

Rebecca Sanders
3027 W. Eastwood Avenue
Chicago, IL 60625

February 4, 2015

Dear Honorable Judge Gershwin Drain,

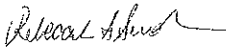
I am writing to request leniency from you in the March 12 sentencing of Rasmea Odeh, whom I am fortunate to know through my work with the Arab American community in Chicago. For six years, I served as the Executive Director of the Chicago Cultural Alliance (CCA), a consortium of Chicago area ethnic museums and cultural centers with a mission of building cultural understanding across communities; the Arab American Action Network is one of the founding members of CCA. Though I no longer serve as the CCA's executive director, I remain deeply committed to supporting the communities I represented at CCA, and I am connected to many of these communities through both my professional, volunteer, and civic roles.

Rasmea is a dynamic and warm person, revered for her quiet and steadfast leadership - both within her community and beyond. She has forged positive, meaningful relationships among Chicago's diverse communities, and the leaders of the Chicago Cultural Alliance's membership selected Rasmea for one of two 2013 Outstanding Community Leader Awards for this commitment. I met Rasmea early in my tenure at the Chicago Cultural Alliance. She is a warm leader and revered in her community for her care and leadership. She is not only a trusted role model for Arab and Muslim women, but for women across immigrant and underserved communities. The City of Chicago is a better place because of her contributions, and, while I cannot comment on the specifics of her case, I strongly believe that a prison sentence will achieve nothing positive for the State or the community.

Rasmea is an award-winning leader of Chicago's immigrant community who has dedicated 50 years of her life to serving refugees wherever she has lived. In Chicago, she built the Arab Women's Committee, with some 600 members. Because of Rasmea's work, immigrant and refugee women who came to the United States from countries facing war and political crises - like Iraq, Palestine, Yemen, Syria, and beyond - now have a place to seek support, gain empowerment and community and call their home. The incarceration of Rasmea would be a painful and substantive loss for these women.

Thank you for your consideration and review of my letter. I appreciate your compassion in Rasmea's case.

Respectfully yours,



Rebecca A. Sanders

