

PUBLIC

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Prisoner of conscience/

Torture o

PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY Maher al-Dasuqi, journalist, aged 38

Maher al-Dasuqi, who hosts a popular television program broadcast by two local Palestinian stations, was arrested on 15 September 1999, shortly after a Palestinian prisoner's mother criticized the Palestinian Authority on his program. Amnesty International considers him a prisoner of conscience.

Maher al-Dasuqi was arrested in Ramallah by Preventive Security Service (PSS) officers on a warrant issued by the military prosecutor, Colonel Muhammad al-Bishtawi. He has been charged with possession of material likely to cause incitement against the Palestinian Authority. However, PSS officers searched Maher al-Dasuqi's office at the time of his arrest but did not actually confiscate any material. Maher al-Dasuqi is being held at a PSS detention centre, the *mutaba' wa tahqiq*, in Ramallah. His wife and his lawyer, Husni Kalboneh of the human rights organization LAW, visited him on 23 September. He told them that he had been kept hooded continuously for three days.

PSS officials have stated that Maher al-Dasuqi is accused of "offences against the state" and that his arrest is not connected with anything broadcast on his show.

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

- stating that Amnesty International regards Maher al-Dasuqi as a prisoner of conscience and is calling for his immediate and unconditional release;
- asking the Palestinian Authority not to imprison anyone for exercising their right to freedom of expression, guaranteed by Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states: "Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas...";
- calling on the Palestinian Authority to order an independent and impartial inquiry into allegations that Maher al-Dasuqi was hooded continuously for three days and to publicize the conclusions of this inquiry;
- urging the Palestinian Authority to bring to justice in a fair trial, consistent with international standards, anyone against whom evidence is found that they tortured or ill-treated Maher al-Dasuqi.

APPEALS TO:

President Yasser Arafat

Palestinian Authority

Al-Muntada

Gaza

Palestinian Authority

Telegrams: President Arafat, Palestinian Authority, Gaza

Faxes: + 972 7 282 2365 (when voice answers, please request fax tone)

Salutation: Dear President Arafat

Colonel Jibril al-Rajub

Head of the Preventive Security Service (West Bank)

Jericho

Palestinian Authority

Telegrams: Colonel al-Rajub, Palestinian Authority, Jericho

Faxes: + 972 2 232 1273 (when voice answers, please request fax tone)
Salutation: Dear Colonel al-Rajub

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

Faxes: + 972 7 286 7109
Salutation: Dear Minister

COPIES TO:

Dr Kamal Sharafi
Chairman of the Human Rights and Monitoring Committee
Palestinian Legislative Council
P O Box 1930
Ramallah
Palestinian Authority

Salutation: Dear Dr Sharafi

The Palestinian Society for the Protection of Human Rights and the Environment
(LAW)
P O Box 20873
Jerusalem
Via Israel

and to representatives of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO)
accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat,
or your section office, if sending appeals after 5 November 1999.