



8TH DAY CENTER FOR JUSTICE

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Dear Judge Drain,

February 7, 2015

We write to request leniency from you in the March 12 sentencing of Rasmea Odeh, who we've known as longtime a friend and colleague of the 8th Day Center for Justice.

8th Day Center for Justice is a Catholic organization that was founded in 1974 by religious men and women seeking a more just and peaceful world. This year, at 8th Day's 40th anniversary celebration, we awarded Rasmea Odeh with the *Sr. Mary Elsbernd Award*, a distinguished honor awarded to individuals who we believe personify the values of Passion, Relationship, and Imagination. The award is named after Sr. Mary Elsbernd, a Franciscan Sister who dedicated her life to preaching the Gospel message of love and justice. Rasmea Odeh's commitment to working for equality and justice within and beyond her community here in Chicago made her an unequivocal candidate to receive the honor in Sr. Mary Elsbernd's name.

8th Day has known and worked with Rasmea Odeh and the Arab American Action Network (AAAN) for many years as an ongoing partner and through our annual Urban Plunge program, a week-long immersion into justice work in Chicago. Each year when 8th Day visits AAAN during the Urban Plunge, participants (who are both religious and lay people) were touched by Rasmea's passion for making this city, country, and world a more just and loving place. She truly lives the Gospel message of compassion and love, both in her relationships and in her work on behalf of those who have been pushed to the margins of society.

We at 8th Day want to assure you that this pillar of Chicago's Palestinian community is no flight risk. On the contrary, Rasmea has a deep commitment to her community, to her supporters across the country, and to her own family members living in Chicago – two nephews and several cousins.

During her trial, the presence of dozens of members of the Arab Women's Committee (AWC) is a testament to the fact that Rasmea's connection to these women is not professional, but rather, very personal. As immigrants, the AWC has helped them overcome feelings of isolation and the bond between Rasmea and members of the Committee cannot be overstated. Her connection to this community of women is described by all of them as "like a family." This is why they left families at home in Chicago, and traveled 5 hours each way on buses to be with Rasmea during this difficult time. Their presence was a comfort to Rasmea, and her arrest and detention were devastating to them.

Countless other community members, from Chicago and beyond, also filled your courtroom and an overflow courtroom throughout the trial. Some hailed from Detroit and Dearborn, but most traveled much further to support Rasmea, a valued community leader. Time and again, Rasmea assured her supporters that no matter the outcome in her case, we must "be strong" and "stand together."

We stand with Rasmea and request leniency from you at her March 12 sentencing session. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

Liz Deligio
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8th Day Center for Justice Co-coordinator

Chris Eagan

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