



AMERICAN BAR ASSOCIATION

750 North Lake Shore Drive
Chicago, Illinois 60611
(312) 988-5000
FAX: (312) 988-6281

January 7, 2000

Mr. Saleh Armouti
President
Jordan Bar Association
P.O. Box 9024
Amman, Jordan

Dear Mr. Armouti:

The American Bar Association, representing more than 400,000 members of the legal community, has a longstanding commitment to the preservation of the rule of law throughout the world. Our concern focuses on an independent judiciary that is free from undue political influence and that respects the independence of lawyers, judges and human rights advocates in order to maintain internationally recognized standards of fairness and justice.

Consequently, we are deeply concerned about reports that the Jordan Bar Association prohibits its members from representing Israeli citizens before the courts in Jordan. It is our understanding that only Jordanian lawyers who are members of the Association may practice law or appear before the courts. Therefore, Israeli defendants are effectively denied legal representation in Jordan. A recent report cited the case of an Israeli, Nasat Shabeita, who was sentenced to a year in prison following a trial for which he was not able to obtain legal counsel.

Such a policy clearly violates international human rights norms, and Jordan's legal obligations as a party to various international agreements. The independence of lawyers to represent their clients, and of every person's right to counsel in criminal prosecutions, is fundamental to maintaining the international norms of equal justice and due process enumerated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), to which Jordan is a signatory. Article 14 of the ICCPR preserves, among other things, the rights of the accused to communicate with counsel of his own choosing and to be free from self-incrimination. The Jordan Bar Association's current policy is obviously contrary to these requirements.

As representatives of the legal profession, bar associations around the world bear a special responsibility to help ensure that the rule of law is being fairly and equitably administered in our countries. The United Nations Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers specifically recognizes this responsibility by providing that "[p]rofessional associations of lawyers shall cooperate with Governments to ensure that everyone has effective and equal access to legal services and that lawyers are able, without improper influence, to counsel and assist their clients in accordance with the law and recognized professional standards and ethics."

Mr. Saleh Armouti

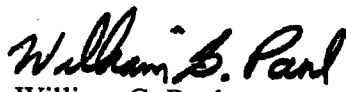
January 7, 2000

Page Two

The sole concern of the American Bar Association is the maintenance of the rule of law in the international community and the elements necessary to sustain it. We therefore respectfully urge that the Jordan Bar Association immediately rescind its policy prohibiting Jordanian lawyers from representing Israeli citizens and ensure that all persons in Jordan, regardless of nationality, religion or other status, are allowed access to legal representation.

Thank you for your consideration of this important matter. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "William G. Paul".

William G. Paul

cc: The Honorable Madeline Albright, U.S. Secretary of State
The Honorable William Joseph Burns, U.S. Ambassador to Jordan
His Excellency Marwan Muasher, Ambassador of Jordan to the United
States