

PUBLIC

AI Index: MDE 15/021/2003

10 February 2003

Further Information on UA 30/03 (MDE 15/015/2003, 29 January 2003) Prisoners of conscience / Conscientious objectors

ISRAEL

Hillel Goral (m), aged 18

Noam Bahat (m), aged 19

Hillel Goral and Noam Bahat remain in prison for refusing to serve in the Israeli army. Both started a hunger strike on 16 January 2003.

After 16 days, Noam Bahat decided to stop his hunger strike, during which, he reportedly was not examined, nor did he receive any medical treatment. After a two-day break Hillel Goral decided to resume his hunger strike. The two teenagers remain detained in isolation wards in Military Prisons No. 4, near Tel Aviv, and No. 6, near Haifa, respectively. Both are reportedly subjected to harsh treatment.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Israel has no alternative civilian service to compulsory military service. In 2002, Hillel Goral and Noam Bahat were amongst 300 signatories of the "High School Seniors' Letter" in which teenagers shortly to be conscripted for army service wrote to Prime Minister, Ariel Sharon. They stated that they would not take part in the oppression of the Palestinian people by serving in the Israeli army. Some refused to serve in the Occupied Territories, while others expressed complete objection to serving in the Israeli army.

Amnesty International is concerned about the number of Israeli soldiers and reservists detained because of their refusal to perform military service or to serve in the Occupied Territories. In Israel, conscripts who make it known that they are unwilling to serve on grounds of conscience and because they believe that the army is committing human rights violations are imprisoned. However, other conscripts are routinely granted deferral or exemption from performing military service on religious grounds. Recently, the Israeli army has hardened its position towards these conscript conscientious objectors, who are being sentenced to repeated terms of imprisonment of between 14 and 42 days each.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in English, Hebrew or your own language:

- calling for all conscientious objectors who have been imprisoned to be immediately and unconditionally released;
- urging the authorities to provide all necessary medical care to those on hunger strike.

APPEALS TO:

Shaul Mofaz
Minister of Defence
Ministry of Defence
37 Kaplan Street
Tel-Aviv 61909,
Israel

Telegram: Defence Minister, Tel-Aviv, Israel

Fax: +972 3 6962757 / 6917915

Salutation: Dear Defence Minister

Brig. Gen. Menachem Finkelstein
Chief Military Attorney
Military postal code 9605
Israeli Defense Forces (IDF)
Israel

Telegram: Chief Military Attorney, Israeli Defense Forces, Israel
Fax: +972 3 5694370
Salutation: Dear Brigadier General

Colonel Deborah Chassid
Commander of Induction Base, Tel-Hashomer
Military postal code 02718
Israeli Defense Forces (IDF)
Israel

Telegram: Chief Military Attorney, Israeli Defense Forces, Israel
Fax: +972 3 7376052
Salutation: Dear Colonel

Maj. General Gil Regev
Head of the IDF Personnel Department
Military postal code 9605
Israeli Defense Forces (IDF)
Israel

Telegram: Head of IDF Personnel Department, Israeli Defense Forces, Israel
Fax: +972 3 5699400
Salutation: Dear Major General

Head of the Incompatibility Unit
Induction base, Tel-Hashomer
Military postal code 02718
Israeli Defense Forces (IDF)
Israel

Telegram: Head of the Incompatibility Unit, Israeli Defense Forces, Israel
Fax: +972 3 7376705
Salutation: Dear Sir

COPIES TO: Diplomatic representatives of Israel accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 24 March 2003.