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Naturalized U.S. Citizen Charged with Immigration Fraud for Failing to Disclose Terrorism Conviction

U.S. Attorney's Office
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Eastern District of Michigan
(313) 226-9100

A naturalized United States citizen who was convicted in Israel for participating in a terrorist bombing was charged with immigration fraud, U.S. Attorney Barbara L. McQuade announced today.

Joining McQuade in the announcement was William Hayes, Acting Special Agent in Charge of Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Homeland Security Investigations.

Special agents arrested Rasmieh Yousef Odeh, 66, at a Chicago-area residence after the unsealing of an indictment filed in federal court in Detroit. The indictment charges procurement of citizenship unlawfully. The indictment alleges that Odeh was convicted in Israel for her role in the 1969 bombings of a supermarket and the British Consulate in Jerusalem, which were carried out on behalf of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), a designated terrorist organization.

According to the indictment, Odeh and others placed multiple bombs at the British Consulate and in a supermarket. One of the bombs placed at the supermarket detonated, killing two and injuring others. A bomb placed at the Consulate caused structural damage to the facility. Odeh was sentenced by Israeli military authorities to life imprisonment but was released after 10 years as part of a prisoner exchange, and she then returned to the West Bank.

The indictment alleges that in 1995, she immigrated to the United States and naturalized as a citizen in 2004. In her immigration documents filed in the United States, the indictment alleges, Odeh omitted her arrest, conviction, and imprisonment overseas, which were material facts for the United States government in determining whether to grant her citizenship.

"The United States will never be a safe haven for individuals seeking to distance themselves from their pasts," said William Hayes, acting special agent in charge for HSI Detroit. "When individuals lie on immigration documents, the system is severely undermined and the security of our nation is put at risk."

"An individual convicted of a terrorist bombing would not be admitted to the United States if that information was known at the time of arrival," McQuade said. "Upon discovery that someone convicted of a terrorist attack is in the United States illegally, we will seek to use our criminal justice system to remove that individual."

If convicted of the charge, Odeh will be stripped of her United States citizenship. She also faces a maximum sentence of 10 years for naturalization fraud.

The charges contained in the indictment are only allegations. A person is presumed innocent unless and until he or she is proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in court.

This case was investigated by special agents of Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Homeland Security Investigations with the assistance of the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

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