

Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/terr-palestiniens-journalist-yousef-shayeb-freed-on-05-04-2012,42262.html>

Middle East/North Africa - Palestinian terr.

Sword of Damocles

Journalist Yousef Shayeb freed on bail but defamation trial still looms

5 April 2012

Reporters Without Borders was relieved to learn of the release on bail two days ago of Palestinian reporter **Yousef Shayeb** after the payment of two bonds of 5,000 Jordanian dinars (5,200 euros) each.

However, the organization remains concerned that the investigation is still open. "We demand that the charges against the journalists be dropped immediately," it said. "This harassment must cease."

Shayeb had been in detention since 26 March after libel suits were brought against him by the Palestinian foreign minister, Riyad al-Malki, and the head of the Palestinian diplomatic mission in France, Hael Al-Fahoum, his deputy Safwat Ibraghith, and the widow of Brigadier General Jad Tayeh, an officer in the Palestinian Authority's intelligence service.

The suits were prompted by an article Shayeb wrote for the Jordanian daily *Al-Ghad* in January about irregularities within the diplomatic mission in France. He quoted unidentified sources as implicating Ibraghith in cases of corruption with the complicity of his boss, Al-Fahoum, the head of the Palestinian National Fund, Ramzi Khouri, and foreign minister Al-Malki.

It also referred to the fact that Ibraghith was the son-in-law of General Tayeh, who was assassinated by a militant group in 2006.

Shayeb's sources also accused Ibraghith and some of his colleagues of putting pressure on Palestinian students living in France to monitor the activities of Islamist groups there and in other countries on behalf of Palestinian - and maybe foreign - intelligence.

The day after the article was published, the journalist was questioned for several hours by Palestinian intelligence officials then released. Two months later, he received a summons from the Ramallah attorney general.

Shayeb's lawyer Daoud Darawi told Reporters without Borders he was originally held in police custody for 48 hours and was questioned at length by the attorney general. Darawi said he and a representative of the Palestinian Journalists Union were present during the interrogation. Shayeb was ordered to reveal the sources for his article and was accused of causing discord and harming the security of the Palestinian Authority.

Faced with the journalist's refusal to reveal his sources, although the order had no judicial backing, a Palestinian Authority court decided on 28 March to extend his detention by two weeks.

Palestinian law guarantees the right of journalists to maintain the confidentiality of their sources unless a court rules that identifying them is necessary for state security or to prevent the commission of a crime.

After his detention was extended, Shayeb began a hunger strike, despite suffering from diabetes and a heart condition. He was then placed in solitary confinement and was refused visits except by the Palestinian Independent Commission for Human Rights and the Red Crescent, seven days after his arrest. He was not questioned during this time and his lawyer was unable to visit him.

He was released two days ago and was immediately admitted to hospital because of his deteriorating health. He was able to return home the following evening.

The investigation remains open and Shayeb is awaiting a date for the start of his trial. The plaintiffs are seeking damages of 6 million dollars.

You can download those documents on our website :

- Journalist Yousef Shayeb freed on bail but defamation trial still looms - Arabic Version, (PDF - 335.4 kb)
 - , (JPEG - 118.1 kb)
-