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President of the UN Human Rights Council, HE Ambassador Omar Zniber
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28 August 2024

Dear H.E. Amb. Omar Zniber

Please accept this formal letter and demand jointly issued by the initiating lawyers, and legal and civil society organizations, requesting the dismissal of Special Rapporteur on Torture, Alice Edwards for actions in abject breach of her duties, in violation of her mandate to uphold international law, and which evince a patent, and actionable, anti-Palestinian bias- at a critical moment of genocide and unprecedented torture of Palestinians.

We urge Your Office to receive and consider this letter with the gravity and urgency with which it is sent. We hope to hear your positive response within one week of the date of this letter, after which time, and should we not hear back, we will publicize this letter for public support, signing, and advocacy.

Please accept our gratitude for your time and attention in advance, and please do not hesitate to contact us to discuss this matter, at the contact information sent in the primary email you should have received.

Respectfully Submitted,

The PAL Law Commission
Euro-Med Human Rights Monitor
Worldwide Lawyers Association

International Lawyers, and Legal and Civil Society Organizations, Join Euro-Med Human Rights Monitor's Request for Dismissal, or Alternatively, the Establishment of a Rigorous Oversight and Accountability Process of UN Special Rapporteur on Torture, Alice Jill Edwards

International Lawyers, legal groups, and civil society organizations join Euro-Med Human Rights Monitor's demand for the immediate dismissal, or alternatively, the establishment of a rigorous oversight and accountability process for UN Special Rapporteur on Torture Alice Jill Edwards. Edwards' tenure has been marked by a gross erasure of systematic Israeli torture, by anti-Palestinian bias, and a complete failure to fulfill her mandate. Edwards' inaction during 10 months of the most documented, sadistic, Israeli torture of Palestinian captives is particularly egregious.

Despite widely circulated testimony and evidence, including photographic and video evidence of Israeli officers and civilians torturing Palestinians, Edwards' silence has enabled Israeli impunity and allowed Israeli torture to continue unabated. As a result, thousands of Palestinians are facing torture, scores of Palestinians have been killed by Israeli torture, and millions of people across the world have been psychologically traumatized as they are forced to witness that torture livestreamed and posted on social media by Israelis themselves. Edwards' failure to act and her apparent bias is a gross violation of her duties and the UN's human rights principles and its commitment to protecting humanity from such heinous crimes.

Edwards' term is a stark example of the UN system's structural failure, particularly in its historic minimization of Palestinian suffering and its consistent downplaying of Israeli crimes. In an era of growing global skepticism towards international law and the systems tasked with upholding it, Edwards' tenure has exposed the deep bias underpinning these failures. Her dismissal and the appointment of a dedicated, impartial rapporteur- or alternatively the establishment of a rigorous oversight and accountability mechanism- are essential not only for the protection of Palestinians but also for restoring faith in the international system and the UN.

Edwards has consistently demonstrated a patent bias and refusal to ring the alarms on Israeli torture and call for meaningful action to stop the unprecedentedly documented, methodical, and systematic Israeli torture of Palestinians- which has shockingly included the dismemberment of Palestinian hostages by Israeli officers, since October. Edwards reports have consistently favored and repeated the Israeli narrative, despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary. Since October 2023, when globally publicized photos, videos, and recorded testimony of Palestinians being captured, tortured, and mutilated emerged, Edwards' silence and her biased reports served to erase those reports and freeze international action. Most disturbingly, even as the Knesset debated acceptable methods of torture and rape against Palestinian captives, Edwards reiterated her feeble call for historically failed and self-serving Israeli "self-investigation," only addressed Israeli soldiers' actions, ignored the role of Israeli officials who celebrated, lauded and debated the different forms of acceptable torture, and made absolutely no mention of the Israeli illegal "legal framework" underpinning the systematic torture. In doing so, Edwards, empowered Israeli impunity, and torture, to flourish.

In a recent, scathing, report, Euro-Med Human Rights Monitor documented Edwards' breaches of her mandate and her undeniable anti-Palestinian and pro-Israeli bias. The report highlights her minimization and downplaying of well-documented cases of Israeli torture inflicted on Palestinians since October 7, 2023. These atrocities include starvation, beatings to death, gang rapes on camera, the rape of children, and the torture to death of Palestinian hostages, including Lawyers and medical professionals. In her singular report, Edwards condemned allegations of torture and sexual violence by Palestinians in the strongest terms—allegations of rape were later debunked several mainstream media investigations fully within her purview—while remaining silent on Israel's well-established crimes. Moreover, Edwards has thinly veiled her bias by repeatedly calling for Israeli self-investigation, knowing full well that such investigations are a sham and have never resulted in anything beyond

merely symbolic action. Edwards continued her pattern of bias by calling Israeli rape “sexual harassment,” while categorizing allegations against Palestinians as “sexual violence,” the latter of which she strongly condemned as she prioritized release of Israeli captives, leaving the thousands of illegally held Palestinian captives as a mere footnote. Edwards’ actions not only legitimize Israeli torture systems but also exemplify her role in perpetuating the narratives that shelter them.

Edwards’ recent press release- issued *only* in response to the Euro-Med Monitor report, merely reaffirms her bias and her inability, and refusal, to fulfill her mandate at this critical juncture. In her release, Edwards inexplicably focuses on a single incident among hundreds of verified reports of extreme Israeli torture, choosing to highlight the actions of a solitary soldier while ignoring the widespread, systematic nature of Israeli torture and the role of Israeli officials, laws, and society in encouraging that torture. Despite the widespread public discussions, celebrations, and debates in Israeli government, mainstream media, and social platforms regarding acceptable forms of torture and rape, Edwards refused to call for any meaningful action or independent investigation. Instead, she continued to support Israeli self-investigation and self-policing, underscoring her ongoing bias and apparent disinterest in mobilizing the international community to stop Israeli torture of Palestinians. Edwards’ press statement reads as a sleight of hand, intended to give further cover to her bias while reducing the unprecedented scale and severity of Israeli torture to a single “self-investigated” incident.

Her ongoing refusal to address the Israeli systems and laws that perpetuate systematic torture, combined with her repeated use of Israeli language to describe the abduction of thousands of Palestinians since October 7, along with her equivocation, vague language, and refusal to explicitly condemn and criminalize Israeli torture have diluted the severity and urgency of the situation Palestinians face. This not only empowers Israeli officials to dismiss and diminish reports of torture but also prevents forceful action by the UN and the international community.

Edwards' tenure is irreversibly marred by bias and a reluctance to pursue Israeli accountability, which may amount to complicity in light of the overwhelming evidence of Israeli crimes of torture, both historically and since October 7. Accordingly, it is imperative that the UNHRC either dismiss Edwards immediately and select a rapporteur capable of fulfilling their mandate to protect Palestinians and all people from torture, or alternatively, establish a rigorous oversight and accountability process to ensure that she adheres strictly to her mandate. Failure to do so sets a dangerous precedent and a harrowing message to humanity: that powerful, Western-backed forces may commit torture without fear of accountability, with the complicity of the very international institutions that exist to stop such crimes.

Signed,

Initiating Lawyers, Legal Organizations, and Civil Society Organizations:

Legal Organizations

The PAL Law Commission on War Crimes, Justice, Reparations, and Return, International
Euro-Med Human Rights Monitor, International

Worldwide Lawyers Association (WOLAS), International
L'Association Avocats pour la Justice au Proche-Orient (A.J.P.O.), France
CRED, Center for Research and Elaboration on Democracy, Italy
Global Legal Alliance for Palestine, International
Young Muslim Lawyers Association, YMLA, South Africa
Corporacion Juridica Alternativa Ciudadana, Colombia
Lawyers for Palestine, Chile
The Association for Human Rights and Solidarity for the Oppressed (MAZLUMDER), Turkey
International Refugee Rights Association (IRRA).
International Commission to Support Palestinian People's Rights (ICSPR).
Lawyers Association (Hukukçular Derneği)

Lawyers

Lamis J. Deek, Director of Diplomatic and Legal Affairs, PAL Law Commission On War Crimes, Justice, Reparations, and Return [PAL Law Commission]
Hüseyin Dişli, Vice President of WOLAS, Antalya Bar.
Dan Kovalik, PAL Law Commission, USA
Fabio Marcelli, CRED and IADL
Sabrina Mirza, Director of Legal Affairs, Justice for All, USA
Pablo Araya Zacarías, Lawyers for Palestine and PAL Law Commission, Chile
Rania Madi, Senior Advisor Law for Palestine (LAP).
Nadeem Mahomed, YMLA, Former Acting Judge of the Labour Court.
Dominique Cochain, Avocat au Barreau de PARIS, pour l'Association Avocats pour la Justice au Proche-Orient (A.J.P.O.)
Leena Widdi, PAL Law Commission
Enes Kafadar, Lawyer, President of WOLAS, Istanbul Bar
Soraya Jacobs, Lawyers for Palestine and PAL Law Commission, Chile
Bayram Veli Yuvali, Wolas, Lawyer, Istanbul Bar.
Kaya Kartal, MAZLUMDER, Istanbul Bar.
Abdullah Resul Demir, President of International Refugee Rights Association (IRRA).

Michael Letwin, Former President, Assn. of Legal Aid Attorneys/UAW 2325, USA

Şükrü Sungur, Lawyer, Istanbul Bar.

Mariam Jamal Esmail Abdullah, Lawyer, Palestinian Bar Association.

Sami Mohammed Ismail Alghoul , Lawyer, Palestinian Bar Association.

Nemaa Hemdan Selmy Abu Behary , Lawyer, Palestinian Bar Association.

Mohammed Adel R. A. Mhanna, Lawyer , Palestinian Bar Association.

Sadi M. S. Attaalha , Lawyer, Palestinian Bar Association.

Nabil M. J. Abuzir, Lawyer, Palestinian Bar Association.

Heyam M. R. Hajjaj, Lawyer, Palestinian Bar Association.

Ayat Mohamed Mahmoud Al Shaer, Lawyer, Palestinian Bar Association.

Madleen Zuhayr Mahmoud Ziara, Lawyer, Palestinian Bar Association.

Warda I.S. Aljaro, Lawyer, Palestinian Bar Association.

Nedal Waleed Abdallah Al Shayyah, Lawyer, Palestinian Bar Association.

Hazem H.S. Alshaer, Lawyer, Palestinian Bar Association.

Ramzi F .D. Jalhoom, Lawyer, Palestinian Bar Association.

Salah Abdel Atti, President of International Commission to Support Palestinian People's Rights (ICSPR).

Ayesha Mehdi, Lawyer, USA.

Cavit Tatlı, Lawyer, Istanbul Bar.

Elif Nur Güvençer, Lawyer, Istanbul Bar.

Hilal Değirmenci, Lawyer, Istanbul Bar.

Esma Yurt Mul, Lawyer, Istanbul Bar.

Özlem Öztekin, Lawyer, Istanbul Bar.

Merve Sultan Bilgen, Lawyer, Istanbul Bar.

M. Talha Güvençer, Lawyer, Istanbul Bar.

Mehmet Fatih Kıratlı, Lawyer, Istanbul Bar.

Mehmet Koçak, Lawyer, Istanbul Bar.

Mehmet Melih Gülseren, Lawyer, Istanbul Bar.

Hasan Mul, Lawyer, Istanbul Bar.

Barjas Anwar Abu Middain, Lawyer, Palestinian Bar Association.

Hüsamettin Orhan, Vice President of Orphans Foundation (Yetim Vakfi), Istanbul Bar.

Civil Society Organizations

International Coalition to Stop Genocide in Palestine

Palestinian Assembly for Liberation

Justice for All

Mavi Marmara Solidarity and Freedom Association

Alliance of International Doctors (AID)

International Federation of Student Associations - UDEF

Orphans Foundation (Yetim Vakfi)

Mississippi for a Just World