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22 July 2010

To:

Mr. Benjamin Netanyahu  
Office of the Prime Minister  
3 Kaplan Street  
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Israel  
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Dear Prime Minister,

I write as the Secretary General of CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation, an international movement of civil society with members and partners in over a hundred countries. We are deeply concerned about the questionable imprisonment, since 6 May 2010, of Ameer Makhoul, a Palestinian Arab citizen of Israel, human rights defender and Director of Ittijah: Union of Arab Community-Based Associations.

It is our understanding that Mr. Makhoul was arbitrarily arrested in the middle of the night by Israeli Shin Bet – General Security Service (GSS) who conducted an extensive search of his house and confiscated personal items such as documents and mobile phones, including those belonging to his wife and two daughters. During the same evening, the office of Ittijah was raided and ransacked with documents and computers also confiscated from there. Prior to his arrest, when attempting to leave Israel to attend a work-related conference in Jordan on 21 April 2010, Mr. Makhoul was placed on a two month travel ban under Article 6 of the Emergency Regulations (Foreign Travel) of 1948 by Israeli Ministry of the Interior, Eli Yishai, who claimed that “the exit of Ameer Makhoul from the country poses a serious threat to the security of the state.” As part of the surreptitious nature of Mr. Makhoul’s detention, a sweeping gag order was issued immediately after his arrest to prevent the Israeli media from publicising this fact.

We deplore that since his arrest, Ameer Makhoul has been continually denied his proper due process rights. He was detained incommunicado for twelve days and denied access to a lawyer. Since then, Mr. Makhoul has been charged with aggravated espionage and has been accused of conspiring with an alleged Hezbollah agent during a previous trip abroad, which Mr. Makhoul and his lawyers have vehemently denied.

We were appalled to learn that it was not until 18 May when Mr. Makhoul was allowed to meet with his lawyers for the first time. At their initial meeting, Mr. Makhoul’s lawyers found him exhausted due to the intensive around-the-clock interrogations to which he had been subjected. Mr. Makhoul complained of pains and dizziness and informed his lawyers that he had been

visited by a doctor from the prison service. The subsequent refusal by the prison service to release Mr. Makhoul's medical records has further raised suspicions of ill-treatment and possible abuse.

We are further distressed to hear that in all seven of Mr. Makhoul's visits with his lawyers while incarcerated, the prison authorities have monitored their conversations and denied him the right to meet his attorneys privately, a clear violation of internationally guaranteed due process rights. Even according to Provision 45 of the Israel Prisons Ordinance, clients and lawyers should not be separated, conversations should not be recorded or listened in on and it should be possible for lawyers to exchange documents relevant to legal proceedings with their clients, all of which Mr. Makhoul was denied.

We believe that Mr. Makhoul has been imprisoned for politically motivated reasons, due mainly to his work with Ittijah, which promotes Palestinian Arab civil society and advocates for political, economic and social change for Palestinians living in Israel who are continually denied equal access to infrastructure and services.

Arbitrary arrest and denial of fundamental basic due process rights, including the right to legal counsel, are unacceptable violations of both Israeli and international law. To demonstrate your government's commitment to upholding human rights standards and international law, we ask that:

- 1) The politically motivated charges against Mr. Makhoul are dropped and he is released.
- 2) An impartial and transparent investigation is carried out to reveal the circumstances of his arrest, imprisonment and allegations of abuse.
- 3) The government ensures that Mr. Makhoul is guaranteed his constitutional due process rights.

Sincerely,



SECRETARY GENERAL

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