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**ISRAEL AND THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES**

**@SELECTIVE OBJECTOR TO MILITARY SERVICE**

**MENACHEM BEFETZ**

Menachem Befetz is currently in prison for refusing to carry out his reserve duty in the Israel Defence Force (IDF), Israel's armed forces. He has reportedly referred to his opposition to current IDF practices in the Occupied Territories as his reason for refusing to serve.

Menachem Befetz was born in 1959 and comes from Tel Aviv. He was sentenced on 14 October 1991 to 28 days' imprisonment for refusing to carry out his reserve duty in the Occupied Territories. This is the third time he has been imprisoned for refusing to serve. He was previously sentenced on 2 January 1988 to 22 days' imprisonment and on 16 July 1990 to 14 days' imprisonment. He is currently believed to be held in Atlit military prison (prison No.6).

**AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL'S CONCERN**

Amnesty International works for the release of prisoners of conscience, a category which includes persons held by reason of their political, religious or other conscientiously held beliefs, provided that they have not used or advocated violence.

Amnesty International notes that the United Nations Commission on Human Rights' Resolution 1989/59 Conscientious objection to military service recognizes conscientious objection to military service as a legitimate exercise of the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion as laid down in Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as well as Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

A person 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 and is imprisoned as a direct result of their refusal to serve is considered by Amnesty International to be a prisoner of conscience unless such person has also refused to perform alternative civilian service which is no longer than the length of military service. There is no such alternative civilian service in Israel.

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. It therefore considers people who refuse to take part in a particular conflict or serve in a particular place (selective objectors) to be prisoners of conscience.

Amnesty International is concerned that Menachem Befetz has been imprisoned for his conscientiously-held beliefs and as such is a prisoner of conscience. The organization is calling for his immediate and unconditional release.

Amnesty International is also calling on the Israeli authorities to review their legislation on military conscription, with a view to recognizing and protecting the right to conscientious objection and to providing an alternative, non-punitive, civilian service.