

Palestinian-American journalist Ali Abunimah arrested and detained in Switzerland

Kevin Reed
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Ali Abunimah, the executive director of the Chicago-based Electronic Intifada, was arrested and detained by Swiss police on Saturday afternoon just before he was scheduled to speak at an event in Zürich.

According to a report by *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* (NZZ), a Swiss, German-language daily newspaper based in Zürich, Abunimah had been invited to speak at an event held by The Palestine Committee Zürich.

The NZZ report said, “Zürich police had been notified of Abunimah’s planned appearance and submitted a request to the Swiss Federal Office of Police that he be banned, which was granted.”

The NZZ report continued, “Government Councilor and Head of the Department of Security Mario Fehr told NZZ that Abunimah is forbidden to travel to Zurich, adding, ‘We do not want an Islamist Jew-hater, who calls for violence, in Switzerland.’”

The Swiss federal police have the authority to ban entry to people deemed a threat to “internal or external” national security. However, when Abunimah arrived in Switzerland on Friday, he was detained by police and questioned for an hour and then permitted to enter the country.

Ali Abunimah, 53, is a Palestinian-American journalist and resident of Chicago. He is the executive director and co-founder of the Electronic Intifada, a pro-Palestinian news website founded in 2001. Born in Washington, DC, Abunimah is a regular contributor to the Chicago Tribune and the Los Angeles Times and has also appeared on CNN, MSNBC and PBS as a representative of the Palestinian perspective.

He is also vice-president on the board of directors of the Arab American Action Network, and is a fellow at the Palestine Center. Abunimah has been described as,

“the leading American proponent of a one-state solution to the Israeli–Palestinian conflict.”

Over decades, Abunimah has been an outspoken critic of the unconditional support by US imperialism for Israel and its crimes against Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank. To his credit, Abunimah went on national television in 2008 and denounced Barack Obama, who “used to attend events in the Palestinian community in Chicago all the time,” and his representative to the United Nations, Susan Rice, for “closing every door to justice for Palestinians,” after Obama was elected president.

Abunimah has been regularly and falsely accused of antisemitism. He has repeatedly drawn the parallel between the Holocaust and Israel’s murderous and genocidal attack on Palestinians. In 2010, he posted on Twitter, “Supporting Zionism is not atonement for the Holocaust, but its continuation in spirit.”

On January 6 of this year, Abunimah authored an article on Electronic Intifada entitled, “Israel still can’t find any 7 October rape victims, prosecutor admits,” which details the lack of evidence and “zero complainants in alleged cases of rapes committed by Palestinians” on the day Israel began its genocidal rampage in Gaza, that has now claimed the lives of over 60,000 Palestinians, according to a study by the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, a majority of whom are women and children.

Abunimah’s report details the fact that Israeli prosecutor Moran Gez has admitted that the horrific stories of the “mass” and “systematic” rape and sexual abuse of Israeli women by Hamas have no evidence for filing any cases for prosecution against the Palestinian attackers held in Israeli jails.

As reported on the *World Socialist Web* January 20, “Speaking in an interview at the end of last month with the Israeli online daily Ynet, Gaz said that despite all their investigations, ‘In the end, we have no complainants.’ No one came forward to give evidence.”

In a statement on Saturday, Electronic Intifada wrote,

Abunimah’s arrest appears to be part of a growing backlash from Western governments against expressions of solidarity with the Palestinian people.

Last year, several activists and journalists in Britain were arrested, raided or charged using “counter-terror” powers. These include Asa Winstanley, an associate editor with The Electronic Intifada, whose home was raided and his computers and phones seized. Winstanley has not been charged with any crime.

The Electronic Intifada team stands in solidarity with Ali Abunimah. Speaking out against injustice in Palestine is not a crime. Journalism is not a crime.

Numerous individuals have taken to social media to denounce the arrest and detention of Abunimah as an attack on fundamental rights. British Journalist Jonathan Cook, for example, wrote on Twitter/X,

The head of Zurich’s department of security peddles three lies in one short sentence on Ali Abunimah’s arrest to stop his speaking tour.

* Abunimah is not an ‘Islamist.’ He’s entirely secular.

* The claim he’s a ‘Jew hater’ is beyond preposterous. One of his closest, longtime colleagues at Electronic Intifada is Jewish, as have been many of his website’s contributors.

* He’s made no ‘calls for violence,’ in Switzerland or anywhere else, beyond insisting on the right of resistance enshrined in international law against Israel’s illegal occupation and its regional wars of aggression.

Meanwhile, the state Abunimah criticizes –

Site Israel – ~~on~~ has senior government ministers who are self-declared religious fascists.

For decades, Israel has held Palestinians under a hate-filled apartheid regime.

And for the past 15 months, Israel has been committing genocide – the ultimate act of violence – against the Palestinians.

European elites are turning the world on its head.

An online petition is being circulated at change.org to demand the Swiss government release Ali Abunimah from administrative detention. The petition says the journalist was, “violently and forcibly taken by unidentified individuals in civilian clothing while walking on the streets of Zurich on Saturday 25th January 2025.”

The petition also states that Abunimah was “on his way to give a lecture on the history of Palestine, after another event he was going to deliver the following day was cancelled due to external pressure, following a defamatory article in a local newspaper baselessly accusing him of radical Islamism and antisemitism.”



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