



Marc Garneau,  
Minister of Foreign Affairs,  
House of Commons,  
Ottawa, Ontario, K1A OA6

March 15, 2021

Dear Minister Garneau,

Greetings from Canadian Friends Service Committee, the peace and social justice agency of Quakers in Canada. We write out of our deep concern for the wellbeing of former Gaza aid worker Mohammed El Halabi.

Mohammed El Halabi, the former director for Gaza for World Vision, was arrested by Israeli security forces in June 2016, on charges that he was diverting development funds to armed groups in Gaza, charges he denies. The Australian government funded a comprehensive audit and found no such diversion of funds to have taken place: <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2017/mar/21/inquiry-clears-world-vision-gaza-of-diverting-funds-to-hamas>

It is troubling to us that after four years in the Ramon Prison in the Negev Desert, and over 150 court appearances, the Israeli government has not given Mohammed El Halabi, a humanitarian worker, or his lawyer, any evidence of wrong-doing. His lawyer says that the Israeli prosecutor has repeatedly offered Mohammed El Halabi a plea deal, but his client has rejected such offers and maintains his innocence. It appears that the prosecution is relying on confessions allegedly obtained by force to make their case.

UN human rights experts<sup>1</sup> say that Israel must release Mohammed El Halabi or grant him a fair trial. Under the Fourth Geneva Convention, Mohammed El Halabi's human rights are protected. Article 1 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, to which Canada is a signatory, states it is a requirement of signatories to ensure that violations of the Fourth Geneva Convention do not occur under any circumstance.

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<sup>1</sup> Namely: Michael Lynk, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian Territory occupied since 1967; Agnès Callamard, Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions; Nils Melzer, Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment; Diego García-Sayán, UN Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers.

Therefore, Canadian Friends Service Committee calls upon the Canadian Government to urgently request that Israel adhere to the requirements of international law as laid out in the Fourth Geneva Convention.

Please Minister Garneau, can you let us know what action our government is willing to take to ensure that Mohammed El Halabi's human rights are protected, so that he either gets a fully open and fair trial or is given an unconditional release?

In Friendship,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lana Robinson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Lana Robinson,  
Clerk, Canadian Friends Service Committee (Quakers)

CC:

Miriam Ziv, Ambassador, Israeli Embassy in Ottawa,  
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