



Ramallah, May 30, 2018

Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

Palais Wilson
52 Rue des Pâquis
CH-1201 Geneva, Switzerland

**Re: Joint Allegation Letter and Urgent Action Request – Interception of Gaza ‘Freedom Boat’
by Israeli Naval Forces on 29 May 2018**

To the attention of:

- The Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian Territory occupied since 1967, **Mr. Michael Lynk**,
- The Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, **Mr. Seong-Phil Hong**, Chair-Rapporteur,
- The Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, **Mr. Dainius Pūras**,
- The Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, **Mr. Nils Melzer**,
- The Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, **Mr. David Kaye**,
- The Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, **Mr. Clement Nyaletsossi Voule**, and
- The Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, **Ms. Agnes Callamard**;

Dear Mr. Lynk, Mr. Hong, Mr. Pūras, Mr. Melzer, Mr. Kaye, Mr. Voule, and Ms. Callamard,

It is with grave concern that we direct this allegation letter and urgent action request to your mandates on behalf of the Palestinian Human Rights Organizations Council (PHROC), in relation to Israel’s interception by the Israeli naval forces on Tuesday, 29 May 2018.

In a peaceful attempt at challenging Israel’s prolonged closure, which will enter its twelfth year in the coming days, Gaza’s ‘Freedom Boat’ was launched as a peaceful initiative, carrying aboard students, patients, and Palestinians injured by the Israeli occupying forces during the Great Return March, in an effort to highlight the unliveable conditions created as a result of Israel’s prolonged closure of the Gaza Strip, amounting to collective punishment in violation of international humanitarian law.

The 'Freedom Boat' left Gaza's shore at around 12:25 pm, local time, on Tuesday, 29 May 2018, heading to Cyprus with 17 Palestinians on board, including seven patients, one of them a cancer patient, a patient companion, five activists, including students, and four Palestinians making up the boat's crew. Around 4:00 pm, the boat was reportedly intercepted by the Israeli naval forces, after reports that warning shots may have been fired. The vessel was surrounded by four Israeli warships and seized at about 14 nautical miles off Gaza's shore, where all 17 Palestinians on board were detained. The 'Freedom Boat' was then directed by Israel's naval forces to the port of Asdod.

At approximately 12:30 am, local time, the Israeli occupying authorities released 14 of the 17 Palestinians on board, including patients and students, at Beit Hanoun "Erez" checkpoint in the northern Gaza Strip. Raed Muhammad Deeb, one of the injured passengers, Suheil Muhammad Al-'Amoudi, the boat's captain, and Ahmad Muhammad Al-'Amoudi, the captain's assistant, continued to be detained by the Israeli occupying authorities. At 10:10 am on Wednesday, 30 May 2018, Israeli authorities released Raed Muhammad Deeb and Ahmad Muhammad Al-'Amoudi, while the captain, **Suheil Muhammad Al-'Amoudi**, remains in detention as of 11:00 am, local time.

PHROC notes with concern Israel's arbitrary deprivation of liberty of 17 Palestinian civilians as a result of their peaceful actions in participation in the 'Freedom Boat' and notes that the Israeli occupying authorities were aware that Palestinian patients and injured persons were aboard the 'Freedom Boat' when they intercepted and seized it. PHROC calls on the concerned United Nations special procedure mandates to urgently impress upon the Israeli authorities the need to immediately release **Suheil Muhammad Al-'Amoudi**, the captain of the 'Freedom Boat', which was launched as a symbolic gesture towards bringing an end to Israel's prolonged 12-year closure of the Gaza Strip.

In addition, PHROC calls on the concerned United Nations special procedure mandates to ensure Israel abides by international human rights law and standards in the treatment of Suheil Muhammad Al-'Amoudi, who remains in Israeli detention, notably in relation to his freedom from torture and ill-treatment, his right to liberty and security of person, his right to be treated with humanity and with respect for his inherent dignity, and his right to a fair trial.¹ PHROC further highlights his status as protected persons under international humanitarian law, which prohibits any attacks on his person.²

In light of the above, PHROC calls on the special procedures to condemn Israel's detention of the 17 Palestinians aboard the 'Freedom Boat' and to call for the immediate release of the boat's captain, Suheil Muhammad Al-'Amoudi. PHROC further impresses upon your mandates the urgent need to bring to an end Israel's unlawful closure and blockade of the Gaza Strip and the occupation of the Palestinian territory at large, in order to fulfil the right of the Palestinian people to self-

¹ Articles 7, 9, 10, and 14, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).

² Article 29, Fourth Geneva Convention (1949).



determination, which includes their right to permanent sovereignty over natural resources and the right of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes and property, as mandated by international law.

Over the past nine weeks, Palestinians have continued to demonstrate in the Gaza Strip as part of the Great Return March, which will continue until 5 June 2018, in commemoration of 51 years of ongoing Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territory. Since 30 March 2018, 129 Palestinians have been killed by the Israeli occupying forces in the Gaza Strip, including 96 during peaceful Great Return March protests. For weeks, the Israeli occupying forces repeatedly resorted to intentional, excessive, and unnecessary force, including lethal force, against unarmed Palestinian protesters, committing acts that may amount to war crimes of wilful killing and wilfully causing great suffering or serious injury to body or health.³

As grave breaches of international humanitarian law and serious violations of international human rights law continue to be committed by the Israeli occupying forces in suppression of Palestinians' legitimate demands, a clear stance must be taken by the international community, including international human rights experts, in condemnation of Israel's conduct and towards holding perpetrators accountable.

Yours sincerely,

– END –

³ Articles 8(2)(a)(i) and 8(2)(a)(iii), Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

Addameer Prisoners' Support and Human Rights Association
 Al-Haq – Defending Human Rights
 Defense for Children International – Palestine Section
 Jerusalem Center for Legal Aid and Human Rights
 BADIL Resource Center for Palestinian Residency and
 Refugee Rights

مجلس منظمات حقوق الإنسان الفلسطينية
 Palestinian Human Rights Organizations Council



Aldameer Association for Human Rights
 AL-Mezan Center for Human Rights
 Ramallah Center for Human Rights Studies
 The Palestinian Center for Human Rights
 Hurryyat-Center for Defense of Liberties and Civil Rights
 Independent Commission for Human Rights (Observer)

Palestinian Human Rights Organizations Council comprising:



**Addameer Prisoners' Support and
 Human Rights Association**

Sahar Francis
 General Director



**Aldameer Association for Human
 Rights**

Hala Jaber
 General Director



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Shawan Jabarin
 General Director



**Al Mezan Center for Human
 Rights**

Issam Younis
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**Badil Resource Center for
 Palestinian Residency and Refugee
 Rights**

Nidal Azza
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