

# **Palestinian-Born Man Deported to Jordan; Technician Accused of Immigration Fraud; Lawyer Fears Torture in Amman**

The Washington Post

November 30, 2001 Friday, Final Edition

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**Section:** A SECTION; Pg. A29

**Length:** 932 words

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## **Body**

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U.S. immigration officials have deported a Palestinian-born man charged with immigration fraud from Texas to Jordan, where his U.S. lawyer fears he will be tortured by Jordanian authorities investigating his alleged ties to terrorist groups.

Ghassan Dahduli, 41, a computer technician and father of five from suburban Dallas, was accompanied by U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service agents on a flight to Jordan on Tuesday, said his Texas lawyer, Karen Pennington. Dahduli, who had been battling INS authorities over his status for more than a year, was arrested 11 days after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.

Although Dahduli has never been charged with any terrorist-related crime, he has acknowledged being friends in the 1980s with a close associate of terrorist mastermind Osama bin Laden.

Members of his family who were at the Amman airport to greet him Tuesday watched as he was escorted off the plane by INS agents and blue-suited Jordanian security men, Pennington said.

"All this raises concerns in my mind about whether [U.S. officials] are there to supervise his interrogation by the Jordanians using methods impermissible under U.S. law," she said.

Messages left at the Jordanian Embassy here were not returned this week. Human rights groups said the Jordanians have tortured some suspected terrorists and provided their statements to U.S. officials.

U.S. government officials, while declining to comment on Dahduli, denied arranging the torture of anyone.

"This is not an allegation that holds any merit," said INS spokesman Karen Kraushaar. "In this country we won't be involved in any form of torture. It's against the Constitution." She added that the agency requires agents to accompany deportees to the receiving country "if they're a flight risk or a risk to public safety."

Dahduli had been in this country for 23 years and worked for Freddie Mac, the federally chartered mortgage firm. He had been engaged in a year-long legal struggle with the INS, which accused him of fraud in obtaining his visa. Federal agents tried to persuade him to infiltrate terrorist groups for them, but he declined, Pennington said.

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At one point an FBI agent told Dahduli "you'll be treated a lot better by us than by the Jordanians," Pennington said.

Dahduli was arrested at his home in Richardson, Tex., on Sept. 22 and was ordered held without bond. Last month he agreed to be **deported** to **Jordan**, hoping he would be allowed to live free there, Pennington said.

Last year, authorities had stepped up their investigation of Dahduli after agents spotted his name in the address book of Wadih Hage, a close aide to bin Laden who earlier this month was sentenced to life in prison for his role in the 1998 bombings of the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, Pennington said. Dahduli and Hage had known each other only slightly from the 1980s, when they both lived in Tucson, she said.

But terrorism researcher Steven Emerson said the pair were close, fellow members of a Tucson Islamic center that raised funds for a bin Laden group then fighting the Soviets in Afghanistan. Some of the center's members went on to become key bin Laden operatives, Emerson said; one was Wa'el Hamza Jalaidan, who U.S. Treasury officials say was one of three founders of bin Laden's al Qaeda group and is now its "logistics chief."

For years Dahduli also was a leader of an Illinois-based organization called the Islamic Association for Palestine (IAP), which Israel, some members of Congress and former FBI counterterrorism officials say is a front for Hamas, the Palestinian terrorist group. Some speakers at IAP events have taken extreme anti-Jewish and anti-American positions.

A number of IAP's members have been questioned by the FBI over the years. But the IAP's chairman, Sabri Samirah, said the FBI has never targeted the IAP in any probe. "We deny any connection to Hamas," he said. "It's misinformation taken from pro-Israel Zionist groups." He acknowledged that the group's publications, Web sites and conferences have praised Hamas but said IAP is conveying the views of many Palestinians, adding, "it doesn't mean we support Hamas."

Samirah praised Dahduli as "a good family **man** who has no connection to terrorism and is suffering an injustice. . . . We **fear** for his safety and health in **Jordan**."

Jordanian officials have routinely **tortured** suspected terrorists, including alleged bin Laden associates on trial for allegedly planning bombings in Israel and **Jordan** during the millennium, Amnesty International said in a recent report. Some of the defendants said Jordanian security officers extracted confessions by beating suspects on the soles of their feet or hanging them upside down with their hands tied behind their backs, the Amnesty report stated.

Hanny Megally, head of the Middle East office of Human Rights Watch, said Dahduli's case is reminiscent of another, that of Hani Sayegh.

A Saudi **man** who U.S. and Saudi officials believe was involved in the 1996 bombing of a U.S. Air Force dormitory in Saudi Arabia that killed 19 American airmen, Sayegh was arrested in Canada in 1997. He then was brought to the United States after agreeing to testify.

But he reneged. Civil libertarians say U.S. officials, hoping the **fear** of being beheaded in his home country would prompt a confession, sent him to Saudi Arabia in 1999. Now he's in prison there facing bombing-related charges both in that country and in the United States.

Jaafar Allagany, spokesman for the Saudi Embassy, said any suggestion that the Saudis would **torture** Sayegh or anyone else is "nonsense."

## Classification

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Language: ENGLISH

Palestinian-Born Man Deported to Jordan; Technician Accused of Immigration Fraud; Lawyer Fears Torture in Amman

**Publication-Type:** Newspaper

**Subject:** TERRORISM (92%); IMMIGRATION (91%); US FEDERAL GOVERNMENT (90%); TERRORIST ORGANIZATIONS (90%); IMMIGRATION LAW (90%); DEPORTATION (89%); ARRESTS (89%); TORTURE (89%); INVESTIGATIONS (89%); SPECIAL INVESTIGATIVE FORCES (89%); CITIZENSHIP (78%); CRIMINAL INVESTIGATIONS (78%); LAW ENFORCEMENT (78%); LAWYERS (78%); LITIGATION (78%); TERRORIST ATTACKS (77%); SEPTEMBER 11 ATTACK (77%); AL-QAEDA (77%); SENTENCING (74%); HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANIZATIONS (73%); HUMAN RIGHTS (72%); PRISONS (72%); BOMBINGS (72%); HUMAN RIGHTS & CIVIL LIBERTIES LAW (71%); EMBASSIES & CONSULATES (71%); BAIL (70%); JAIL SENTENCING (70%)

**Company:** FEDERAL HOME LOAN MORTGAGE CORP (FREDDIE MAC) (64%)

**Organization:** US CITIZENSHIP & IMMIGRATION SERVICES (58%)

**Industry:** LAWYERS (78%); AIRPORTS (76%); MORTGAGE BANKING & FINANCE (61%)

**Person:** OSAMA BIN LADEN (57%)

**Geographic:** DALLAS, TX, USA (79%); AMMAN, JORDAN (73%); TEXAS, USA (92%); UNITED STATES (94%); JORDAN (92%); TANZANIA, UNITED REPUBLIC OF (79%); KENYA (79%); STATE OF PALESTINE (79%)

**Load-Date:** November 30, 2001