

24 July 2020

## Occupied Palestinian Territories: Arbitrary detention of anti-corruption human rights defenders

On 22 July 2020, the Ramallah Magistrate Court extended the detention of the anti-corruption human rights defenders **Jihad Abdo** and **Fayez Swaity** for an additional 15 days. The two defenders were initially detained on 19 July 2020 whilst peacefully protesting, and have been charged with 'illegal gathering' and 'violating the emergency laws'.

Jihad Abdo is a co-founder of the [The Coalition of Civilized Demand for Fair Palestinian Telecom Sector](#) (*Bekfi ya shrikat alitissalat* - Enough Communication Companies), a movement which was established to demand fair competition in the Telecom sector in Palestine and to defend the economic rights of Palestinians. He regularly participates in organising peaceful demonstrations calling for an end to corruption within the Palestinian Authority and the Palestinian telecom sector. Fayez Swaity is the founder and director of the Palestinian association 'Together Against Corruption'. His activities focus on investigating and documenting corruption in the Palestinian Authority.

On 19 July 2020, several movements organised a peaceful demonstration in Ramallah under the title 'enough is enough', demanding an end to corruption and nepotism issues within the government. The organisers stated that they would commit to observing social distancing measures in the context of COVID-19. However, before the protest began, approximately 25 participants were arbitrarily detained, including the defenders, and taken to the Ramallah Police Directorate detention facility. There they were held in crowded cells, with no consideration for recommendations regarding social distancing. Jihad Abdo and Fayez Swaity began open-ended hunger strikes in protest against their arbitrary detention. On 20 July 2020, the Public Prosecution charged the two defenders with 'illegal gathering' and 'violating the emergency laws' and extended their pre-trial detention for 48 hours.

On 21 July 2020, Jihad Abdo was transferred to hospital as his health had deteriorated since being detained. On 23 July 2020, the human rights defenders were allowed to see their lawyer for the first time since they were detained. On 22 July 2020, the Magistrate Court of Ramallah extended the pre-trial detention of the human rights defender for an additional 15 days. The following day, the same court refused the request to release Jihad Abdo on bail regarding his unstable health condition. Neither defender was permitted to be visited by family members and were only allowed to communicate with them through short phone calls.

Human rights defenders and members of the movements 'together against corruption' and 'the Coalition of Civilized Demands for Fair Palestinian Telecom sector' have previously been [harassed](#) and arbitrarily detained. On 5 July 2020, Fayez Swaity was detained for a week after he was summoned by the General Intelligence Department in Hebron. He is still facing the charge of 'defaming the public authority' regarding his social media posts criticising the corruption within Palestinian Government sectors, and advocating for the economic and social rights of Palestinians. Jihad Abdo has also been detained several times in the past regarding his peaceful human rights activities.

Front Line Defenders is deeply concerned regarding the harassment and arbitrary detention of human rights defenders and members of the different Palestinian human rights movements by the

authorities. Front Line Defenders believes that the arrest of Jihad Abdo and Fayeز Swaity is solely regarding their peaceful and legitimate human rights activities.

**Front Line Defender urges the Palestinian authorities to:**

1. Immediately and unconditionally release Jihad Abdo and Fayeز Swaity and drop the charges against them, as Front Line Defenders believes they are being held solely as a result of their legitimate and peaceful work in defence of human rights;
2. Ensure that the treatment of Jihad Abdo and Fayeز Swaity, while in detention, adheres to the conditions set out in the *'Body of Principles for the Protection of All Persons under Any Form of Detention or Imprisonment'*, adopted by UN General Assembly resolution 43/173 of 9 December 1988;
3. Provide Jihad Abdo with the necessary medical treatment he requires;
4. Allow both Jihad Abdo and Fayeز Swaity immediate and unfettered access to their families and lawyers;
5. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in the Occupied Palestinian Authority are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions [including judicial harassment].

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