

May 21, 2018

To:

Dr. Avichai Mandelblit
Attorney General

Dear Sir,

Re: The grave behavior of the Israeli police surrounding the arrest of Jafar Farah, Director of the Mossawa Center for Arab Citizens in Israel

We, civil society organizations in Israel who work to strengthen Israel's democracy, human rights, social justice, and coexistence on a daily basis, appeal to you, urgently, to thoroughly investigate the events in Haifa during which the Director of the Mossawa Center, Mr. Jafar Farah, was arrested.

Last Friday, May 18, 2018, a protest was held in Haifa against the events near the Gaza fence at the beginning of last week. During the demonstration, the police arrested 21 protesters, among them Jafar Farah, Director of the Mossawa Center for Arab Citizens in Israel, and his son. In pictures of the event, Mr. Farah is seen walking on his feet to the police car, despite later reports of his hospitalization for a broken leg in Bnei Zion hospital. According to Mr. Farah's family, when Mr. Farah requested to assist his son, who was also arrested and hurt, the police took to him violently, leading to his hospitalization and his leg being put in a cast. According to his family, police officials refused to provide Mr. Farah's family with any information about his medical condition, prevented his family from visiting him during the long hours he was in the hospital, and insisted on returning him to police custody, despite his medical condition.

A reality where the director of a leading social change organization, working to protect human rights, is arrested during a non-violent demonstration, handcuffed and taken into police custody, after which he is hospitalized with a serious injury, should turn on a red light for any citizen who values the freedoms of expression and assembly, and who recognizes the importance of the activities of civil society organizations. The failure of the police to provide a clear explanation of the consequences of Mr. Farah's injury raises suspicion of misconduct and violence on the side of police officials. Additionally, the claims of Mr. Farah's family against the police regarding their treatment after his hospitalization, raises additional suspicion that the police tried to cover their improper conduct.

The arrest and injury of Mr. Farah leaves us, civil society and human rights organizations, with the strong feeling of crisis towards Israel's law enforcement agencies. These events join a long line of claims of police brutality towards populations in Israel requesting to fulfill their right to protest against various injustices, and towards civilian activists leading these demonstrations. This is accompanied by a strong, continuous attack on human rights organizations, and the legitimacy of their public activities. This crisis constitutes a threat on the fabric of the relationship between civil society and law enforcement agencies, on the coexistence between Jewish and Arab citizens of Israel, and the democratic nature of Israel in general, and should not be taken lightly.

In light of the behavior of police officials in the last few days, and the ease with which they denied the right to liberty, as evidenced by the court's criticism this morning, **we call on you to personally intervene, and to order a thorough and immediate investigation into the circumstances of Mr Farah's arrest and injury and the arrests of the other protesters, and at the same time send a clear and public message to the police and law enforcement agencies regarding the importance of the freedom of expression, the importance of civil society organizations, and of the freedom to**

organize protests. We expect this message to be backed up by steps to eradicate occurrences of police brutality against protesters and the implementation of clear and strict procedures in all levels of the police force.

We hope our urgent letter will fall on attentive ears.

Signatories:

1. The Israel Movement for Progressive Judaism
2. The Association for Civil Rights in Israel
3. The Berl Katznelson Educational Center
4. Shatil – The New Israel Fund
5. Yedid: the Association for Community Empowerment
6. Sikkuy: the Association for the Advancement of Civic Equality
7. The Coalition Against Racism in Israel
8. Israel Hofsheet: Be Free Israel
9. Our Heritage: the Charter for Democracy
10. The Mizrahi Democratic Rainbow Coalition
11. The Hotline for Refugees and Migrants
12. Na'amat - Movement of Working Women and Volunteers – Coexistence Department
13. Kav Laoved – Worker's Hotline
14. The Center for a Shared Society at Givat Haviva
15. The Abraham Fund Initiatives
16. Tmura: the Israeli Antidiscrimination Legal Center
17. Doctors for Human Rights
18. Sadaka-Reut: Arab Jewish Youth Partnership
19. Amnesty International
20. Ossim Shalom – Social Workers for Peace and Social Welfare
21. Gisha – Legal Center for Freedom of Movement
22. Hamoked: Center for the Defence of the Individual
23. Rabbis for Human Rights
24. Assaf: Aid Organization for Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Israel
25. The Adam Institute for Democracy and Peace
26. Itach: Women Lawyers for Social Justice
27. Achoti – sister: for Women's rights in Israel
28. Mahapach-Taghir
29. I'lam: Arab Center for Media Freedom Development and Research
30. Movement of Democratic Women in Israel
31. Association of University Graduates from Russia and the Former Soviet Union
32. Veahavtem – And you shall love: High School Students for Equality and Social Justice
33. The Public Committee Against Torture in Israel
34. Ajeec Nispeed
35. Zazim: Community Action
36. Israel Social TV
37. B'tselem: the Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories
38. Citizens for the Environment

Copied to:

Chief Superintendent Roni Alsheikh, Police Commissioner

For more information contact: orly@irac.org, fax: -026256260