

EXTERNAL

AI Index: MDE 15/02/96

3 January 1996

Further information on UA 214/95 (MDE 15/29/95, 8 September 1995) - Fear for Safety and new concern: Prisoner of Conscience

PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY Bassem Eid, aged 38, human rights activist

Bassem Eid, a researcher working for B'Tselem, a human rights organization based in Jerusalem, was arrested about 11pm on 2 January 1996 by members of the Palestinian security forces. He is now held in Ramallah at the headquarters of Force 17, a branch of the Palestinian security services said to be directly under Chairman Yasser Arafat.

Bassem Eid was able to telephone his office during the morning of 3 January and said he had not been interrogated or informed of the reasons for his arrest.

The Palestinian Authority (PA) has made no statement about the cause of his detention.

On 28 December 1995 B'Tselem issued a press statement about interrogations and torture carried out by a group of prisoners on fellow prisoners held by the Israeli authorities in Ketziot Detention Centre (also known as Ansar III). Two Palestinian prisoners were said to have died in September and October 1995 as a result of torture by the group of prisoners. B'Tselem accused the Israeli prison authorities of failing to intervene to prevent the torture. B'Tselem stated that the group which had carried out the tortures was subsequently released in the context of the Oslo II peace agreement and that the leader of the group was appointed to a senior position in the Preventive Security Service (PSS).

In August 1995 B'tselem issued a report accusing the Palestinian PSS of violations against Palestinians in the West Bank, including torture, extrajudicial punishments and arrest without warrant. On 8 September, after a personal attack on Bassem Eid by Colonel Jibril Rajub, the Head of the PSS in Jericho, Amnesty International issued Urgent Action 214/95.

In the context of the Oslo II agreement major towns, including Ramallah, in the territories occupied by Israel, have been placed under the PA. The PA has previously arrested, usually for a few hours or days, a number of human rights activists and journalists suspected of criticising the Authority.

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

- reminding the Palestinian Authority that Chairman Yasser Arafat stated to an Amnesty International delegation that he was committed to respect all internationally recognised human rights standards;
- stressing that Bassem Eid is a prisoner of conscience and should be immediately and unconditionally released;
- urging the Palestinian Authority to set up a thorough and independent investigation into the allegations, made in the 28 December 1995 B'Tselem press release, that present members of the PSS were involved in torture whilst in Israeli prisons, and to make public its findings.

This is a limited action. Please restrict appeals to 10 per Section.

APPEALS TO:

Chairman Yasser Arafat
Head of the Palestinian Authority
Palestinian Authority
Abu Khadra Building
Omar al-Mukhtar Street,
Gaza,
Palestinian Authority
Telegrams: Chairman Arafat, Gaza, via Israel
Faxes: +972 7 823 744
Salutation: Dear Mr Arafat

Khaled al-Qidreh
Attorney General
Palestinian Authority
Attorney General Building
Yarmouk,
Gaza,
Palestinian Authority
Telegrams: Attorney General, Palestinian Authority, Gaza, via Israel
Faxes: +972 7 824 503
Salutation: Dear Attorney General

COPIES TO:

The Palestinian Independent Commission for Citizens' Rights
Ritz Hotel
Jerusalem
via Israel
Faxes: +972 2 282 869

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 17 February 1996.