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ORAL STATEMENT

ITEM 7: Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian Territory occupied since 1967

STATEMENT OF LAITH ABU ZEYAD

UN Human Rights Council
Forty-fourth session
30 June – 17 July 2020

Madam President,

My name is Laith Abu Zeyad. I campaign for human rights and live in the occupied West Bank.

I had planned to address the Council in person. I cannot, though, because I am trapped. Since October 2019, Israeli authorities have banned me from travel, locking me in the West Bank.

They claim I am a security threat, though they refuse to share any evidence for this claim or allow me to challenge it in a meaningful way in a fair trial.

I am not a threat. I am a person dedicated to the notion that all people are born free and equal in dignity and rights.

I have worked with Amnesty International since 2017, and this is not the first time I have been attacked for my human rights work. While monitoring a protest in June 2018, I was arbitrarily detained and tortured by Palestinian security forces.

I am not the first human rights defender to have been arbitrarily detained and beaten at a protest or banned from travel. These are tools all too common in repressive states; they must be named, condemned, and stopped, in Israel, in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, and elsewhere.

Those like me, especially when we are unable to make progress in our home countries, need to be able to come to the Council to call out repression where and when we see it and to engage with human rights officials, experts, and mechanisms.

I want to thank the Council for adjusting its rules this Session; as a result I can address

you directly, if remotely, across a punitive travel ban. I ask you, please, to demand Israel to stop targeting human rights defenders for their work.

Special Rapporteur, how do you think this continued lack of accountability for Israel's actions would impact the situation of human rights defenders in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory?

Thank you, Madam President.