



Stop LAPD Spying Coalition

June 28, 2014

Rasmea Odeh is a leading member of Chicago's Arab and Muslim communities contributing years of service towards positively changing thousands of people's lives, in particular disenfranchised Arab women and their families. As the Associate Director of the Arab American Action Network (AAAN) she is a crucial part of English as a Second Language (ESL) services, civic empowerment, civil rights and political education, as well as advancing the skill of organizing and leadership for women in the community.

The charges brought against her do not indicate she is a danger to society, and her community contributions- in fact- indicate the opposite. If she is found guilty of "Unlawful Procurement of Naturalization" then we respectfully demand that she receive a lighter sentence such as community service in addition to not having her citizenship revoked. If she goes to jail, Chicago's diverse communities especially migrant women will lose the much needed leadership and advocacy brought by Rasmea Odeh. Rasmea makes it her life's work to serve and empower Palestinian and Arab families. It is clear she is now a victim of another witch-hunt by our federal law enforcement agencies, which continue to violate the civil rights of Arabs and Muslims with impunity, particularly those who are critical of U.S. support for Israel's aggressive and criminal actions toward Palestinian people. Incarcerating Rasmea is a slippery slope for targeting other peaceful activists who speak critically of mainstream U.S. practices and will set an unjust precedent for the thousands of people who work for social justice. She is a well-respected and beloved member and leader of the Arab-American community in Chicago. Furthermore, she has an extensive network of family and friends in Chicago, and it is her home.

Earlier this year Rasmea received the "Outstanding Community Leader Award" from the Chicago Cultural Alliance which described her as a woman who has "dedicated over 40 years of her life to the empowerment of Arab women- in her homes of Palestine, Lebanon and Jordan, where she worked as an activist and attorney also including the past 10 years of work in Chicago." She is also a mentor to hundreds of immigrant women, including the many staff and members of AAAN. Rasmea is a well-known and respected organizer throughout Chicago, the US and the world.

We believe Rasmea is being targeted for organizing and educating individuals in regards to the human right violations inflicted on the Palestinian people by the state of Israel and the subsequent support of these policies by the United States. In the past her family in Palestine experienced acts of torture and their home destroyed, simply for speaking out against the violence they experience. Here in the US, she is facing a similar situation with the attempt to criminalize her for an incident that occurred over 20 years ago. The communities she serves are vulnerable and would be severely impacted should she face incarceration and/or revocation of her citizenship.

We respectfully demand that all charges be dropped against Rasmea Odeh. She is an extremely important part of various communities within Chicago and continues to impact thousands of lives in positive ways. Revoking her citizenship and/or incarcerating her would devastate the people she has helped.

Draft