



**UNJPPI**

United Network for Justice and Peace  
in Palestine and Israel

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**DELIVERED BY EMAIL**

The Hon. Karina Gould, P.C., M.P.  
Minister for International Development  
House of Commons  
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

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Dear Minister Gould,

**Re: Issa Amro and Canadian Funding for Courts in the West Bank**

New Year Greetings from the United Network for Justice and Peace in Palestine and Israel ('UNJPPI'), a grassroots network of United Church of Canada members and friends working for a just peace in Palestine/Israel.

Many UNJPPI members have visited Israel and the Israeli occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem ('WB&EJ'). Some of us served there with the World Council of Churches as ecumenical accompaniers ('EAs'). Whether there as EAs or as Come and See pilgrims we have seen the distressful impacts of the now 53 year old Israeli military occupation on the lives of Palestinians.

Some of us who served in or visited Tulkarm in the northwest West Bank have seen the beautiful courthouse constructed there with Canadian funding. As reported by CBC correspondent Margaret Evans, Canada is also funding the construction of a beautiful courthouse in Hebron.

Without doubt, assisting the Palestinian Authority with the construction of judicial infrastructure and how to administer a fair judicial process is an important undertaking, but from the experience of EAs and many other people knowledgeable about what is happening to Palestinians in the West Bank, the court system with the greatest impact on them is the Israeli military courts in which the procedures are clearly not fair and not in compliance with internationally recognized standards. The result is a conviction rate of over 99%.

Issa Amro is a very recent example of the oppression that is experienced by Palestinians in Israeli military courts. Mr. Amro is a Palestinian human rights activist. He is the co-founder of Youth Against Settlements in Hebron and is formally

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acknowledged as a Palestinian Human Rights Defender. In 2010 he was recognized by the United Nations as “Human Rights Defender of the Year”.

Mr. Amro’s trial before the military court on 16 charges had been ongoing since August 2016. Amnesty International said the charges against him were “politically motivated and linked to his peaceful work in exposing Israel’s human rights violations”. They also described the charges as “baseless” and “physically impossible”. Nonetheless, on January 6 the military court convicted Mr. Amro of 3 counts of “participating in a rally without a permit,” 2 counts of “obstructing a soldier,” and 1 count of “assault”. He is scheduled for sentencing on February 8<sup>th</sup>.

Mr. Amro is not the first human rights defender working on behalf of Palestinians to have been tried in Israeli military courts. Many others have suffered a similar fate, as have thousands of other Palestinians, including children. Defense for Children International – Palestine reports that up to 700 children are arrested each year. Like others arrested, they are not given prompt access to a lawyer and often suffer mistreatment amounting to torture.

To help bring justice for Mr. Amro, we suggest that Canada’s representative make a public appearance at Mr. Amro’s sentencing hearing. For more systemic judicial change for all West Bank Palestinians, it would be helpful if Canada were to publicly state that the procedures in Israeli military courts are not in compliance with international standards. These are small but quick steps Canada can take to help bring justice for Palestinians.

We would appreciate an opportunity to meet to discuss other steps Canada might take.

Yours respectfully,

George Bartlett  
Chair  
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