

Respected Judge Amy St. Eve

My name is Dr. Esam Omeish, the National President of the Muslim American Society (MAS), one of America's largest grass roots Muslim organization with over sixty chapters in thirty-five states nationwide. I am also a doctor and a general surgeon in private practice in Alexandria, Virginia.

I am writing you on behalf of one of our community leaders , **Dr Abdelhaleem Ashqar** who, on February 1, 2007 was acquitted in your court by a federal jury of the racketeering conspiracy charges. He was nonetheless convicted on two lesser charges of obstruction of Justice and criminal contempt for refusing to testify in front of a grand jury. He faces a maximum sentence of 22 years in prison.

I have known **Dr.Ashqar** on a personal and community levels for a long time. He has been a folk legend for his resistance to testifying against anybody in what he perceives as a witch hunt for any supporters of the Palestinian rights. I also had the privilege to treat and supervise the medical care of Dr Ashqar at different times in his ordeal. I have known him for years now and have interacted with him in a multitude of circumstances.

I have also known him as a member of the executive committee of our Mosque and community center when I was the vice president of the committee from March 2000 to July 2001. **He was the recipient of the highest votes in the elections at the Mosque getting over 83% of the votes** and has a stellar performance as a director of the educational committee. His choice of speakers and the variety of programs he directed clearly show his **balanced and moderate view of Islam** and their applications.

The man I know and have encountered in all of these years is **not only an intellectual, intelligent and distinguished professor at a university, but a human being of an exemplary caliber and an impeccable integrity.** I have interacted with Dr Ashqar in many capacities and we argued in many times the rights and wrongs of what is going on here in our country and in the world at large. **Never at any time did I sense a radical tone and an extremist agenda in his words or actions.** He has never and from what I saw can never aide or abet any terrorist or help finance any act of terror, simply because he does not believe in violence and extremism as a way to voice disenfranchisement or disagreement. **He is a man of conviction and principle** and that was amply clear in his hunger strikes and his persistence despite being on the brink of death several times.

In short, **Dr Ashqar is a unique human being who believes in the rights of his people to a homeland,** but he is of principles and beliefs that will not allow him to transgress or employ terror in any circumstance. He is also been subject to a witch-hunt for years and an unstoppable and unrelenting government pressure and attempts to criminalize him, mostly because of external foreign governmental pressure and an agenda that has nothing to do with our National Security as America. The latest acquittal of the serious charges is an absolute testament to the innocence and integrity of Dr Ashqar. The lesser charges are essentially dwarfed and meaningless in this concoction of charges. **22 years are extremely harsh and draconian in light of his overall acquittal** and the fact that he had paid dearly before for such charges of court contempt even to nearly the cost of his life at some point.

**I implore your wisdom and ever present sense of Justice and what is right and great about our country and its justice system,** of which you are a beacon and a representative, to right the wrong and do what is consistent with these lofty ideals you represent. **Your leniency and minimal sentencing is urgently needed** and greatly requested to give Dr Ashqar and the millions of our Muslim American society the reaffirmation and hope that America that we know and we have always cherished and dreamed about, is in fact the America that we live in today and we always be proud of and defend at all times.

Thank you and May God the Almighty bless you, Dr Ashqar and all of us , amen

Dr. Esam Omeish  
Alexandria, Virginia



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