



**الفلسطينية لحقوق الإنسان (حقوق)**  
**Palestinian Human Rights Organization - PHRO**  
Member of International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH)  
Member of Euro Mediterranean Human Rights Network (EuroMED rights)  
Member of Arab Organization for Human Rights (AOHR)



Beirut 30 May 2018

**Between General Security and Military Intelligence**  
**The Director General of the Palestinian Human Rights Organization (PHRO),**  
**Ghassan Abdallah, spends 50 hours in detention**  
**Reasons for detention, Description of events and Observations during Interrogation**  
**and Detention**

*Translation of the Arab report published on 21 May 2018*

On the 10<sup>th</sup> of May 2018, the Director General of the Palestinian Human Rights Organization (**PHRO**), Mr. Ghassan Abdallah, received a written summons to appear before the Lebanese General Directorate of General Security. The summons required Mr. Ghassan Abdallah to appear at the Office of Information Affairs - Security Investigation, on the 14<sup>th</sup> of May 2018 at 9:00 am, with his identification papers and summons to appear documents, which were handed to him by an officer of the General Directorate of General Security.

Mr. Abdallah informed **PHRO**'s board members immediately, following his receipt of the summons. An urgent meeting was then held, to discuss the situation in detail and explore the possible reasons for the summons, as either Mr. Abdallah or **PHRO** has been engaged in any activity outside the organization's mandate related to the defense, promotion and protection of the human rights of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon and the MENA region. Despite this, Mr. Abdallah responded accordingly and presented himself, on time, at the General Directorate of General Security located in Adlieh, Al Mathaf, Beirut.

**A. The interrogation by the Lebanese General Directorate of General Security**

The interrogation started at 9:30 am on the 14<sup>th</sup> of May 2018. The initial interrogation took approximately four hours and involved routine questions about Mr. Abdallah's full personal and family identity; his work; and the organization's mandate, relations, meetings, and funding. Mr. Abdallah was also asked questions about names of activists and human rights defenders inside and outside Lebanon, in addition to few names visited **PHRO** in the past some of them stayed connected. The interrogation particularly focused on an individual, on whom the General Directorate of General Security possessed communication data. The interrogator stated that her last incoming call was in 2011, but Mr. Abdallah did not remember that call.

**It should be noted that the communication data was gathered from its source and not from Mr. Abdallah's private phone, which was not in his possession, and since there was no felony case against him, a well-known human rights defender. In so doing, the General Security acted in breach of the law, and violated Mr. Abdallah's right to privacy, by going through his call history.**

## The interrogation was based on three main points:

- 1. Mr. Abdallah's travels outside Lebanon**, this included: the meetings that Mr. Abdallah participated in; **PHRO's** membership in the Euro-Med Rights, and other international NGOs, whether these included "Israeli" associations, and the existence and nature of working and or personal relationships between **PHRO** and these associations. Mr. Abdallah clarified that there are no direct, bilateral relations, or partnerships between either him or **PHRO** and any "Israeli" NGOs and declared that all international human rights-based NGOs and networks are includes member associations from countries around the world.
- 2. Phone calls from Palestine to Mr. Abdallah.** The interrogator asked Mr. Abdallah about a certain number, since it was difficult to remember numbers, the interrogator mentioned a name belonging to a Palestinian struggler, friend and human rights defender, who is the director of the oldest Palestinian human rights organization and general-secretary of an international human rights organization. Mr. Abdallah elaborated that it is necessary for the organization's work, network and nature to have such connections.
- 3. Mr. Abdallah's visits to Palestine.** The primary focus of the interrogation concerned Mr. Abdallah's trips to Palestine, which he visited twice in 2013. Mr. Abdallah's first trip was to the Gaza strip, in response to an invitation sent from the Department of Refugee Affairs to attend a conference on refugee rights and the right of return. The second trip was in response to an invitation from Hebron University's legal clinic to attend an international conference on the methodology of legal education, the role of human rights NGOs and legal clinics. **PHRO** presented a paper at this conference which is published on the **PHRO** website.

When the interrogation, which was carried out in a formal interrogation room<sup>1</sup>, was almost finished the interrogator wrote his findings on informal draft paper. Following this, the interrogator attempted to reach a settlement through requesting Mr. Abdallah to sign a written pledge not to revisit Palestine or at least review the security services and request permission prior to visiting Palestine. When Mr. Abdallah rejected this proposed settlement, the interrogator then wrote a statement again on official paper. This statement was read to Mr. Abdallah, as he had left his reading glasses back home, before he was requested to sign the Investigation Minutes. Mr. Abdallah was later informed that this had been a test, whether or not he would sign the pledge, as such settlements do not exist.

Following this, at about 2:00 pm, Mr. Abdallah was informed that he would be further detained and would be transferred to army intelligence. He was searched and deprived of his personal belongings, in addition he was photographed and handcuffed, like a criminal, and barred from his right to make a phone call. Mr. Abdallah was obliged to wait for a long time for the patrol that would transfer him to the army intelligence. He requested, while he was waiting, to see the officer in charge due to pain in his hands caused by the metal handcuffs. The metal handcuffs exacerbated the pain in his hands, as a result of injuries he had suffered as a child, during the civil war in Lebanon. The officer did not see him; however, he ordered the removal of the handcuffs.

After a long wait, at about 9:00 pm, Mr. Abdallah was surprised to be transferred, with other detainees, to the General Security Prison where he was kept in custody overnight, for the benefit of the Lebanese army

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<sup>1</sup>The interrogation room had an iron chair installed on the ground for the defendant to sit on, there was a fixed iron table, moving chair for the interrogator and a glass wall.

intelligence near the Directorate in Al-Abdi Square. On the morning of his second day in detention, with the help of Caritas, Mr. Abdallah managed to contact his family and request them to bring his medications. It must be noted that Mr. Abdallah's special needs as a result of injuries incurred during the war, including the amputation of his left limb, had not been taken into consideration. Owing to his injuries, he is unable to stand for a long time and to use a non-seated toilet. First, when he arrived at the detention facilities, while waiting for the procedures to be completed, he was not allowed to use a chair, and after being detained, he was not allowed to use the seated toilet, the officer was denying its availability, until the morning of the second day. On the morning of the second day, Mr. Abdallah confirmed that he saw one of the officers entering a seated toilet which was labeled as out of service, he told those responsible for holding him captive, that they would be responsible for any injury which occurred if he fell while using the non-seated toilet.

At about 2:00 pm, on the second day, 15 May 2018, Mr. Abdallah was transferred to the army intelligence in Yarzeh. Despite his condition and his war injuries, particularly those affecting his hands, the officer in charge of the transfer insisted on handcuffing Mr. Abdallah with metal handcuffs. In addition, **PHRO's** General Director was asked to put a cover over his eyes when he reached Yarzeh. Apart from this, the treatment was acceptable and there was minimal respect shown. This was the first 30 hours of detention, during which Mr. Abdallah witnessed violations against other detainees. A number of the violations he observed are discussed in this paper under the title "Observations".

## **B. Interrogation by the Lebanese Army Intelligence:**

On Tuesday afternoon, 15 May 2018, at around 3:00 pm, the allocated patrol delivered the Director General of **PHRO**, Mr. Ghassan Abdallah, to the Lebanese Army Intelligence head-quarters at the Ministry of Defense, in Yarzeh.

Upon his arrival, orders were given to remove the metal handcuffs as well as the covering over Mr. Abdallah's eyes. The order stipulated that the blindfold should not be used on Mr. Abdallah again. Health and security check-ups were then conducted. During the check-up, a humiliating and degrading procedure took place where Mr. Abdallah was required to remove his artificial leg under the pretext of security procedures and a health check-up. As a result, Mr. Abdallah requested to meet the officer in charge of international law and human rights in the army, but the request was denied. Finger prints and a photo was taken, and Mr. Abdallah was given a number to be called by. However, Mr. Abdallah insisted that his name was Ghassan Abdallah and he would not be referred to by a number. He was called by his name after that.

Immediately, following the completion of these procedures, the military interrogation began with Mr. Abdallah. The nature of the interrogation conducted by the military intersected significantly with that conducted by the General Security. The investigation was conducted intermittently, and in between, the disgraceful procedure was repeated, but this time at Mr. Abdallah cell, when a military photographer obliged him to remove his artificial leg to take a picture of his amputated leg with a written paper containing his data. The focus of the military interrogation was on:

1. **PHRO's** funding and the activities and meetings the organization engages in;
2. Mr. Abdallah's travels abroad, the international meetings and international conferences he participates in, and once again he was interrogated regarding whether there were any "Israeli" associations attending these meetings and conferences;
3. Calls Mr. Abdallah received from Palestine and his visits to Palestine;

4. In addition, Mr. Abdallah was questioned about some of the names that he had been asked about at the General Security. In addition, new names came up, one was the name of a human rights activist of Lebanese origin, she works for an international organization;
5. The primary focus of the military interrogation was on reports issued by **PHRO** which document human rights violations against Palestinian refugees in Lebanon and reflect incidents occurring in Nahr al-Bared camp. The interrogator considered these reports as being offensive toward the Lebanese army. It must be noted that the Lebanese army intelligence has previously interrogated **PHRO** staff concerning these reports, at army intelligence North Branch between 2010 and 2011.
6. Mr. Abdallah was also questioned about the date of his father's death. Mr. Abdallah's father died in 1976, however, the interrogator insisted that he had information that Mr. Abdallah's father had died in 1983, and that he had connections with the "Israelis". The interrogator also insisted on the existence of a report published by **PHRO** in 2010 which, he claimed, stated that **PHRO** was defending a spy from Al-Abdullah's family. When **PHRO**'s Director General explained that he was not aware of such a report and asked the interrogator if he could see the report, the interrogator promised to bring the report, however, this did not happen. The interrogator then requested that Mr. Abdallah provide his e-mail password and hand over his phone. Mr. Abdallah rejected the request, in the absence of a judicial decision requiring him to do so.

The interrogation ended, and Mr. Abdallah waited until 9:00 pm for the return of the interrogator, who informed him that there was an intention to release him on the same day. However, when the interrogator called for his judicial record, they claimed that they had found judicial rulings against him. Mr. Abdallah smiled and asked what these rulings were which required his arrest but yet did not prevent him from traveling; Mr. Abdallah had just returned from abroad two weeks previously. The interrogator told him that it was an old ruling related to traffic violations, an unpaid speeding ticket, which must be settled the following day with the Internal Security Forces. Consequently, Mr. Abdallah requested to be transferred early the following morning to the Internal Security Forces, so as to settle the traffic violations and not spend another night in detention.

Mr. Abdallah spent his second night at the army intelligence facility. Around 8:00 am on the third day, the same doctor (who had checked him upon arrival) visited him to re-check his health. And around 9:00 am another doctor wearing a military uniform, of the rank of major, also conducted a check-up on him. After that, Mr. Abdallah waited for the investigator and the patrol to transport him to the Internal Security Forces. The investigator arrived at around 11:00 am, where he informed Mr. Abdallah that some calls had been made and that he would not be transferred to the Internal Security Forces. The interrogator handed him a handwritten paper with four rulings for four unpaid speeding tickets, which Mr. Abdallah had not previously been informed about. The most recent of these alleged traffic fines was from 2013. It is important to mention, that Mr. Abdallah had visited the Traffic Court at Al-Adlieh in 2017 to settle a traffic violation, and he had not been informed about any other traffic fines at that time. The investigator then asked Mr. Abdallah to sign the minutes of the investigation and told him to settle the traffic fines and bring back the receipt of payment, in person, within 48 hours so the investigation could be closed. Mr. Abdallah was then released and transported in a car to the main road.

This is the manner in which the Director General of **PHRO** spent about 20 hours in detention at the military intelligence center in Yarzeh. Despite the disgraceful and degrading treatment and the violations to his human dignity, mentioned above, the treatment was acceptable and interest in his health condition was shown. There were no observations or stories heard during his detention, as he was placed in a cell alone.

It is worth mentioning that after settling the traffic violations and receiving the receipt, Mr. Abdallah returned to the Ministry of Defense within the stipulated deadline. Mr. Abdallah was surprised by obstacles that hindered his entry, especially since he had not been provided with a name or a number to call, and his name was not provided to those at the checkpoints, so that he could pass. However, after he was able to enter and reach the information office, he requested to contact the Military Investigation Department to hand them the receipts of payment for his speeding tickets. The information office was surprised by the procedure and made several phone calls for clarification, asking Mr. Abdallah to wait in the meanwhile. After a while, an individual dressed as a civilian who did not identify himself, came and talked to Mr. Abdallah. After speaking to Mr. Abdallah, this individual called the officer in charge to inform him that Mr. Abdallah was there and that the receipts, requested by the military investigation office, were with him. The response was "take it and let him go". Mr. Abdallah then asked if there were investigation minutes which needed to be closed, the answer was "everything is over".

### C. An overview of the violations perpetrated against Mr. Abdallah

Despite the two Security agencies seeking to show a minimal level of decency, this did not prevent the occurrence of several human rights violations, these include:

1. Depriving Mr. Abdallah of his right to call either a lawyer, family member, or **PHRO**, to inform them about his situation and his place of detention at both Security agencies.
2. Mr. Abdallah's health condition and special needs were not taken into consideration at the General Security prison. This lack of consideration for his special needs, included that he was kept standing for a prolonged period of time, with no chair, in the detention room before entering the prison. Further, he was denied access to a seated toilet, until he challenged them.
3. Treating Mr. Abdallah as a criminal and handcuffing him.
4. The disgraceful procedure occurring at the Lebanese army intelligence where Mr. Abdallah was obliged to take off his artificial limb twice, and during the second procedure where a photo was taken of his amputated leg, with a written paper containing his data.
5. Despite international legislation, both security agencies prevented the presence of a lawyer during the preliminary investigation. Further, the interrogators did not even introduce themselves.

#### • Observations and testimonies during detention at General Security

- In the security of Information Branch-investigation division at the General Security, Mr. Abdallah observed degrading treatment of foreign detainees, in-particular Syrians. This included the detainees being: handcuffed with their hands behind their back; blindfolded; forced to stand for prolonged periods of time; and separated from each other by wooden barriers of approximately half a meter in length. It is important to mention that some of the general security newcomers and youth officers were observed mistreating and abusing the detainees. Mr. Abdallah saw one of the officers kick the detainees, forcing them to stand, after these detainees tried to rest due to prolonged periods of forced standing.
- In the general security prison (newly constructed and funded by Europeans) in Al Abdi Square, Beirut, one of the detainees told Mr. Abdallah that it is one of the best prisons in comparison to other prisons in Lebanon. Despite this, the prison was not equipped with rooms for people with special needs.

- It was noted that there are multiple differing standards for dealing with detainees. The length of time detainees spend in detention, differs among those with the same charges - with some being detained for hours while others are detained for days. Mr. Abdallah was also informed, by one of
- The detainees that his detention period exceeded 40 days without him being transferred to any judicial court.
- It was noticed that the workers inside the General Security prison serving the detainees are foreigners. It turns out that these workers are in fact detainees.

## D. Conclusion

The Palestinian Human Rights Organization (**PHRO**) considers the summoning for security interrogation and detaining of its Director General for 50 hours, between interrogation and the actual duration of detention, as a clear breach and flagrant violation of human rights especially since there was no legal justification for Mr. Abdallah's detention. **PHRO** is concerned about the timing and rationale behind this approach and suspects that it was an attempt to intimidate and pressurize activists and human rights defenders, as well as human rights organizations in Lebanon.

**PHRO** emphasizes that it will not hesitate to carry out the mission it was founded on and daily struggles for, that is - promoting, protecting and defending the human rights of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon and the broader MENA region.

**PHRO** calls for an end to the offensive and pseudo media leaks, which are attributed to security sources, and which have been published in the yellow journalism. These pseudo media leaks' claims include that: Mr. Abdallah arrived at the airport, having ten Israeli entry stamps in his passport and that there are several rulings against him which was the reason behind his arrest and transference to Lebanese army intelligence. These pseudo media leaks also claimed that the security sources were surprised by the media uproar followed by a wide and immediate movement by NGOs, INGOs, entities, friends and international bodies interested in freedoms and human rights, and also saying in their publication released in the news that there is no legal justification for Mr. Abdallah's detention.

**PHRO** condemns these pseudo media leaks which spread false news. **PHRO** confirms that Mr. Abdallah received the summons letter by hand from a general public security officer at his house and not at the airport as claimed (copy of the summoned letter attached). Further, following discussion by the **PHRO** board members, Mr. Abdallah went voluntarily on time to the Lebanese General Security - Adlieh, where he was interrogated, detained and transferred to the army intelligence headquarters in Yarzeh. Mr. Abdallah was not arrested at the airport as the leaks falsely imply. **PHRO** believes that these leaks were intended to discredit the truth, after it had been revealed. Mr. Abdallah had a wide -spread solidarity campaign against his detention without any legal justification. **PHRO** is also concerned that these pseudo media leaks are part of a new set of intimidation tactics.

**PHRO** confirms that it will follow up on the unlawful detention of its Director General as well as the case of the pseudo-media leaks. Further, along with Mr. Abdallah, **PHRO** reserves the right to respond and prosecute.

**PHRO** is grateful for the global efforts and the response of local, regional and international human rights organizations, entities, civil society, and diplomatic corps that supported the release of Mr. Abdallah. Likewise, **PHRO** is grateful to all our friends who responded urgently and voluntarily in an international campaign that assisted in ending the detention and interrogation of Mr. Abdallah.

## PHRO calls for:

1. The security agencies concerned to clarify the real reason behind the summons and detention of PHRO's Director General, especially since the primary reason given, was his visits to Palestine. This reason does not seem logical, since that visit took place in 2013, and it was announced and was in response to the invitation from a Palestinian entity.
2. The security agencies concerned, to provide clarification concerning the leaks to media, especially as the security agencies that interrogated Mr. Abdallah did not deny the leaks. The clarifications concerning these leaks are essential, since these leaks threaten the safety of Mr. Abdallah and his colleges at PHRO.
3. All security agencies to stop harassing and/or detaining human rights defenders based on unfounded and unreasonable claims.
4. The Lebanese government to lift restrictions on visiting Palestinian territories, especially since Lebanon officially recognizes the Palestinian state, accredited its Embassy in Beirut and receives officials, protocols and delegations from Palestine.
5. Relevant bodies and agencies to address human rights violations against detainees, as referred to in this paper.

REPUBLICQUE LIBANAISE  
Direction Générale  
de la Sûreté Générale

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دعوة  
CONVOCATION  
المديرية العامة للأمن العام

٢٠١٤ / ٧ / ٢٠  
٥١ - ٨٥٥٣٨٩

ان السيد اللبناني الكندي غسان حيدر عبد الله والمقيم في بيروت منذ ١٩٦٦  
المقيم في طريق الجديدة شارع الفاسطاني - بنايه الشرق ط ٢  
demourant  
مدعو للحضور الى مكتب شرطة وذا المعلومات الشخصية  
est prié de se présenter le  
في الساعة ١٤ / ٥ / ٢٠١٤ من يوم  
à heures à notre Service  
مرفقاً بأوراق هويته الشخصية  
( ), muni de ses pièces  
لقضية تتعلق به .  
d'identité, pour affaire le concernant.

Beyrouth, le ٢٠١٤ - ١  
Le Directeur Général  
de la Sûreté Générale

مدير عام الأمن العام  
رئيس دائرة أمن حزام بيروت  
المقيد صناد دمشق  
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المديرية العامة للأمن العام  
البيروت  
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*PHRO is an independent non-governmental organization, established in 1997, recognized in Lebanon under registration no. 36/AD and works for promoting, protecting and defending the Human Rights of the Palestinian Refugees in MENA region. PHRO is a member of the international Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) and the Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network (EuroMED rights) and the Arab Organization for Human Rights (AOHR).*