

EXTERNAL

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Prisoner of Conscience / Legal Concern

22 May 1997

PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY Daoud Kuttab, journalist and broadcaster

Daoud Kuttab, a well-known Palestinian journalist and broadcaster, has been arrested by the Palestinian police and is now being held as a prisoner of conscience in Ramallah police station under the Palestinian Authority (PA).

Daoud Kuttab, winner of the 1996 International Press Freedom Award of the Committee to Protect Journalists, was summoned by phone by the Palestinian police from his home in East Jerusalem at 11pm on 20 May 1997. He did not return home and around 2.30am he telephoned his family to say he was being held by the police in Ramallah.

Initially the Palestinian police in Ramallah denied holding him, both to the media and to Amnesty International. However, during the afternoon of 21 May, a US consular official was allowed to visit Daoud Kuttab (who has American citizenship) at Ramallah police station. Later his family and the Director of the Mandela Institute were able to see him, though they were not allowed to stay alone with him. He told them that he was being well treated, but that he had not been charged with any offence or even questioned. On 22 May, he also received visits from his family, including his three children and representatives of the US embassy, who were eventually allowed to see him in private.

Daoud Kuttab, who is the head of the Modern Communications Centre at al-Quds University, has an independent television studio which has been broadcasting sessions of the 88-member Palestinian Legislative Council. These broadcasts, which often contain severe criticisms of the Palestinian Authority, are frequently jammed by the PA. The session broadcast on Tuesday 19 May apparently contained particularly severe criticisms of alleged corruption in the PA.

Amnesty International considers that Daoud Kuttab is a prisoner of conscience being held solely for his activities as a journalist, broadcaster and academic. He should be immediately and unconditionally released.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express/airmail letters in Arabic or English or your own language:

- stating that you consider Daoud Kuttab to be a prisoner of conscience, detained solely for his work as a journalist and broadcaster;
- calling for his immediate and unconditional release;
- urging President Arafat to ensure that freedom of expression expressed in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is respected.

APPEALS TO:

President Yasser Arafat
Head of the Palestinian Authority
Palestinian Authority
Al-Muntada,
Gaza,
Palestinian Authority

Telegrams: President Arafat, Gaza, via Israel

Faxes: +972 7 823 744; 822 365 (ask for fax)

Salutation: Dear President Arafat

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2. Minister of Justice Mr Freih Abu Meddein
Ministry of Justice
Abu Khadra Building
Omar al-Mukhtar Street
Gaza, Palestinian Authority

Faxes: +972 7 822 236

Telegrams: Justice Minister, Palestinian Authority, Gaza

Salutation: Dear Minister

Please send messages of support to Daoud Kuttab at Ramallah police station,
fax number +972 2 995 5020.

COPIES TO: diplomatic representatives of Palestinian Authority accredited to
your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat,
or your section office, if sending appeals after 22 June 1997.