

Another Palestinian, an American Citizen, Deported. No Homeland.

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Theme: [Law and Justice](#), [Media Disinformation](#), [Police State & Civil Rights](#), [Poverty & Social Inequality](#)

In-depth Report: [PALESTINE](#)

Featured image: Rasmae Odeh (Source: [Justice for Rasmae!](#))

(BNAziz' commentary: Monday Aug 21, 7:45 am on [WBAI](#), 99.5fm.)

Rasmae Odeh is either on a plane out of her country. Or she's in a federal holding cell in Detroit or New York awaiting deportation from the USA.

Odeh's departure marks the end of a bizarre life, yet one that can evoke admiration. As a young Palestinian Odeh fought against Israeli oppression. Now after a valiant legal battle with many supporters in this, her new homeland, she is departing (by force).

Some Americans may recall with satisfaction their support for Russian dissidents in the 1950s and 1960s when the Soviet Union exiled its critics. If they were not sent to Siberia, opponents of the USSR were denied residence in their own country, involuntarily banished. However much the US and UK welcomed them and even lionized them, banishment is a hard punishment to bear. Today's Russia no longer metes out such penalties; which is not to say Russia is completely tolerant of dissent.

In the US, one hardly hears of Americans being banished from these hallowed shores. However rare, it does occur. Often Palestinian Americans are the target of this injustice, with Israeli authorities (somehow, usually) involved in legal cases brought against those Palestinians in US courts.

Perhaps the most widely publicized case is that of **Professor Sami Al-Arian**. Starting in 1993, after a long, noble struggle against false accusations, years in jail, support from a campaign determinedly led by his own family, continued harassment from the US government, Al-Arian finally succumbed and left the country in 2015. Before him, his associate **Mazen Al-Najjar** also spent years attempting to secure justice before he too was deported. [I myself interviewed both men on several occasions between 1993 and 2003 on Radio Tahrir (www.RadioTahrir.org), WBAI, 99.5 fm. While Al-Arian's case is well documented, Al-Najjar's history is almost completely scrubbed from the public record.] Both men were brave advocates for US justice and for Palestinian rights.

Rasmae Odeh's treatment is a troubling reminder that this happens to US citizens who have never committed a crime in this country and never threatened anyone in the US.

Odeh is the latest Palestinian banished from this country. Now 69, she moved to the US (where her father resided) and settled in the Chicago area in the 1990's. She was pressed to leave her home in the Occupied Territories like countless Palestinians over the past half century, dispossessed people who lost homes, family and hope. They left under duress in search of peace and dignity.

In 1994 Odeh applied for an immigration visa, later for US citizenship. Unlike many immigrants, she dared to become a community leader. Any immigrant, whatever their background, who arrives here quickly learns to keep their head down, their mouth shut—civil rights-be-damned. Just join the American dream for a job and a house.

The long arm of Israeli injustice followed Odeh however, and perhaps because of her visibility, her earlier experience with Israeli authorities was disclosed. (Many years earlier, Odeh was convicted for involvement in an attack on Israelis. She was released after serving ten years in a prisoner exchange.) Her American crime? She'd failed to report that conviction in her immigration application, a serious oversight. So when her history came to light in 2013, US authorities brought a charge of "immigration fraud" against Odeh. In her defense a major campaign was launched, and in [2015 the conviction was set aside](#). Forces determined to destroy her stepped up the attack however and she faced yet another trial, set for May 2017. Although there was considerable public support for her, in March, Rasmea's defense team advised a plea deal. She would serve no jail time, but her citizenship was revoked and she'd be deported. Thus [the court's announcement](#) last week of her removal.

While this conclusion was hardly noted in the regular US press, the Jewish press, in USA and in Israel, hailed the decision, using the news to highlight her 1969 terrorism conviction and to draw attention to the ubiquitous threat of Palestinian terrorism.

Such tactics are part of the ever present Israeli campaign coursing through US culture, a threat that smothers dissent, intimidates and drives academics out of the universities, and in response to the success of the BDS movement, is pressing ahead with S. 720, a bill in the US Congress, to prohibit Americans who will not countenance Israeli injustice, from participating in any boycott of Israeli products and institutions.

All the more reason to support vocal critics including journalists, and American community leaders like [Linda Sarsour](#).

There will always be funds for shelter-less and malnourished children in refugee camps. Today, in the face of stepped up Israeli surveillance and political pressures, immense courage is needed to pursue justice for Palestine and free speech on behalf of their rights. Many Americans (including journalists), nameless and known figures—Arabs and non-Arabs—have moved into obscurity after years of threats and intimidation. Somehow new champions emerge to continue a just cause.

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