

EXTERNAL

AI Index: MDE 15/24/96

UA 82/96

Fear of torture / Legal concerns

26 March 1996

**PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY At least 700 detained since recent suicide bombings  
in Israel**

---

In a wave of arrests following the recent suicide bombings in Israel, at least 700 suspected supporters of *Hamas* or *Islamic Jihad* have been arrested, mostly without warrant, by the Palestinian Authority (PA). Fears that some of them may face torture or ill-treatment during interrogation have been heightened by reports of beatings of detainees. At least one prisoner has been sentenced to life imprisonment after a grossly unfair trial.

Few of the detainees have been charged or given access to lawyers. Detainees held in Nablus Prison have not been allowed visits by human rights organizations. Families and human rights organizations experience difficulty in locating those who have been arrested, which means that many of those arrested by PA security services are held incommunicado until a member of their family is able to find out where they are detained. Lack of access to the outside world facilitates torture and ill-treatment and Amnesty International has received reports of beating of detainees during interrogation in Gaza, Jericho and Nablus prisons, including beating by electrical cables.

At least one detainee has been sentenced in a grossly unfair trial before the State Security Court. Mohammed Abu Wardah was reportedly tried at 1am on the night of 5-6 March. He was represented by a state-appointed lawyer. Amnesty International has condemned trials before the State Security Court as unfair, and had called on the governments of Israel and the United States of America (USA) to stop encouraging the practice of unfair trials in the Palestinian Authority.

The suicide bombings, which were carried out on 26 February and 3 and 4 March, killing over 60 people including the bombers, were followed by strong pressure from Israel and the USA on the Palestinian Authority to act decisively against supporters of *Hamas* and *Islamic Jihad*. Amnesty International is calling on these governments to ensure that, in their efforts to prevent further suicide bombings and to bring those who participated in organizing suicide bombings to justice, they abide by their duty under the United Nations Charter to promote respect for, and observance of, human rights.

(see also UA 64/96, *Fear of continued killings of civilians by Hamas*, MDE 15/15/96, 5 March 1996; UA 65/96, *Israel and the Occupied Territories: Concern of state response to suicide bombings*, MDE 15/16/96, 6 March and update 21 March).

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

- urging the Palestinian Authority to ensure that no detainee is tortured or ill-treated;
- urging that detainees be promptly charged and brought before a judge or released;
- to inform families of detainees where their relatives are held, and to ensure that all those held have access to lawyers and family visits;
- to halt trials before the State Security Court because they are grossly unfair
- defendants sentenced by this court should be retried in a court which meets international standards for fair trial.

**APPEALS TO:**

1. President Yasser Arafat  
Palestinian Authority  
Al-Muntada  
Gaza, Palestinian Authority  
**Faxes: +972 7 822 365 (ask to send a fax)**  
**Telegrams: President Arafat, Palestinian Authority, Gaza**  
**Salutation: Dear President Arafat**

2. Minister of Justice Mr Freih Abu Meddein  
Ministry of Justice  
Abu Khadra Building  
Omar al-Mukhtar Street  
Gaza, Palestinian Authority  
**Faxes: +972 7 822 236**  
**Telegrams: Justice Minister, Palestinian Authority, Gaza**  
**Salutation: Dear Minister**

3. Khaled al-Qidrah  
Attorney-General  
Attorney-General Building  
Yarmouk, Gaza,  
Palestinian Authority  
**Faxes: +972 7 822 388**  
**Telegrams: Attorney-General, Palestinian Authority, Gaza**  
**Salutation: Dear Mr al-Qidrah**

**COPIES TO:**

Dr Iyad al-Sarraj  
Palestinian Independent Commission for Citizens' Rights  
Ritz Hotel  
Ibn Khaldun Street  
PO Box 54627  
Jerusalem  
Via Israel  
**Fax: +972 2 28 28 69**

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

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.** Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 10 May 1996.