

Adv. Amit Aisman  
State Attorney  
The Office of the State Attorney  
Email: [State-attorney@justice.gov.il](mailto:State-attorney@justice.gov.il)

Dear Amit Aisman,

I am writing to express my grave concern over the indictment, silencing and intimidation of Palestinian human rights lawyer, Ahmad Khalefa, under the cover of Israel's discriminatory counterterrorism law. A Palestinian citizen of Israel, Ahmad Khalefa is a prominent human rights defender, community organiser and an elected member of the Umm al-Fahm city council.

On 19 October 2023, Ahmad Khalefa was violently arrested, along with 10 other protesters, including four children, in Umm al-Fahm, during a peaceful demonstration against the Israeli military offensive in the occupied Gaza Strip. Despite injuries sustained from his arrest, Ahmad Khalefa was denied medical treatment and transported directly to Megiddo Prison.

On 6 November 2023, Ahmad Khalefa was charged with "incitement to terrorism" and "identifying with a terrorist organization" solely for leading a peaceful protest and for chanting peaceful, nonviolent slogans against the Israeli occupation. He is the first protester to be indicted and imprisoned for such slogans, which are common in protests by Palestinians in Israel, including in recent protests after 7 October. During the nearly four months he spent in prison, Ahmad Khalefa was subjected to torture and other ill-treatment, including beating, and witnessed the severe torture of other prisoners as well. Amnesty International's researchers reviewed the slogans chanted by Ahmad Khalefa – and by other protesters - and concluded that none of them amounted to advocacy of hatred.

On 8 February 2024, Ahmad Khalefa was put under house arrest following a decision by the Israeli Supreme Court to accept his appeal, but he continues to face extreme restrictions, including electronic monitoring, being banned from using the internet, and spending the house arrest outside his hometown of Umm al-Fahm, where his children study. The court assigned his wife Lina as his guarantor who has to stay with him at all times. Consequently, Ahmad and Lina were forced to rent an apartment in Haifa and have been separated from their three young children.

Ahmad Khalefa's next hearing before the Haifa Magistrate's Court is scheduled for 8 April 2024. The baseless charges against him, part of a broader crackdown against Palestinian citizens of Israel and their freedom to protest against the war on Gaza, violate Israel's obligations under Articles 19 and 21 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which it has ratified.

I therefore urge you to act swiftly to drop all charges against Ahmad Khalefa and to immediately and unconditionally release him from house arrest and lift all associated restrictions of his rights. He must be allowed to resume his vital work and activism without reprisals or intimidation.

Yours sincerely,