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January 16, 2015

Honorable Judge Gershwin Drain,

I write to urge you to be lenient when you sentence Rasmea Odeh on March 12. My interest in this case is not that of a passive observer or close acquaintance of Ms. Odeh. Rather, I was contacted by her attorney after charges were brought to provide an affidavit relating to her torture by Israeli security forces and subsequent conviction in an Israeli military court (these issues fall within my areas of academic expertise) and, possibly, to testify as an expert witness at her trial. You declined both of these offerings.

Although you decided to exclude testimony and evidence about Ms. Odeh's experience of torture at trial, at the sentencing phase I urge you to regard this as a mitigating factor. In a context where torture was prevalent and systemic (i.e., the Israeli-occupied West Bank and the military court system used to prosecute and convict Palestinians), Ms. Odeh's experience was among the very worst on record. The effects of this experience have colored her entire life, and affected her mental health. The experience itself and the resultant effects are legitimate grounds for mitigation. I urge you to take this into consideration on March 12.

Sincerely,
Lisa Hajjar

Lisa
Hajjar

Digitally signed by Lisa Hajjar
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