skills needed to survive their daily lives.



Rasmea is an important community leader whose work has impacted numerous lives so much so that last year, she received the prestigious "Outstanding Community Leader Award" from the Chicago Cultural Alliance for her four decades of work in empowering Arab women's lives in Chicago and abroad.

I truly hope that you will be able to consider the meaning of fairness and the protocols of international human rights as you make your decision. What she has already been through is more than any human being should have to endure — especially since her imprisonment in Israel was based on a forced confession. Now, she could lose her citizenship for an act she committed because of her PTSD (and her PTSD was excluded from her trial in Detroit in November 2014). Losing citizenship and deportation would destroy Rasmea because she will be taken away from her life line — her community work in Chicago. It would also devastate many Chicago communities who deeply respect her and rely on her leadership and skills for empowerment. To imprison Rasmea on top of this would only mean her destruction as a person and the destruction of a significant aspect of what makes life go on for many people in Chicago.

I request, in the most serious terms, leniency in the sentencing of Rasmea Odeh.

Respectfully yours,



Professor Anna Guevarra

