



Distressing Update from Bishop Dr. Imad Haddad on Natalie Abudayyeh: 22 July

Dear partners,

Today we received very disturbing news about Natalie Abudayyeh, the 21-year-old university student and ELCJHL youth who has now been held in Israeli prison for nearly two months. Though we thank each of you who have advocated for Natalie over the last several weeks, we are both devastated and outraged to share that our voices, and the voices of all others who have called for her release, have not been heard.

Today Natalie had an appearance in Israeli military court. During this hearing, the judge ordered that she remain in prison until the 23rd of September, when she will make another court appearance. Israeli authorities have denied all the family's requests to have Natalie released on bail for the duration of the proceedings and have refused to allow them to visit or contact Natalie in any way. They are exhausted, troubled, and losing hope that the church, local or global, will be able to help bring Natalie home.

For Natalie to spend another two months minimum in Israeli prison is incomprehensible. She is still being held at Damon Prison, where prisoners have reported terrible conditions and repeated human rights violations.

We are incredibly grieved by this news and deeply worried about her safety. Within this grief, we hold fear and uncertainty for the future of all our youth. This pattern of systemic attacks by Israel on Palestinian universities is just one more element of an occupation that suffocates Palestinian life and drives our young people to consider leaving their home. I ask you to consider how it would feel to be Natalie's parent, sibling, pastor, or friend. Our community is angry and hurting.

As a church, we continue to cry out for justice and for Natalie's freedom. At the minimum, we call for her family and a church representative to be able to visit her. We ask that the family's request for Natalie to be released temporarily on bail be reconsidered. We continue to pray without ceasing, and we ask you to continue to pray and advocate as well, both for Natalie and for all our youth.

"He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free." Luke 4:18b

Bishop Dr. Imad Haddad

Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land

