

HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH

350 Fifth Avenue, 34th Floor
New York, NY 10118-3299
Tel: 212-290-4700
Fax: 212-736-1300
Email: hrwnyc@hrw.org

MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA DIVISION

Sarah Leah Whitson, *Executive Director*
Joe Stork, *Deputy Director*
Eric Goldstein, *Research Director*
Nadim Houry, *Researcher*
Joseph Logan, *Researcher*
Abderrahim Sabir, *Project Leader for the Civilian
Protection Initiative*
William Van Esveld, *Helton Fellow*
Christoph Wilcke, *Researcher*
Nicholas Wood, *Researcher*
Assef Ashraf, *Senior Associate*
Brent Giannotta, *Associate*

ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Shibley Telhami, *Chair*
Hassan Elmasry, *Vice Chair*
Kathleen Peratis, *Vice Chair*
Bruce Rabb, *Vice Chair*
Gary G. Sick, *Vice Chair*
Gamal Abouali
Lisa Anderson
Stephen Apkon
Shaul Bakhash
M. Cherif Bassiouni
Nathan Brown
Paul Chevigny
Helena Cobban
Ahmad Deek
Edith Everett
Mansour Farhang
Christopher E. George
Rita E. Hauser
Salah al-Hejailan
Robert James
Edy Kaufman
Marina Pinto Kaufman
Samir Khalaf
Ann M. Lesch
Robert Malley
Stephen P. Marks
Rolando Matalon
Philip Mattar
Nader Mousavizadeh
Habib Nassar
Trevor Pears
Jean-Francois Seznec
Charles Shamas
Mustapha Tili
Andrew Whitley
Napoleon B. Williams, Jr.
James Zogby

HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH

Kenneth Roth, *Executive Director*
Michele Alexander, *Development & Outreach Director*
Carroll Bogert, *Associate Director*
Emma Daly, *Communications Director*
Barbara Guglielmo, *Finance & Administration Director*
Peggy Hicks, *Global Advocacy Director*
Iain Levine, *Program Director*
Andrew Mawson, *Deputy Program Director*
Suzanne Nossel, *Chief of Operations*
Dinah PoKempner, *General Counsel*
James Ross, *Legal & Policy Director*
Joe Saunders, *Deputy Program Director*
Jane Olson, *Chair, Board of Directors*

March 5, 2009

Maxime Verhagen
Minister of Foreign Affairs
Bezuidenhoutseweg 67
The Hague
Netherlands

Dear Minister Verhagen,

I am writing to request your assistance with the case of Mr. Shawan Jabarin, director of the Ramallah-based human rights organization Al Haq, whom the Stichting Geuzenverzet has invited to visit the Netherlands this month to receive De Geuzen Penning.

As you are no doubt aware, the Stichting Geuzenverzet is giving the 2009 award to both Al Haq and the Jerusalem-based organization B'Tselem to honor their courageous and persistent monitoring of human rights abuses by the Israeli government and Palestinian authorities in Gaza and the West Bank. Unfortunately, Mr. Shawan may not be able to attend the ceremony on March 13 in Vlaardingen because the Israeli military has imposed a travel ban on him for the past three years.

As a former recipient of the prize, Human Rights Watch is well aware of the award's significance and the prestige it holds in the Netherlands. We kindly ask you therefore to undertake all efforts on Mr. Jabarin's behalf to urge Israel to lift the travel ban so that he may receive the prize and continue his valuable contributions to the defense of human rights.

Human Rights Watch has worked closely with Mr. Jabarin for many years. He and his colleagues at Al Haq are valuable partners in our efforts to document human rights violations in the region. In addition to reports on Israeli violations, Al Haq documents human rights abuses by the Palestinian authorities in the West Bank and Gaza, including violations by Hamas.

Between 1999 and 2006, Mr. Jabarin traveled abroad on eight occasions. During those years, Israeli authorities raised no concerns that might justify the imposition of a travel ban. However, since March 2006, Israeli authorities have refused to allow him to travel outside the West Bank.

HUMAN
RIGHTS
WATCH

www.hrw.org

The only thing that changed after March 2006 was Mr. Jabarin's appointment as general director of Al Haq. Human Rights Watch addressed a letter to Prime Minister Olmert in March 2007 and to Defense Minister Ehud Barak in May 2008 protesting the restriction on Mr. Jabarin's freedom of movement. Regrettably, what appears to be an arbitrary policy directed at Mr. Jabarin because of his role as a human rights defender remains in place.

The human rights activity of Mr. Jabarin, being honored by the Stichting Geuzenverzet, is precisely the work recognized as legitimate, important and valuable in the Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, which the EU and its member states have undertaken to support. Any effort on your behalf to help Mr. Jabarin receive the award in the Netherlands would be in the spirit of supporting the EU Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders.

Today the Israeli High Court of Justice is hearing a petition brought by Mr. Jabarin, seeking to overturn the travel ban—the fourth petition he has brought against the travel ban. Hopefully a judgment will be rendered in time for him to attend the award ceremony next week. In the meantime, we ask you to intervene with your counterparts in Tel Aviv, so that they may understand the significance of the Geuzen Medal, and the counter-productive decision to block a human rights defender from conducting his work. We hope the travel ban will be lifted so that he can receive the prize in the Netherlands, and thereafter travel without restriction.

Thank you in advance,

Carroll Bogert
Associate Director
Human Rights Watch