

Affidavit No. 7465/2012

Sworn Statement

After having been warned to tell the truth and nothing but the truth or else I shall be subjected to penal action, I, the undersigned, Eman Diyab Abd al-Hajj, of Palestinian nationality, holder of ID No. 802260281, born on 7 April 1989, a youth activist, and a resident of the al-Nuseirat refugee camp, Central Gaza governorate, would like to declare the following:

At around 4:30 pm on Wednesday, 9 May 2012, I went to the Dar al-Basha Archaeological Museum, opposite the al-Zahra' parking lot in the al-Daraj neighbourhood east of Gaza city. I wanted to attend the closing ceremony of the Palestine Literature Festival, organised by the Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (PACBI). Launched on Saturday, 5 May 2012, the Festival brought together Palestinian civil society organisations, literary figures, and writers. With the PACBI delegation, I have participated in artistic and literary activities in universities throughout Gaza, as well as at the Rashad al-Shawwa Cultural Centre in the centre of Gaza city. Around 43 Arab activists, including artists, literary figures, poets and members of the Egyptian Eskendrella Music Band, took part in the Festival. Guests included Mr. 'Amro 'Izzat, a journalist from the Egyptian *Al Yawm as Sabe'* (Seventh Day) newspaper, and Mr. 'Ala Abdul Fattah, an Egyptian blogger and political activist.

The closing ceremony, which was organised at al-Basha Palace, brought together a large number of activists, bloggers, and writers from the Gaza Strip. Almost 200 male and female participants took part in the event. The closing ceremony was launched with a welcome statement by Doctor Haydar 'Eid, a member of the Palestine Literature Festival organising committee. Because electricity was cut off, organisers turned on an electricity generator. Doctor Ahdaf Sweif, a member on the PACBI delegation, introduced speakers in the closing ceremony. Doctor Sweif was introducing the speakers at the event. Then Doctor Amro 'Izzat spoke about the geographical borders of the Arab world, the Israeli Siege on the Gaza Strip and about how the Hamas government violates the rights of its people. He said "those who suppress their people cannot liberate their country" and the people engaged in rapturous applause. It was then that I saw a large number of Hamas security officers in civilian clothing taking photographs of the attendees. Professor 'Ala' Abdul Fattah then spoke about borders and his personal experience crossing Erez checkpoint with his son and then he spoke about freedoms and rights in the Gaza Strip and how they are not respected by the Hamas government, especially due to the ongoing Arab Spring. It was then that the members of the Hamas Security force cut the electricity and spread among the attendees forcing them to leave and ending the event. The visiting delegations and the organisers then began arguing with the security personnel about the inappropriate behaviour towards the attendees despite the fact that the event had been organised with the approval of the Hamas government.

A security officer addressed Mr. 'Amro 'Izzat, saying: "Now you will see exactly how we oppress freedoms... You uttered slander against the Gaza government."

The security officer then spoke on a wireless telecommunications device and requested an additional security force. I heard the other speaker on the wireless device saying: "Beware, the security officers should not harm the Egyptians and the delegation... The Palestinians: crush them."

Security officers pushed the audience outside the hall and uttered obscene words and improper expressions to female participants. Then, I saw security officers confiscating a video camera from a young woman, who was taking footage of the event. In protest against the cruel treatment and expulsion of the delegation and audience out of the ceremony hall, participants

started to chant: "The people want to end the division", "The people want the fall of the regime", and "Down with the military rule".

Later, a large force of security officers arrived in white buses and evacuated the hall. While uttering indecent expressions, security officers pushed participants out by force.

This is my declaration, which I hereby sign, 15 May 2012

Signature: Eman al Hajj

Name not withheld

Field researcher: Mohammed Abu Rahmah