

UA 116/98

Fear of torture / Legal concern

16 April 1998

PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY Ghassan al-Adassi, 19
Dr 'Abd al-Aziz Rantissi, 51
At least 40 others

There are serious concerns about the above named men and at least 40 others who have been arrested by the Palestinian security and police forces since 29 March 1998.

Ghassan al-Adassi, a Birzeit University student, was arrested by the Palestinian Preventive Security Service (PSS) on 29 March at his home in al-Bireh in the West Bank. He has reportedly suffered torture during detention, including beatings, sleep deprivation and hanging from his hands. A letter he allegedly wrote states that his confession to involvement in the murder of Muhyi al-Din Sharif, a leader of the military wing of *Hamas*, was extracted under torture. He has been denied access to his lawyer, who has repeatedly asked to see him.

Dr 'Abd al-Aziz Rantissi, a *Hamas* spokesman and leader from the Gaza Strip, was arrested by Palestinian police on 9 April after *Hamas* had issued statements accusing the Palestinian Authority (PA) of involvement in the killing of Muhyi al-Din Sharif. According to a police official, Dr Rantissi was "*arrested for interrogation following baseless accusations and insults he made against the Palestinian Authority*". If so, Amnesty International would consider Dr Rantissi to be a prisoner of conscience.

Since his arrest, Dr Rantissi has not been allowed to receive visits from his lawyer or family, despite the fact that the Attorney General granted his lawyer permission to visit him.

At least 40 other suspected members of *Hamas* and other Islamic groups have been arrested since 29 March. Amnesty International is concerned that they are not being allowed access to their families and lawyers and fears that they may be in danger of ill-treatment or torture.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

All the above arrests have occurred following the mysterious death of Muhyi al-Din Sharif in the West Bank on 29 March 1998. The PA stated that he was killed by fellow members of the military wing of *Hamas*. *Hamas* then denied the charge, claiming that Israel, aided by members of the PA, was behind his death. The PA subsequently launched a series of arrests targeting Islamists, including prominent *Hamas* members.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/faxes/e-mails/express/airmail letters in Arabic, English or your own language:

- asking for assurances that all those arrested since 29 March 1998 are well treated and allowed immediate access to their lawyers and families;
- calling for the immediate release of all detainees unless they are charged with a recognizably criminal offence and given a fair and prompt trial;
- in the case of Ghassan al-Adassi, asking that the allegations of torture be investigated and reminding the authorities that confessions extracted under torture must not be allowed as evidence in court;
- in the case of Dr 'Abd al-Aziz Rantissi, asking for his immediate and unconditional release if he is only held for the peaceful expression of his opinions.

APPEALS TO:

President Yasser Arafat

Palestinian Authority

Al-Muntada

Gaza, Palestinian Authority

Telegrams: President Arafat, Gaza, Palestinian Authority

Faxes: + 972-7-822365 (ask to send a fax)

Salutation: Dear President Arafat

Mr Freih Abu Meddein

Minister of Justice

Ministry of Justice

Abu Khadra Building

Omar al-Mukhtar Street

Gaza, Palestinian Authority

Telegrams: Justice Minister, Gaza, Palestinian Authority

Faxes: + 972-7-867109

Salutation: Dear Minister

Colonel Jibril Rajoub

Head of Preventive Security

Jericho, Palestinian Authority

Telegrams: Rajoub, Preventive Security, Jericho

Faxes: + 972-2-992-1273 (ask to send a fax)

Salutation: Dear Colonel Rajoub

Brigadier General Ghazi Jabali

Head of Civilian Police (Gaza Strip)

Police Headquarters

Gaza City, Palestinian Authority

Fax: + 972-7-822 335

Salutation: Dear Brigadier General Jabali

COPIES TO:

Palestinian Centre for Human Rights

PO Box 1204

Qadada Building

Omar El Mukhtar Street

Gaza, Palestinian Authority

Fax: + 972-7-824776/825893

Email: pchr@trendline.co.il

LAW - The Palestinian Society for the Protection of Human Rights and the Environment

PO Box 20873

Jerusalem, via Israel

Fax: +972-2-581 1072

Email: law@lawsociety.org

and to diplomatic representatives of the Palestinian Authority accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 29 May 1998.