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"Freedom of the press is guaranteed only to those who own one."

In Captivity: A Letter from Abdallah Abu Rahma



Abdallah Abu Rahmah during a demonstration in Bil'in. Picture credit: Oren Ziv/ActiveStills

From the [Popular Struggle Coordination Committee](#) website:

Dear Friends and Supporters,

It has been two months now since I was handcuffed, blindfolded and taken from my home. Today news has reached Ofer Military Prison that the apartheid wall on Bil'in's land will finally be moved and construction has begun on the new route. This will return half of the land that was stolen from our village. For those of us in Ofer, imprisoned for our protest against the wall, this victory makes the suffering of being here easier to bear. After actively resisting the theft of our land by the Israeli apartheid wall and settlements every week for five years now, we long to be standing along side our brothers and sisters to mark this victory and the fifth anniversary of our struggle.

Ofer is an Israeli military base inside the occupied territories that serves as a prison and military court. The prison is a collection of tents enclosed by razor wire and an electrical fence, each unit containing four tents, 22 prisoners per tent. Now, in winter,

wind and rain comes in through cracks in the tent and we don't have sufficient blankets, clothes, and other basic necessities.

Food is a critical issue here in Ofer, there's not enough. We survive by buying ingredients from the prison canteen that we prepare in our tent. We have one small hot plate, and this is also our only source of warmth. Those whose families can put money in an account for us to buy food, do so, but many cannot afford to. The positive aspect to this is that I have learned how to cook! Tonight I made falafel and sweets to celebrate the news about our victory. I cannot wait to get home and cook for my wife and children!

I was arrested in my slippers, and to this day my family has been unable to get permission to supply me with a pair of shoes. I was finally given my watch after repeated requests. For me this is an essential way to keep oriented; it was unbearable not being able to see the rate at which time passes. Receiving it, I felt so overjoyed, like a child getting his first watch. I can barely imagine what it will be like to have a pair of proper shoes again.

Because of our imprisonment, the military considers our families to be a security threat. It is very hard for our wives, children and extended family to visit. My friend Adeeb Abu Rahmah, also a political prisoner from Bil'in, cannot receive visits from his wife and one of his daughters. Even his mother, a woman in her eighties who is currently in bad health, is considered a security threat! He is afraid that he will not see her before she dies.

I am a teacher and before my arrest I taught at a private school in Birzeit and also owned a chicken farm. My family had to sell the farm at a loss after I was arrested. I don't know if I will have my position at the school when I am released. Adeeb's family of nine is left without their sole provider, as are many other families. Not being able to care for our loved ones who need us is the hardest part of being here.

It is the support that I receive from my family and friends that helps me go on. I am grateful to the Palestinian leaders who have contacted my family, the diplomats from the European Union and to the Israeli activists who have expressed their support by attending my hearings. The relationship we have built together with the activists has gone beyond the definition of colleague or friend, we are brothers and sisters in this struggle. You are an unrelenting source of inspiration and solidarity. You have stood with us during demonstrations and court hearings, and during our happiest and most painful occasions. Being in prison has shown me how many true friends I have, I am so grateful to all of you.

From the confines of my imprisonment it becomes so clear that our struggle is far bigger than justice for only Bil'in or even Palestine. We are engaged in an international fight against oppression. I know this to be true when I remember all of you from around the world who have joined the movement to stop the wall and settlements. Ordinary people enraged by the occupation have made our struggle their own, and joined us in solidarity. We will surely join together to struggle for justice in other places when Palestine is finally free.

Missing the five-year anniversary of our struggle in Bil'in will be like missing the birthday of one of my children. Lately I think a lot about my friend Bassem whose life was taken during a nonviolent demonstration last year and how much I miss him. Despite the pain of this loss, and the yearning I feel to be with my family and friends at home, I think that if this is the price we must pay for our freedom, then it is worth it, and we would be willing to pay much more.

Yours,
Abdallah Abu Rahmah
From the Ofer Military Detention Camp