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Joint Public Statement

LPHR and Addameer statement providing a full update on the cases of three Palestinian human rights defenders: Mr Murad Shteivi, Ms Shireen Issawi and Ms Bushra al-Taweel

London and Ramallah, 21 May 2015 - Lawyers for Palestinian Human Rights (LPHR) and Addameer Prisoner Support and Human Rights Association (Addameer) provide the following update concerning three Palestinian human rights defenders whom we actively supported last year: Mr Murad Shteivi, Ms Shireen Issawi, and Ms Bushra Al-Taweel.

Our support primarily took the form of comprehensive complaints submitted to the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of Human Rights Defenders using the UN Special Procedures, and submissions made to diplomatic missions to take effective action under the EU/Norwegian/Swiss Guidelines for Human Rights Defenders.

Mr Murad Shteivi

As announced in our [public statement of 11 December 2014](#), **Murad Shteivi** was convicted and sentenced by an Israeli Military Court on 3 December 2014 to 9.5 months imprisonment and a fine of 10,000 NIS on charges of participating in and organising demonstrations, and a further suspended sentence in case he participates in demonstrations in the future.

LPHR and Addameer can confirm that Murad Shteivi was released from Megiddo prison on 22 January 2015, after being held in Israeli military pre-trial detention and post-conviction imprisonment for a total of 268 consecutive days.

LPHR and Addameer remain appalled that Murad Shteivi was convicted and sentence under Israel's repressive protest law, which effectively prohibits the exercise of the fundamental right to peaceful protest provided for by international human rights law. His case also highlights the ongoing threat and practice of human rights violations perpetrated by Israeli military authorities against Palestinian human rights defenders.

LPHR and Addameer are grateful for the support provided to Murad Shteivi by EU diplomatic missions in Jerusalem and Ramallah, who issued a [public statement](#) on 8 December 2014 expressing their concern at the conviction and sentence, stating:

“The EU missions are concerned that the imprisonment of Mr Shteivi, who is deeply committed to non-violence, is intended to prevent him and other Palestinians from exercising their legitimate right to protest.”

LPHR and Addameer also note that Murad Shteivi's conviction and sentence was cited in the latest annual [Foreign & Commonwealth Office Human Rights and Democracy Report](#).



LPHR and Addameer have conducted an interview with Murad Shteivi following his release from detention and imprisonment. This is published today (**at the end of this statement**), and it follows the publication of our first interview which took place immediately following his conviction on 3 December 2014. In the interview published today, Murad Shteivi expresses the following:

“My deepest thanks to everyone who supported me whilst I was in prison and to everyone who has recognised me as a human rights defender; it has had a great positive effect on my hearings and also in highlighting the issue of Kufr Qaddum within international forums and the global community. It also very much encourages me to continue peaceful measures to defend human rights.”

LPHR and Addameer will continue to monitor the situation facing Murad Shteivi and other residents of the village of Kufr Qaddum, as they engage in weekly peaceful protests to demand the reopening of the main road connecting the village to the city of Nablus, and to express their opposition to the Israeli military occupation and the detrimental expansion of the nearby illegal Israeli settlement of Qedumim.

Ms Shireen Issawi and Ms Bushra al Taweel

Ms Shireen Issawi and Ms Bushra al-Taweel are both devoted to promoting and protecting the human rights of Palestinian prisoners. Both their cases raise serious concerns that Palestinian human rights defenders are being targeted by Israeli authorities for arbitrary arrest and detention due to peacefully and legitimately exercising their fundamental right to freedom of expression on the significant human rights issue of Palestinian prisoner conditions and rights

Ms Shireen Issawi is a human rights lawyer and prominent advocate for Palestinian prisoner rights from occupied East Jerusalem who has participated in monitoring, documenting and advocacy on human rights violations committed by Israeli authorities against Palestinian prisoners in Israeli prisons.

Shireen Issawi was arrested by Israeli authorities on 6 March 2014 and has now been held in detention on remand for 15 consecutive months pending the completion of her trial. According to Israeli law, an individual can only be held in detention on remand for nine months from the day of her arrest. If court proceedings don't end within nine months, the State has to apply to the Israeli High Court to prolong detention on remand. On 20 January 2015 the Israeli High Court accepted the State's request to extend Shireen Issawi's detention on remand. On 27 April 2015, the Israeli High Court accepted a second State request to extend Shireen Issawi's detention on remand.

The current status of Shireen Issawi's trial is that the State's case has finished and that Shireen Issawi's defence case started last Friday 15 May 2015. Her trial began in October 2014.

Ms Bushra al-Taweel is a 21 year old female student and journalist who performs voluntary work for the Aneen Al-Qaid news organization which publishes information about Palestinian prisoner issues. She also performs voluntary work for the Prisoners Club and is a participant in



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a European Union sponsored project on documenting human rights violations specifically relating to human rights defenders.

Bushra al-Taweel was arrested by Israeli military authorities on 2 July 2014 and, after been held continuously in Israeli military detention for 319 consecutive days, was released on 17 May 2015. The decision to detain Bushra al-Taweel was made under Article 186 of Military Order 1651, which is made on the basis of secret evidence which is not disclosed to the prisoner or his/her lawyer.

LPHR and Addameer reiterates serious concerns that Article 186 of Military Order 1651 was impermissibly used against Bushra al-Taweel as grounds to arbitrarily re-arrest and detain her. We further take the firm position that as a result of the unfair Article 186 procedure, Bushra al-Taweel's right to a fair hearing was unlawfully impaired. LPHR and Addameer reiterates their position that Article 186 of Military Order 165 should be rescinded or amended so that it complies with international human rights law and basic due process standards.

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About Lawyers for Palestinian Human Rights (LPHR)

[LPHR](#) is a legal charity in the United Kingdom that works on legal projects aimed at protecting and promoting Palestinian human rights.

About Addameer Prisoner Support and Human Rights Association (Addameer)

[Addameer](#) is a Palestinian non-governmental, civil institution that works to support Palestinian political prisoners held in Israeli and Palestinian prisons.

For background information on these three cases, please visit the [Protect Human Rights Defenders page](#) of the LPHR website, or the Addameer website.

Please also see [Addameer's short video](#) about the human rights situation of Palestinian peaceful protesters in the occupied West Bank village of Kufr Qaddum.



LPHR and Addameer second interview with the Palestinian human rights defender, Murad Shteiwi

This interview was conducted on 18 March 2015. It followed Murad Shteiwi's release from prison on 22nd January 2015, after completing a 9.5 month sentence handed down to him by an Israeli military court following conviction on charges of participating in and organising demonstrations. The interview was conducted through e-mail between an Addameer representative and Murad Shteiwi. The interview was initially conducted in Arabic and translated to English.

This is our second interview with Murad Shteiwi. The [first interview](#) took place following his conviction on 3 December 2014, and is published on the LPHR and Addameer websites. Murad Shteiwi's conviction and sentence was notably cited in the latest annual [Foreign & Commonwealth Office Human Rights and Democracy Report](#). For further information on our work on Murad Shteiwi's case, please visit the [LPHR](#) and [Addameer](#) websites.

Q: Can you confirm the date of your release from imprisonment?

A: I was released on Thursday 22nd January 2015, at around 5:30pm, from Megiddo prison.

Q: How did you feel and what were your thoughts upon being released?

A: The taste of freedom is something that can only be felt by those who have suffered the horrors of prison. My feelings cannot be explained, I had doubts that I would be free before I was actually released. After the shackles were removed I could only think about the moment I would see my family and friends - who suffered as much as I did.

Q: What are your reflections on your period of Israeli military detention, imprisonment, conviction and sentence now that you have been released?

A: A feeling of injustice and oppression by the occupation forces, as I haven't committed an offence or violated any laws. Everything we do is legal and allowed under international law – there was no basis for a conviction. Additionally, my detention was a huge obstacle in my career and affected the new position I was supposed to hold at work (I was due to start on the same day of my arrest – 29th April 2014).

Q: Your military trial lasted five months and yet it had only five days of hearings. All this time you were detained in remand and refused bail. Do you think the length of delays during the trial and the refusal of bail was unfair?

A: The period of my trial lasted approximately 7 months. I was arrested on 29th April 2014 and my sentence was given on 3rd December 2014. During this period I had 19 hearings which included procedural hearings in addition to five trial hearing dates.. The delay and stalling tactics are common policies practiced by the occupation forces to put psychological pressure on the detainees.



Q: Part of your suspended sentence was a further suspended sentence if you participated in demonstrations after your release. How has this part of the sentence affected your protest activities since your release from imprisonment? Do you intend to obey or refuse this part of your sentence?

A: I believe in this type of peaceful resistance and I know that the occupation aims to suppress freedoms associated with procedures like sentencing or suspended sentences. These arbitrary practices will not affect my right to participate in the legal resistance against the occupation with my people.

Q: Have you returned to your role of the primary coordinator of the popular committee of Kufr Qaddum?

A: Yes and the demonstrations have continued.

Q: So the village of Kufr Qaddum still holds weekly peaceful protest demonstrations?

A: Absolutely. The demonstrations also continued whilst I was in detention.

Q: Do you and the villagers of Kufr Qaddum intend to keep organising and participating in peaceful demonstrations until the opening of the closed road?

A: The peaceful demonstrations began in order to achieve the goal of re-opening the main road to the village in 2003 and have been very well attended by the villagers. The peaceful demonstrations will not stop until that goal is achieved.

Q: Has there been any engagement and/or progress made with the Israeli military authorities in opening the closed road?

A: On the day of my arrest, I spoke to the occupation army commander regarding the suggestion to open the road to taxis and ambulances. The same subject was negotiated with the President of the municipal council and the Palestinian coordination but nothing was implemented. It was claimed the events in Jerusalem negatively affected the process.

Q: Have you or any of the residents of your village suffered harassment or violence by the Israeli military authorities since your release? If so, can you give details?

A: Since the day of my arrest, the occupation forces and officers have continued to send indirect messages, through the residents of the village, with regard to me being responsible for organising the demonstrations - the latest incident was when my nephew was crossing a military checkpoint. On 13th March 2015, I was injured in the neck by the splinter of a bullet shot by a soldier while he was trying to suppress the demonstration.

Q: You have been recognised as a human rights defender by EU diplomatic missions and the UK Foreign Office. What importance does this official recognition from European governments have for you? Does it encourage you to continue your peaceful work to defend human rights?

A: My deepest thanks to everyone who supported me whilst I was in prison and to everyone who has recognised me as a human rights defender; it has had a great positive effect on my hearings and also in highlighting the issue of Kufr Qaddum within international forums and the global community. It also very much encourages me to continue peaceful measures to defend human rights.



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Q: In our interview with you on the date of your conviction, we asked if you had a message for the people of Kufr Qaddum and to the world regarding your arrest and detention. You said the following: 'I am honoured to hold this responsibility, and the freedom of movement is a legitimate right guaranteed by all international laws. The peaceful protests are a right as well to demand your rights. I ask the world to increase their solidarity in support of the Palestinian cause to end the occupation, and to shed light on Israeli state terror imposed on children, elderly and women, and the land. I also call on the people of Kufr Qaddum to hold on to their rights and continue to claim them.' Do you have anything you would like to add to this message now that you have been released?

A: I call on all of the international bodies to protect my people and the residents of Kufr Qadoun from the continuous oppression we suffer from by the occupation forces. Our demonstrations started in 2011 and have continuously been peaceful. However, the occupation has escalated the oppression methods to the point that live bullets are fired, without taking children, young men and women or anyone into consideration. Between July 2014 and March 2015, 35 civilians were shot. This clearly shows the occupation will continue, even if it involves escalating mechanisms to the point of murder.