

**PUBLIC**

**AI Index: MDE 21/007/2007**

**09 May 2007**

**Further Information on UA 81/07 (MDE 21/005/2007, 05 April 2007) – Fear for Safety**

**PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY                      Alan Johnston (m), British national, journalist**

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More than eight weeks since his abduction by Palestinian gunmen in Gaza City British news reporter Alan Johnston remains missing and conflicting reports of demands made by his captors for his release are fuelling fears about his safety.

There have been conflicting reports in Arab and other media about alleged demands from groups claiming to be holding Alan Johnston. In a tape received by the al-Jazeera Arabic television station a group calling itself "Army of Islam" and claiming to be holding Alan Johnston demands the release of a Muslim preacher of Palestinian origin currently detained in the United Kingdom on terrorism charges, as a condition for Alan Johnston's release.

According to other reports Alan Johnston is being held by a notorious Gaza crime family whose demands for his release include real estate in the Gaza Strip and a large ransom as well as the release of a Jordanian woman imprisoned in Jordan for her role in a suicide bomb attack which killed dozens in November 2005. Earlier in April a previously unheard-of armed group claimed that it had killed Alan Johnston, though the report was widely believed to be without foundation.

In the meantime repeated claims by rival branches of the Palestinian Authority (PA), notably those of President Mahmoud Abbas' and of Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh, that Alan Johnston is safe and that they are working for his release, have not been followed by any tangible result. In the absence of concrete verifiable information about his whereabouts and condition, concerns for his safety increase with each passing day.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Abductions and other acts of lawlessness perpetrated by Palestinian armed groups and gangs, especially in the Gaza Strip, stem from the failure of the PA government to ensure the rule of law and address impunity. More than 200 Palestinians, including many unarmed civilians, have been killed during the past three months in the Gaza Strip; many of them in clashes between Palestinian armed groups and rival PA security force affiliated with PA President Abbas's Fatah party or with Prime Minister Haniyeh's Hamas party. The armed clashes which have been raging between the two sides since Hamas's election victory early last year has diminished in recent weeks, since the formation of a unity government, but attacks and abductions continue. For now those responsible continue to enjoy impunity, as the PA judicial system is in disarray and virtually paralyzed, and serious doubts remain about whether the PA is willing and able to take the necessary steps to end the lawlessness.

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

- calling on the authorities to spare no effort to ensure the safe and immediate release of Alan Johnston;
- urging the authorities to take concrete measures to restore the rule of law in the Gaza Strip and in other areas of the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT) which fall under their jurisdiction;
- calling on the authorities to ensure that all attacks against journalists and other civilians are investigated thoroughly, and that those responsible are brought to justice in fair trials without recourse to the death penalty.

**APPEALS TO:**

Mahmoud Abbas  
President  
Office of the President  
Ramallah  
Palestinian Authority

**Fax:** +970 2 296 3170

**Salutation:** Dear President

Isma'il Abd al Salam Ahmad Haniyeh  
Prime Minister  
Gaza office:  
Prime Minister's Office  
Jerusalem Street  
Tal al-Hawa  
Gaza

Palestinian Authority

**Fax:** +970 8 282 2159

**Email:** diwan@pmo.gov.ps

**Salutation:** Dear Prime Minister

**COPIES TO:**

Palestinian Journalists' Union  
P.O.Box 219  
Ramallah  
Palestinian Authority

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 20 June 2007.