

Israel's top court orders deportation of human rights official over alleged Palestinian support



Tel Aviv, November 6 (RHC)-- Israel's Supreme Court has upheld a decision by the Tel Aviv regime to expel Omar Shakir, Israel and Palestine Director at Human Rights Watch (HRW), over his alleged support for a pro-Palestine boycott campaign against Tel Aviv.

The ruling published on the court's website rejected an appeal by Shakir and HRW against the expulsion from the occupied territories, saying Interior Minister Arye Deri had not erred in deciding not to renew the activist's residency.

Shakir, a U.S. citizen, has denounced the decision as politically motivated, saying it is part of an attempt to silence human rights organizations working in the occupied lands. A lawyer for Shakir said the court ruling meant that his client "would need to leave within 20 days" or face deportation.

In May 2018, Deri canceled Shakir's visa and ordered the activist's deportation for what the minister described as "his activity against Israel." In April, the Jerusalem al-Quds District Court approved the interior minister's move, claiming that Shakir had in the past expressed support for the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement.

The court alleged that Shakir "continues his actions publicly to advance a boycott against Israel, but it's not on the stages at conferences or in university panels, rather through disseminating his calls to advance a boycott primarily through his Twitter account and by other means."

In July, HRW Executive Director Kenneth Roth told the Israeli newspaper Haaretz that the Tel Aviv regime "is in a campaign designed to silence not only us and local human rights organizations, but also to deny Israelis information about what's happening around them."

Israel has stepped up its clampdown on groups deemed to be supporting the BDS, a Palestinian-led international campaign launched more than a decade ago with the aim of ending Israel's occupation of Palestinian territories.

The movement also pursues equal rights for Palestinians by exerting pressure on the Israeli regime via economic and cultural boycotts.

Shakir's upcoming deportation would be the first of its kind under a 2017 law allowing the expulsion of foreigners who support boycotting Israel.

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