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## **Four Palestinians in the USA awaiting presidential pardon**

Arab Organisation for Human Rights in the UK ([AOHR UK](#)) has called on the US President [Donald Trump](#) to issue a presidential pardon for four Palestinians who have been working in the field of humanitarian relief for years and have been subjected to unfair trials, and those are Shukri Abu Baker, Mufid Abdulqader, Ghassan Elashi and Muhammad El-Mezain.

AOHR UK pointed out that the US president, whose term is ending, has constitutional powers to issue a presidential pardon for defendants and convicts, and he has recently issued pardons, met with wide criticism, for convicts of murder, harm inflicted on national security, embezzlement and tax evasion.

### **Long term of charitable work**

The four Palestinians are members of the Holy Land Foundation (HLF) charity which established in 1989 based in Texas to provide support to the poor and orphans in Palestine. The US authorities closed HLF and confiscated its assets following the events of September 11, 2001.

### **Charges and first trial**

In July 2004, the Public Prosecutor issued charges against the four including supporting a terrorist organisation, in August 2007 the trial began, lasting two months, ended in a mistrial in October 2007, the judge declared its failure, after the jury had reached a dead end.



## **Second trial**

The federal judge in Texas insisted to reopen the case and convict them, therefore a new jury was formed, and the hearings started again before a new judge.

The hearings which only lasted six weeks, and clearly lacked the standards of a fair trial, resulted in the conviction of the five in November 2008.

In May 2009, Judge Jorge Solis, in a Texas court, sentenced Shukri Abu Baker, 50, to 65 years in prison, Muhammad El-Mezain, 55, to 15 years in prison, Mufid Abdulqader, 49, to 20 years in prison, Ghassan Elashi, 55, 65 years imprisonment, Abdelrhman Odeh, 49 (recently released after the expiration of his sentence) to 15 years imprisonment. (ages on the date of judgment).

AOHR UK confirmed that unlike those whom Trump issued a presidential pardon for, the four Palestinians did not commit any crime inflicting harm on the US national security and did not cause any bodily harm to anyone. They were simply victims of the state of hostility that spread following the events of September 11, as many Arabs and Muslims were being charged in a random manner.

## **A goodwill gesture?**

AOHR UK wondered whether Trump would take such a step as a goodwill gesture towards the Palestinian people, who greatly suffered by his recent decisions, which aimed at eliminating their cause, recognizing Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and cutting off all forms of support to the UNRWA agency which deals with Palestinian refugees.

AOHR UK called on all supporters of the Palestinian cause, civil society institutions and human rights organisations in the US and abroad to appeal to the US president



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to issue a presidential pardon, as it is the only way to end the ongoing injustice suffered by the four detainees and their families.

Arab Organisation for Human Rights in the UK (AOHR UK)