

# URGENT ACTION

## HEALTH FEARS FOR PALESTINIAN HUNGER STRIKER

**Palestinian prisoner Akram Rikhawi's life is in grave danger. He has been on hunger strike since 12 April and is being held in an Israeli prison clinic which cannot provide the specialist care he needs. He is suffering from various chronic health conditions including diabetes, asthma, osteoporosis and high cholesterol.**

Thirty-eight-year-old **Akram Rikhawi**, from the Gaza Strip, is held in solitary confinement in the Israel Prison Service (IPS) clinic in Ramleh prison in Israel, apparently as punishment for his hunger strike. He is being denied regular access to an independent doctor and requires treatment in a civilian hospital with the necessary facilities to address his various urgent medical needs. During his hunger strike he has at times only taken water, while at other times he has also taken vitamins.

Akram Rikhawi started his hunger strike in protest at the inadequacy of his medical treatment in prison which led him to request early release although this was denied twice. On 4 July, a doctor from local NGO Physicians for Human Rights-Israel (PHR-I) finally visited Akram Rikhawi. PHR-I had made several requests to the IPS for him to see an independent doctor as well as an appeal to the District Court, which on 27 June ruled that access should be given no later than 3 July. He has had only one other visit from a PHR-I doctor which took place on 6 June.

On 4 July, PHR-I said that Akram Rikhawi's asthma had worsened dramatically and that the "... doctor believes [he] has been given very high doses of steroids as treatment [for asthma], which can cause severe long-term and irreversible damage." The doctor also reiterated a recommendation made following the June visit that he should be examined by a lung specialist. The doctor also said that his right eye needs to be examined to assess whether he needs surgery for a possible cataract; he has already had surgery for a cataract on his left eye. Akram Rikhawi complained of extreme dizziness, numbness in his left thigh which PHR-I report could indicate peripheral nerve damage. He has difficulty walking and standing but is apparently not being assisted to move around.

On 24 June Akram Rikhawi was taken to Assaf Harofeh Hospital, a public hospital in Israel, where he spent two days shackled to the bed – a form of ill-treatment - until he was transferred back to prison.

### **Please write immediately in Hebrew or your own language:**

- Expressing grave concern for Akram Rikhawi's health, urging the authorities to take immediate steps to ensure he has access to adequate medical care including the further examinations he requires in civilian hospitals with specialized facilities, and access to an independent doctor of his choice;
- Urging them to take all necessary measures to ensure that he is treated humanely at all times and not punished in any way for his hunger strike including by being held in solitary confinement and shackled.

### **PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 27 AUGUST 2012 TO:**

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of

Defence

Ehud Barak, Ministry of Defence

37 Kaplan Street, Hakiryia

Tel Aviv 61909, Israel

Fax: +972 3 69 16940 / 62757

Salutation: **Dear Minister**

Israel Prison Service Commissioner

Lieutenant-General Aharon Franco

Israel Prison Service, PO Box 81

Ramleh 72100, Israel

Fax: +972 8 919 3800

Salutation: **Dear Lieutenant-General**

**And copies to:**

Military Advocate General

Brigadier General Danny Efroni

6 David Elazar Street

Hakiryia, Tel Aviv, Israel

Fax: +972 3 569 4526

Email: [avimn@idf.gov.il](mailto:avimn@idf.gov.il)

**Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:**

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY  
INTERNATIONAL**



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### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Akram Rikhawi was arrested by Israeli security forces at a checkpoint in 2004 while he was travelling to his home in Rafah in the Gaza Strip. He was sentenced by a military court later the same year to nine years' imprisonment. Amnesty International is not aware of the offences of which he was convicted

He was part of the recent mass hunger strike involving some 2,000 Palestinian prisoners and detainees who were protesting against poor prison conditions, including solitary confinement, denial of family visits and detention without charge. The hunger strike came to an end on 14 May following an Egyptian-brokered deal with the Israeli authorities. The deal included an agreement by the authorities to end the solitary confinement of 19 prisoners and lift a ban on family visits for prisoners from the Gaza Strip. On 16 July 2012, 40 relatives of 24 individuals from Gaza who are held in Israel were allowed to visit their relatives in Ramon (also known as Nafkha) prison, southern Israel. This is the first time since 2007 that the Israeli authorities have allowed families from Gaza to visit their relatives in Israeli prisons. Akram Rikhawi has not seen his family who live in Gaza since 2006. According to the ICRC, a total of 554 individuals whose families are in the Gaza Strip are held in Israeli prisons (see: <http://www.icrc.org/eng/resources/documents/news-release/2012/israel-palestine-news-2012-07-16.htm>). Relatives of West Bank prisoners are also frequently denied visitor permits by the Israeli authorities on unspecified "security" grounds.

At least three other Palestinian men held in Israeli prisons remain on hunger-strike in protest at their conditions and detention with trial. Read more at <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE15/038/2012/en>.

Name: Akram Rikhawi  
Gender m

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