

## URGENT APPEAL - THE OBSERVATORY

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**PAL 001 / 1109 / OBS 170**  
Break-in and entering / Harassment  
**Occupied Palestinian Territories**  
November 19, 2009

The Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, a joint programme of the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT) and the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), requests your urgent intervention in the following situation in **the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT)**.

### **Description of the situation:**

The Observatory has been informed by the Al Mezan Centre for Human Rights about the break-in and entering into the offices of the Al Dameer Association for Human Rights in Gaza city.

According to the information received, on November 15, 2009, at about 7:30 a.m., the door of the Al Dameer Association for Human Rights was found unlocked. It was opened in a professional way which left it with no damages. Papers and documents were rummaged through, and two computers were reportedly stolen, and the memory card of a digital camera belonging to the association was erased. However, the digital camera was not taken.

Al Dameer immediately informed the police, who came to have a look at the crime scene. However, the police subsequently told Al Dameer's lawyer that the investigation had not progressed. Moreover, on November 16, 2009, the association informed Mr. Fathi Hammad, Minister of Interior, about the event, and on November 17, 2009, the Monitoring and Human Rights Committee of the Palestinian Legislative Council assured Al Dameer to express their support and assure that they would try to pressure the Ministry of Interior to identify those responsible.

The Observatory condemns the break-in, which seems to be aimed at hindering the human rights activities of the Al Dameer Association for Human Rights in Gaza City, and therefore contravenes the United Nations (UN) Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, adopted by the UN General Assembly on December 9, 1998. Indeed, Al Dameer recently put a lot of efforts in documenting cases of Israeli war criminals, as well as monitoring the work of the authorities in the Gaza Strip, especially when it comes to violate the rights of the citizens. It also carries out visits to prisons and follows the work of the Parliament and judicial system working in the Strip. Its work has lead to several reports exposing the violations against the Palestinian civilians.

### **Actions requested:**

Please write to the authorities in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, in particular the Government in Gaza, urging them to:

- i. Guarantee in all circumstances the physical and psychological integrity of members of the Al Dameer Association for Human Rights as well as of all human rights defenders in the OPT;
- ii. Carry out a prompt, effective, thorough, independent and impartial investigation into the above-mentioned events, the result of which must be made public, in order to bring all

- those responsible before a competent, independent and impartial tribunal and apply penal, civil and/or administrative sanctions as provided by law;
- iii. Put an end to any kind of harassment against all human rights defenders in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and ensure in all circumstances that they are able to carry out their work without unjustified hindrances;
  - iv. Conform with the provisions of the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, especially its Article 1, which states that “everyone has the right, individually and in association with others, to promote and to strive for the protection and realisation of human rights and fundamental freedoms at the national and international levels”, Article 6(b), which states that “everyone has the right, individually and in association with others (...) to publish, impart or disseminate to others views, information and knowledge on all human rights and fundamental freedoms”, and its Article 12(2), which provides that “the State shall take all necessary measures to ensure the protection by the competent authorities of everyone, individually or 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 [...] Declaration”;
  - v. More generally, ensure in all circumstances the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms throughout the country in accordance with international human rights instruments.

### Addresses

- Mr. Ismail Haneyeh, Prime Minister (Gaza Government): +970 8 288 4815
- Mr. Fathi Hammdad, Minister of Interior: +970 8 288 1994
- Permanent Observer Mission of Palestine to the United Nations, Route de Vernier 96, Châtelaine, Switzerland. Fax. +41 22 796 78 60, Email: [Palestine.un@bluewin.ch](mailto:Palestine.un@bluewin.ch)

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Geneva-Paris, November 19, 2009

Kindly inform us of any action undertaken quoting the code of this appeal in your reply.

The Observatory, a FIDH and OMCT venture, is dedicated to the protection of Human Rights Defenders and aims to offer them concrete support in their time of need. The Observatory was the winner of the 1998 Human Rights Prize of the French Republic.

To contact the Observatory, call the emergency line:

- E-mail: [Appeals@fidh-omct.org](mailto:Appeals@fidh-omct.org)
- Tel and fax OMCT + 41 (0) 22 809 49 39 / + 41 22 809 49 29
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