

**DUBLIN**

Front Line Defenders – Head Office
Second Floor, Grattan House
Temple Road, Blackrock
Co. Dublin, A94 FA39, Ireland

info@frontlinedefenders.org
www.frontlinedefenders.org

phone +353 1 212 3750
fax +353 1 212 1001

BRUSSELS

Front Line Defenders – EU Office
Square Marie-Louise 72
1000 Brussels
Belgium

euoffice@frontlinedefenders.org
www.frontlinedefenders.org

phone +32 2 230 9383
fax +32 2 230 0028

13 November 2020

OPT/Israel: Administrative detention of woman human rights defender Khitam Saafin

On 9 November 2020, an Israeli military commander ordered woman human rights defender **Khitam Saafin** to be placed under administrative detention for six months. This was reduced to four months the following day upon review. The detention was based on “secret” evidence, that has yet to be made known to her or her lawyer.

Khitam Saafin is a women’s rights defender, president of the Union of Palestinian Women’s Committees and member of the General Secretariat of the General Union of Palestinian Women. Her work focuses on empowering Palestinian women and advocating against human rights violations resulting from the Israeli occupation.

On 2 November 2020, several Israeli soldiers raided the house of Khitam Saafin in Al-Bireh in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT) and arrested her. Without being informed of the charges she faces, she was transferred to Hasharon Prison in Israel, in breach of the IV Geneva Convention, which prohibits the transfer of prisoners out of occupied territory. While the woman human rights defender has had access to her lawyer, she has not been permitted to receive family visits. According to her lawyer, the Red Cross will apply for a permit from the prison administration to grant her visitation rights.

On 9 November 2020, an Israeli military commander ordered Khitam Saafin to be placed in administrative detention for six months. The order was made on the basis of alleged secret evidence, which has not been disclosed to the woman human rights defender or her lawyer. Administrative detention is a policy used by the Israeli authorities in the OPT, where individuals can be detained for up to six months without charges; the detention can be renewed repeatedly without end. Administrative detention is considered to be a punitive tool used by the Israeli occupying authorities to suppress peaceful and legitimate human rights activities of Palestinians. On 10 November 2020, a Khitam Saafin’s administrative detention was reduced from six to four months, following a review.

Woman human rights defender Khitam Saafin has been frequently harassed by Israeli authorities. In July 2017, she was placed in administrative detention for three months, in a case also based on secret evidence.

Front Line Defenders is deeply concerned by the recent administrative detention of Khitam Saafin. It believes that the woman human rights defender is being targeted by the Israeli authorities solely as a result of her peaceful and legitimate work in defence of human rights.

Front Line Defenders urges the Israeli authorities to:

1. Immediately and unconditionally release Khitam Saafin, as Front Line Defenders believes that she is being held solely as a result of her legitimate and peaceful work in the defence of human rights;
2. Prior to securing her release, allow Khitam Saafin immediate and unfettered access to their families and lawyers;

3. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in OPT/Israel are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions.