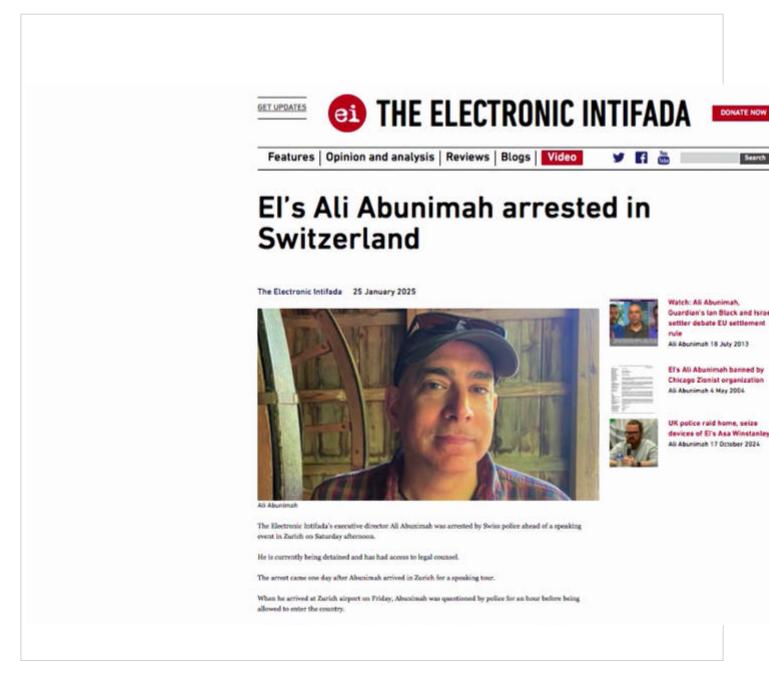# Switzerland releases and deports Palestinian American journalist Ali Abunimah

Bern, January 28 (RHC)-- Palestinian American journalist Ali Abunimah has confirmed that Swiss authorities have released and deported him after holding him for three days.

Abunimah, the executive director of the Electronic Intifada publication, suggested in a social media post on Monday that Switzerland detained him because of his advocacy for Palestinian rights.

"My 'crime'? Being a journalist who speaks up for Palestine and against Israel's genocide and settler-colonial savagery and those who aid and abet it," he wrote.

Abunimah was arrested in Zurich on Saturday before he was set to deliver a speech in the city, sparking outrage from Palestinian rights advocates. The Swiss embassy in Washington, DC, did not immediately respond to Al Jazeera's request for comment.

The Reuters news agency reported on Sunday that the Swiss police cited an entry ban and other measures under the country's immigration law as the reason for Abunimah's arrest.

The Palestinian American journalist said that when he was questioned by police officers, they accused him of "offending against Swiss law" without providing specific charges. He said he was "cut off from communication with the outside world, in a cell 24 hours a day", adding that he was unable to contact his family. He added that he was only given back his phone at the gate of the plane that flew him to Istanbul.

Abunimah noted that during the period when he was taken to prison like a "dangerous criminal", Switzerland welcomed Israeli President Isaac Herzog to the World Economic Forum in Davos.

Herzog has sparked controversy for his stance on Israel's war on Gaza, which has killed more than 47,000 Palestinians. He previously said that there are no "uninvolved civilians" in Gaza.

"This ordeal lasted three days but that taste of prison was more than enough to leave me in even greater awe of the Palestinian heroes who endure months and years in the prisons of the genocidal oppressor," Abunimah said. "More than ever, I know that the debt we owe them is one we can never repay and all of them must be free and they must remain our focus."

United Nations experts had decried Abunimah's detention as an assault on free speech. Irene Khan, a UN special rapporteur for freedom of opinion and expression, described Abunimah's arrest as "shocking news" on Saturday and urged his release.

Francesca Albanese, the UN special rapporteur on human rights in the occupied Palestinian territories, also called for an investigation into the incident. "The climate surrounding freedom of speech in Europe is becoming increasingly toxic, and we should all be concerned," Albanese wrote in a social media post.

Abunimah's detention came amid an increased clampdown on pro-Palestine voices in Europe amid the war on Gaza, which UN experts have compared with genocide. In April, Germany shut down a conference for Palestinian rights advocates and denied entry to the British doctor Ghassan Abu Sittah, who had worked in Gaza.

Activists have also accused German authorities of cracking down on protests throughout the war. In October 2024, British counterterrorism police raided the home of Abunimah's Electronic Intifada colleague Asa Winstanley — an incident that the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) said was part of a "disturbing pattern of weaponizing counter-terrorism laws against reporters".

Months earlier, British authorities held journalist Richard Medhurst, who is vocally critical of Israeli policies, for 24 hours as he arrived in London. Medhurst said on Saturday that the "terrorism" investigation against him was extended until May.

In Gaza, Israel has killed 205 journalists since the start of the war in October 2023, according to local authorities.

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