

18 January 2022

OPT/Israel: Health of woman human rights defender Shatha Odeh Abu Fannouneh deteriorating

Court hearings that were scheduled for 17th and 20th January 2022 at Ofer Military Court, for woman human rights defender **Shatha Odeh Abu Fannouneh** have been postponed. The reason for the postponements was neither given to the woman human rights defenders lawyers nor to her family but the family have learned from other sources that it was due to the fact that Shatha Odeh Abu Fannouneh has contracted COVID and is in isolation. The health condition of the woman human right defender remain unknown. She is currently detained in Damoun Female Prison in Haifa, with her next hearing due to take place on 1 February.

Shatha Odeh Abu Fannouneh is a woman human rights defender and the Director of the Health Work Committee, an organisation working to deliver health services to Palestinians in remote areas of the West Bank. The health organisation focuses on many issues including women's and children's health.

[Shatha Odeh Abu Fannouneh's](#) family were not officially notified of the reason for the postponement of the hearings, but through sources they have learned that she has contracted COVID-19 and is currently in isolation. Over the past three months, Shatha Odeh Abu Fannouneh family were only able to contact her on the phone twice, respectively on 13 December 2021 and on 4 January 2022. They are not being kept informed of her health and well-being, which causes great concern to them as she is older and suffers from underlying health conditions, including hypertension, hyperlipidaemia, diabetes mellitus, and irritable bowel syndrome. They have to rely on Facebook post from lawyers visiting the prison to hear about the general well being of the woman human rights defender. Israeli Prison authorities denied Shatha Odeh Abu Fannouneh request for one of her medications and was only given access to it on 15th July 2021 after her lawyer presented a report explaining its importance. Since the start of her detention, Shatha Odeh Abu Fannouneh has lost about twenty kilos.

In the early hours of 7 July 2021, Shatha Odeh Abu Fannouneh was forcibly and arbitrarily removed from her house in Ramallah, Palestine, and has remained in detention since. On 26 July 2021, during the third hearing of Shatha Odeh Abu Fannouneh the military prosecution presented five charges against her including "holding a position in an unlawful association", "presence in a public event on 14 May 2019", "receiving and bringing funds illegally into the area", "receiving funds and support fraudulently" and "the fraudulent use of documents". The charges brought against the woman human rights defender are linked to an announcement by the Israeli military commander on 22 January 2020, in which he stated that the HWC was an "unlawful organisation".

Front Line Defenders is deeply concerned regarding the health of Shatha Odeh Abu Fannouneh. and believes that the detention of the woman human rights defender is solely based on her peaceful and legitimate human rights work, and that the charges against her reflect both an escalating policy by Israeli authorities of criminalizing Palestinian human rights defenders and organisations on terrorism-related charges.

Front Line Defenders urges the Israeli authorities to:

1. Immediately and unconditionally release the woman human rights defender Shatha Odeh Abu Fannouneh, as it is believed that she is being held solely as a result of her legitimate and peaceful human rights work;
2. Allow the woman human rights defender immediate and unfettered access to her families and lawyers and make sure she is provided with adequate medical treatment
3. Ensure that the treatment of the woman human rights defender 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;
4. Cease targeting all human rights defenders in OPT/Israel and guarantee in all circumstances that they are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions - including judicial harassment.

Front Line Defenders respectfully reminds you that the United Nations Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, adopted by consensus by the UN General Assembly on 9 December 1998, recognises the legitimacy of the activities of human rights defenders, their right to freedom of association and to carry out their activities without fear of reprisals. We would particularly draw attention to Article 6 (b): "*Everyone has the right, individually and in association with others: (b) As provided for in human rights and other applicable international instruments, freely to publish, impart or disseminate to others views, information and knowledge on all human rights and fundamental freedoms*", and to Article 12 (2): "*The State shall take all necessary measures to ensure the protection by the competent authorities of everyone, individually and in association with others, against any violence, threats, retaliation, de facto or de jure adverse discrimination, pressure or any other arbitrary action as a consequence of his or her legitimate exercise of the rights referred to in the present declaration.*"

Please inform us of any actions that may be taken with regard to the above case.

Yours sincerely,



Andrew Anderson
Executive Director