

## A PRE-OCCUPIED FUTURE



**7 July 2010, UNESCO CHAIR ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND DEMOCRACY (NABLUS) - On 8 June 2010, Muath Yusef Khaled Sourakji -a 23 year old graduate from An-Najah National University- was abducted from his home in Nablus during a night raid by Israeli forces. Until now the Sourakji family is left in the dark as to Muath's wellbeing and the reason for his arrest.**

This summer Muath graduated for his BA in Graphic Design at An-Najah National University and he was looking forward to continuing his education through a post-graduate program. Muath has always been involved in many activities besides his studies, such as volunteering with the Zajel Youth Exchange Programme and Injaz. Additionally, his high GPA of 84%, gives him many opportunities for additional higher education and studying abroad. Muath was looking forward to seize every opportunity he had worked so hard for over the past years, to expand his horizon. He had started contacting universities and other institutions locally and abroad. Amongst other things, he was accepted for a graphic design training course in Qattar.

Muath is the second child in a family of two boys and two girls. His older brother, Tareq also graduated from university this year and left for a filmmaking course in Jordan on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of June. Muath could have joined his brother to Jordan that day but insisted on staying for his graduation ceremony on 9 June because he wanted his mother Myassar to see him in his graduation outfit. The ceremony on the 9<sup>th</sup> of June would be the big reward for his hard work and he would be celebrating this event with his friends and family.

One day before his graduation ceremony, his hopes and ambitions were taken into a different direction. At 2 a.m. on 8 June 2010, Moath was taken from his home in Nablus during a night raid by the Israeli forces.

Muath's uncle -who lives opposite Muath's house- called Myassar telling her that her family home was surrounded by dozens of Israeli soldiers who were about to blow off the front door with an explosive device. Myassar opened the door before the explosion could take place after which the soldiers entered the home and demanded everyone to gather in front of the house. Muath, his mother, and his sisters (17 and 20 years old) did as the soldiers ordered and gathered in front of the house.

Muath was handcuffed immediately, in front of his family. The soldiers demanded that Myassar give them Muath's cellphone. Myassar refused to do so after which she was shouted and cursed at. The soldiers threatened to beat Muath if she did not hand over his phone. The cellphone was handed over. Then Myassar and her daughters were put in the guest room of the house for two hours while the soldiers searched the house and completely wrecked the interior. Meanwhile, Muath was kept outside, handcuffed. During the search, in



which they used a dog with a camera on its head, they did not find or confiscate anything. All they left was destruction. At no point during the military raid did the soldiers show an arrest warrant or any other order. Neither did they state any reason for their actions or for targeting Muath. After the two hour raid Muath was taken away by the soldiers. Later that day Muath's family received a phone call from the police in Bet Hatikvah police who stated that Muath was being kept at their interrogation center.

On the request of Myassar, Hamoked (an Israeli human rights organization) monitors the locations of Muath's imprisonment. So far Muath has been moved between different prisons and interrogation centers at least 4 times. Since he was taken to Beit Hatikva interrogation center he has been moved to Ashkelon prison, Jalama prison, Majiddo prison, and back to Bet Hatikvah. According to the latest update from Hamoked, Muath is now in Bet Hatikvah interrogation center again. Regarding the conditions under which Muath is being detained and how he is treated, his family and friends can only guess. All what they know is based on the reputation of the detention locations that has been built by the stories of experiences of former prisoners. Myassar is especially worried about the conditions in which Muath's is held in some these detention and interrogation centers, which have a bad reputation for treatment of the detainees. Furthermore, according to the standard practice in Israeli detention, Muath is likely to be held in solitary confinement, as he is still being kept for interrogation at this stage.

No lawyer is allowed to visit Muath. Neither is Muath's family or the ICRC. Myassar will make a submission to the High Court for being allowed to visit her son. So far Muath's detention has been extended four times, every time without presence of a lawyer at the extension hearings. No one has been able to see or speak to Muath.

Muath's arrest came as a shock to the whole family. Last year March he was called for an 'interview' with the Israeli DCO. Then he was questioned at the DCO office for one day, but all of the questions were related to his father, who was killed by the Israeli forces when Muath was 14 years old. Besides that day of questioning, Muath had never been approached or targeted by the Israeli authorities.

Like many other young Palestinians prisoners who are being kept without any access to justice, Muath is made 'pre-occupied' and is forced to put his future on hold just when he was most eager to start it.

**For further details, please contact:**

Lydia de Leeuw  
UNESCO Chair on Human Rights and Democracy  
An-Najah National University, Nablus (oPt)  
+970 (0)9 234 5113, ext. 2204  
[deleeuw@najah.edu](mailto:deleeuw@najah.edu)

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