

Lynette A. Jackson, Ph.D.

February 4, 2015

Honorable Judge Gershwin Drain,

I am writing this letter to appeal to you to show leniency in your March 12 sentencing of Rasmea Odeh. I have known Ms. Odeh as a community activist and valuable member of the greater Chicago community for many years. I am a Professor of African history and Gender and Women's Studies at the University of Illinois at Chicago. Over the years, I have become familiar with the work that Ms. Odeh performs for Chicago's immigrant and refugee communities and for the Arab American women's community. As a long-time activist - in the Anti-Apartheid Movement back in the 1980s, African, African American and transnational feminist movements, the LGBTQ rights movement, the immigrant and refugee rights movement and the Palestinian Rights movement, I have a strong appreciation for Rasmea Odeh's work as a community leader and champion for the downtrodden in Chicago.

As I have become more aware of Rasmea's personal story, her very difficult history as a refugee, prisoner and survivor of torture in Israeli jails, I feel very strongly that she should receive mercy and compassion. Specifically, I am requesting that you, the presiding judge, will find it in your heart to show leniency in your sentencing of her. She, a frail 67 year old woman who, for many years served as a voice for multiple marginalized communities in Chicago, spent three weeks in solidarity confinement in a cold, damp cell in the St. Clair County Jail. She is being threatened with deportation to a place where her rights will not be respected, and where she has not lived for many decades. Rasmea is an exemplary member of the Chicago community and I pray that you will find it in your heart, motivated by the pursuit of justice, to show leniency in her sentencing.

Respectfully yours,
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