

URGENT ACTION

PALESTINIAN FACING INDEFINITE DETENTION

Palestinian academic and writer Ahmad Qatamesh is being held as an administrative detainee, which allows the Israeli authorities to detain him indefinitely without charge and denies him any real opportunity to challenge the detention order.

Ahmad Qatamesh was arrested by Israeli security forces at 2am on 21 April from his brother's home in Ramallah in the occupied West Bank. He was taken to Ofer detention centre in the West Bank, where he was questioned for around 10 minutes by the Israel Security Agency (ISA). At a hearing on 28 April, a military judge agreed to extend his detention for another six days for further questioning, although none followed in this period. At another hearing on 2 May, the ISA made a request to extend his detention for a second time in order, according to his wife, to question him about his association with the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP). Ahmad Qatamesh denied being active in the PFLP and the military judge refused the request.

A military court official told Ahmad Qatamesh's lawyer that he would be released at 5pm on 3 May, and a prison officer gave him the same message. However, at 8.30pm on 3 May, Ahmad Qatamesh was handed an administrative detention order signed by the West Bank military commander of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF). The order appeared to have been produced for another detainee, since Ahmad Qatamesh's name was written over correction fluid. The order was for an "extension" of administrative detention even though this is Ahmad Qatamesh's first administrative detention order since the 1990s. The order also stated that he was an activist in Hamas, an organization with very different political views to those of the PFLP.

A military judge should review an administrative detention order within eight days and can cancel or reduce the order, though the usual practice is for the judge to confirm it. Amnesty International is concerned that Ahmad Qatamesh is being detained for the peaceful expression of his political views and therefore a prisoner of conscience.

Ahmad Qatamesh was arrested by the IDF in 1992 and reportedly tortured. He documented his experiences in a publication called "I shall not wear your tarboosh [fez]". Over a year later he was placed under administrative detention after a judge had ordered his release on bail. After repeated administrative detention orders, he was eventually released on 15 April 1998.

PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY in Hebrew or your own language, within the next seven days

- Expressing concern that Ahmad Qatamesh is being detained for the peaceful expression of his political views and noting that, if this is the case, Amnesty International would consider him to be a prisoner of conscience and call for his immediate and unconditional release;
- Calling on the Israeli authorities, in any case, to release Ahmad Qatamesh unless he is to be promptly charged with a recognizable criminal offence and brought to trial in full conformity with international fair trial standards;
- Calling on the Israeli authorities to end the use of administrative detention.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 13 MAY 2011 TO:

Commander of the IDF – West Bank

Major-General Avi Mizrahi

GOC Central Command

Military Post 01149

Battalion 877

Israel Defense Forces, Israel

Fax: +972 2 530 5741 / 530 5724

Salutation: Major-General Avi Mizrahi

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of

Defence

Ehud Barak

Ministry of Defence

37 Kaplan Street, Hakiryia

Tel Aviv 61909, Israel

Fax: +972 3 691 6940 / 696 2757

Salutation: Dear Minister

Attorney General

Menahem Mazuz

Ministry of Justice

29 Salah al-Din Street

Jerusalem 91010

Israel

Fax: +972 2 628 5438 / 627 4481

Salutation: Dear Attorney-General

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

During the 1990s, Amnesty International campaigned against Ahmad Qatamesh's administrative detention. After he was released in 1998, he studied political science and has since lectured in the humanities department at al-Quds University in Jerusalem. Following his detention in April 2011, his wife Suha Barghouti, a board member of local human rights NGO Addameer, called his arrest "an attempt to silence his critical voice".

Administrative detention is an Israeli procedure under which Palestinian detainees from the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip are held without charge or trial for periods of up to six months which are renewable indefinitely. No criminal charges are filed against administrative detainees, and there is no intention of bringing them to trial. Detainees are held on the basis of "secret evidence" which the Israeli military authorities claim cannot be revealed for security reasons. The "secret evidence" on which the military authorities base their decision to issue an administrative detention order is not made available to the detainee or his/her lawyer and the detainee cannot challenge the reasons for his/her detention.

The Israeli authorities have used administrative detention against thousands of Palestinians over several decades, but the number of administrative detainees has decreased over the last three years. In March 2011, 217 Palestinians were being held as administrative detainees, according to Israel Prison Service statistics.

The PFLP is a left-wing Palestinian political party which also has an armed wing. While Ahmad Qatamesh was a political and intellectual supporter of the PFLP in the 1990s, he says he has not been involved with them for 13 years. To Amnesty International's knowledge, he has never been involved with PFLP-affiliated armed groups or advocated violence.

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