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ISRAEL AND THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES

@SELECTIVE OBJECTORS TO MILITARY SERVICE

LIOR OVSHANI AND SERGEANT-MAJOR AMIEL VARDY

Lior Ovshani and reserve Sergeant-Major Amiel Vardy are both currently in prison for refusing to carry out military service in the Israel Defence Force (IDF), Israel's armed forces. Both have reportedly given as their reason for refusing to serve their opposition to current IDF practices in the Occupied Territories.

Lior Ovshani (military personal number 5045337) is 18 years' old and comes from Herzliya. He was first sentenced on 9 April 1991 to 14 days' imprisonment which he spent at a military base. On 22 April 1991 he was sentenced to a further 28 days' imprisonment in Military Prison No. 6 at Atlit, from which he was released on 18 May. On 21 May he was sentenced to a further 28 days', 21 of which were suspended. He is currently believed to be held in a military detention facility.

If Lior Ovshani again refuses to serve in the Occupied Territories when his current sentence expires on 27 May, he is likely to be sentenced again, and could face up to 49 days' imprisonment. According to his father, Lior Ovshani has expressed his determination to continue to refuse to serve in the Occupied Territories. His father also reportedly said that his son decided not to serve in the Occupied Territories after working as a construction worker with Palestinian labourers.

Sergeant-major Amiel Vardy was sentenced on 16 May 1991 to 29 days' imprisonment for refusing to carry out his reserve duty in the IDF on the West Bank. This is the first time he has refused to carry out reserve duty in the Occupied Territories. Amiel Vardy is a post-graduate student in the Theatre Studies Department at The Hebrew University in Jerusalem. He is married with two children.

In 1991 a total of 9 selective objectors to military service have been imprisoned for periods of up to 57 days for refusal to serve in the Occupied Territories and Lebanon. Two have been sentenced more than once during the year.

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL'S CONCERN

Amnesty International is concerned that Lior Ovshani and Amiel Vardy have been imprisoned for their conscientiously-held beliefs. Under its mandate, Amnesty International works for the release of prisoners of conscience, a category which includes persons "imprisoned, detained or otherwise physically restricted by reason of their political, religious or other conscientiously-held beliefs or by reason of their ethnic origin, sex, colour, or language, provided that they have not used or advocated violence."

A person imprisoned for refusing to perform military service is considered by Amnesty International to be a prisoner of conscience in accordance with the following definition:

"a person liable to conscription for military service who for reasons of conscience or profound conviction arising from religious, ethical, moral, humanitarian, philosophical, political or similar motives refuses to perform armed service or any other direct or indirect participation in wars or armed conflicts."

This definition also includes people who refuse to take part in a particular conflict or serve in a particular place (selective objectors). The 1970 World Conference on Religion and Peace in Kyoto affirmed that the right to refuse to serve should be extended to:

"those who are unwilling to serve in a particular war because they consider it unjust"

Amnesty International believes that one's reasons for objecting to military service can be other than total pacifism and that political reasons for refusal to serve are also acceptable.

Amnesty International opposes the imprisonment of objectors to military service where no alternative civilian service is available or when the length of any alternative civilian service is considered to be punitive.