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Israel/OPT: Attacks and Defamation Campaign against human rights defenders in Hebron

On 18 July 2021, human rights defender **Badie Dweik's** camera was broken by 4 settlers while he was documenting an attack against Palestinian families in the area of Tel Rumaida, Hebron. This incident follows a defamation campaign that was started few days earlier against the organisation Human Rights Defenders Group, of which he is a co-founder. On 12 July 2021, an article written by Yishai Friedman from the Jewish press defamed human rights defenders Badie Dweik, **Imad Abu Shamsiyya** and B'Tselem. According to the article, the Human Rights Defenders Group sympathizes with terrorists, expresses antisemitism, and spreads hate against Israel.

[Imad Abu Shamsiyya](#) and [Badie Dweik](#) are co-founders of the Human Rights Defenders Group, a non-partisan group that aims to document and expose violations of international law and injustice in conflict areas under Israeli occupation. The human rights defenders are long-standing activists in Palestine and former volunteers at B'Tselem, the Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories, where they were involved in documenting the occupation of Tel Al-Rumeida, in Hebron.

On 18 July 2021, human rights defender Badie Dweik's camera was destroyed by settlers who wanted to stop him from documenting the attack that they were pursuing against Palestinian families in the area of Tel Rumaida, Hebron. When the human rights defender started recording the incident, a settler grabbed the screen of the camera from behind him and tried to take it from him. Three other settlers joined him. Badie Dweik tried to protect the camera with his body by keeping it close to his chest. The screen of the camera broke off as the first settler was still holding on to it. The settlers were escorted away from the human rights defender by soldiers who observed the incident, although they were not detained. The whole incident took place in an area that is completely under Israeli security control and not far from an army security camera.

On 12 July 2021, an article written by Yishai Friedman, editor of the right-wing newspaper Shvi'i, defamed human rights defenders Badie Dweik, Imad Abu Shamsiyya and B'Tselem. According to the author, the fact that B'Tselem recruited a Palestinian activist like Imad Abu Shamsiyya, raised many questions about the role of such organisations in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, as the organisation relies on Palestinian sources to produce information, photos, and testimonies. According to the article "Imad Abu Shamsiya works to disrupt order and demonstrates against settlers and soldiers. He works for the Israeli organization B'Tselem and is active in a Palestinian organization called the "Human Rights Defenders Group", which expresses sympathy with Palestinian terrorists. The founder of the organization is Badie Dweik, an activist from Hebron, and its aim is to document human rights violations. The members of the organization are fighting settlements and the separation wall. However, the founders of the organization does not hide their sympathy for terrorists, and express anti-Semitism, and hate against Israel".

Front Line Defenders is deeply concerned regarding the defamation campaign and the attacks against human rights defenders Badie Dweik and Imad Abu Shamsiyya. Front Line Defenders believes that the defamation campaign and the attack were initiated against them solely as a result of their peaceful and legitimate human rights work.

Front Line Defenders urges the Israeli authorities to:

1. Publicly condemn the defamation campaign against human right defenders Badie Dweik and Imad Abu Shamsiyya;

2. Carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the attack of Badie Dweik on 18 July, with a view to publishing the results and bringing those responsible to justice in accordance with international standards;
3. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in OPT are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions.