

AMERICAN TRADE UNIONISTS APPEAL FOR RELEASE OF PALESTINIAN TRADE UNIONIST HANI BAYDOUN

May 1, 1990

Dear Friends,

As U.S. trade unionists, we are gravely concerned about the arrest and detention without charges of Palestinian trade unionist Hani Baydoun. A well-known leader in the labor movement in the Israeli occupied Palestinian territories, Baydoun has played a key role in unifying the Palestinian trade union federations. Many of us had the opportunity to meet and hear from Hani Baydoun during his U.S. tour in the summer of 1989 in which he met with unionists in 18 cities across the U.S. and Canada.

Baydoun was arrested on March 20, 1990, at an Israeli army checkpoint in Ramallah, in the West Bank. He is now held for interrogation at the Moscobiyah Prison Compound. He has not been charged with any crime; indeed, his lawyer has been unable to ascertain any reason for his arrest and continued detention.

In 1985, following his election as secretary general of one of the Palestinian trade union federations, Baydoun was arrested and sent to prison for 30 months for organizing an illegal organization--the trade union federation itself. In the absence of any charges for his arrest, we can only assume that his continuing trade union activity aimed at reunifying all the trade union federations, is what led to his current incarceration.

We are concerned that Palestinians are being denied the rights that belong to every worker: to organize a union to fight for their rights. It appears that the arrest of Hani Baydoun may be part of an effort by the Israeli authorities to crush the efforts of Palestinian workers to organize and strengthen their trade unions.

We are especially concerned because Baydoun's earlier imprisonment, and mistreatment in prison, led to the loss of hearing in one ear, development of an ulcer, and a severe heart attack. His lawyer, allowed to see him twice during the first five weeks of his imprisonment, reports he is in severe pain, and is under "continuous and heavy physical and psychological pressure," including sleep deprivation, insufficient food, and not being allowed to wash or change his clothes or shave. His health remains in jeopardy in the harsh conditions of Moscobiyah Prison, and recent reports, including those of the U.S. State Department and Amnesty International, provide ample basis for continuing fear of mistreatment of Palestinians in Israeli jails.

As trade unionist ourselves, we cherish the rights to organize our fellow workers that have been so hard-won in our own country. We can not stand by while a fellow unionist is arbitrarily detained, interrogated and perhaps mistreated in prison, for the sole reason of carrying out the task of every union leader: to organize, to mobilize, to build his or her own union.

We believe that we are fortunate to have had the opportunity to meet with Hani Baydoun when he toured the U.S. and Canada last summer, and to hear him speak of the work of

Palestinian trade unionists, we do not want to be deprived of hearing from him in the future. We urge the immediate release of Palestinian trade unionist Hani Baydoun.

Sincerely,

Sabina Virgo	Founding President, AFSCME, Local 2620
Frank Rosen	General Vice-President, United Electrical Workers
Jonnie Jackson	President, Chicago Coalition for Labor Union Women
Larry Deeds	President, United Mine Workers of America, Local 1972
✓ Michael Letwin	President, Association of Legal Aid Attorneys of the City of New York, District 65 UAW
Larry Regan	President, United Steelworkers of America, Local 1014
Philip A. John	Chicago Executive Vice-President, Coalition of Black Trade Unions
William Taylor	President, Oil Chemical and Atomic Workers, Local 7-507
Carole Travis	President, United Auto Workers, Local 719
Elcosie Gresham	President, Amalgamated Transit Union, Local 241
Ted Smolarek	President, United Steelworkers of America, Local 3745
Lou Pardo	Recording Secretary, International Association of Machinists, Local 113
Bill Silver	Representative of Service Employees International Union
Jack Spiegall	Textile Union
Jaime Veve	Transit Workers Union, Local 100
Jane Power	National Education Association
Jeff Perry	Treasurer, National Postal Mailhandlers Union, Local 300 Division of LIUNA (AFL-CIO)
Pete Leki,	AFSCME, Local 1891
Sherna Gluck	Vice-President, California Faculty Association, Local 1000
Albert Calles	International Union of Operating Engineers, Local 501
Don White	Member, House of Representatives, United Teachers of Los Angeles
Louie Duran	Chair, Human Rights Committee, Service Employees International Union, Local 660
Bob McCloskey	Business Agent, Service Employees International Union, Local 660
Paul Schrade	United Auto Workers, Local 887
Jeff Washington	President, United Auto Workers, Local 900
Gilbert Sanchez	President, AFSME Local 1108
Carl Keffler	LA Fed, Delegate, International Association of Machinists, Local 758
Bill Henning	Vice-President, Communication Workers of America, Local 1180
Miriam Thompson	Director of Community Action Programs, United Auto Workers, Local 259
David Brennor	President, AFL-CIO Laundry Union, Local 66
Tess Ewing	Business Representative, AFL-CIO Laundry Union, Local 66
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*Union affiliation listed for identification purposes only.

For more information, please contact the Committee to Release Hani Baydoun, P.O. Box 29340, Chicago, IL 60629, or call 312-436-6060 or 202-332-9667.