URGENT ACTION

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER DETAINED FOR PROTEST

Palestinian human rights defender Murad Shtewi has been detained by Israeli forces since 29 April for his role in weekly peaceful demonstrations in his village. He is a prisoner of conscience. On 22 May a court rejected a petition for his release.

Murad Shtewi is a leading activist in the weekly demonstration held by residents of the village of Kufr Qadum in the occupied West Bank to demand that their main road be reopened. It was closed by the Israeli military authorities in 2002 to prevent Palestinians from travelling on roads designated for use only by Israeli settlers. He was arrested at his home at around 3am on 29 April and taken to Huwara military camp near the city of Nablus.

Murad Shtewi was held in the military camp and was not questioned until, after three days, his lawyer petitioned a military court for his release. The Israel Security Agency (ISA) only interrogated him briefly immediately before he was presented to a military court at Ofer camp near Ramallah on 2 May, where he was charged with organizing a demonstration without a permit, causing a public disturbance, and throwing rocks during a demonstration.

The court ordered Murad Shtewi's detention to continue until the end of the proceedings on these charges. A petition by his lawyer against the remand order was heard by the military court of appeals on 18 May and rejected on 22 May. The charges are based on statements given by two men from Kufr Qadum, who had been detained by the Israeli authorities for several weeks, during a long interrogation in circumstances that amounted to duress.

In Amnesty International's assessment, the charges of rock-throwing and of causing a public disturbance are unfounded. Murad Shtewi has been persecuted for expressing his non-violent opinions and for his role in the peaceful protests in Kufr Qadum against Israel's illegal settlements. His arrest and detention are a measure to punish him and stop him and other village activists from exercising their rights to freedom of expression and to peaceful assembly.

Please write immediately in Hebrew, English or your own language:
■ Calling on the authorities to release Murad Shtewi immediately and unconditionally, as he is a prisoner of conscience, detained solely for the peaceful exercise of his right to freedom of expression;
■ Calling on them to ensure the right to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly of people in Kufr Qadum; Urging them to take effective measures to prevent the use of unnecessary and excessive force by Israeli forces against peaceful demonstrators.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 4 JULY 2014 TO:

Prime Minister
Benjamin Netanyahu
Office of the Prime Minister
3 Kaplan St.
PO Box 187
Kiryat Ben-Gurion
Jerusalem 91950, Israel
Email: b.netanyahu@pmo.gov.il
pm_eng@pmo.gov.il
Salutation: Dear Prime Minister

Military Judge Advocate General
Brigadier General Danny Efroni
6 David Elazar Street
Hakirya, Tel Aviv, Israel
Fax: +972 3 569 4526
Email: avimn@idf.gov.il
Salutation: Dear Judge Advocate General

And copies to:
Minister of Defence
Moshe Ya'alon
Ministry of Defence
37 Kaplan Street, Hakirya
Tel Aviv 61909, Israel
Fax: +972 3 691 6940
+972 3 696 2757

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:
Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Kufr Qadum is a village west of the city of Nablus in the occupied West Bank with a population of around 3,500. The majority of the village's lands have been expropriated by the Israeli authorities for the purposes of building and servicing the illegal settlement block of Kedumim. In 2002 during the second Intifada (Palestinian uprising), the Israeli authorities closed off the main road connecting the village to the city of Nablus. The road is still closed, preventing residents of Kufr Qadum and other Palestinians in surrounding areas from using roads designated for use by Israeli settlers only. Villagers in Kufr Qadum have been holding weekly peaceful demonstrations since 2011 to demand the reopening of the road and to express their opposition to the Israeli military occupation and the expansion of illegal settlements.

Murad Shtewi, a 39-year-old father of three, works at the Ministry of Education office in the city of Qalqilya. He plays a leading role in the weekly demonstration in Kufr Qadum. Israeli forces frequently use unnecessary and excessive force, in breach of international law and standards, against the demonstrators, which has resulted in hundreds of injuries to villagers, including children, many of them serious. These include injuries from Israeli forces firing lethal weapons, such as rubber-coated metal bullets and live ammunition, as well as other less lethal weapons such as tear gas, which Israeli forces use in residential areas and sometimes to target demonstrators as well as journalists. Murad Shtewi has been injured a number of times by Israeli forces using excessive force. On one occasion, on 6 September 2013, a tear gas canister hit him directly in the leg during a demonstration; he was treated in hospital for a broken leg.

The recent arrest and detention of Murad Shtewi are part of a pattern of harassment by Israeli forces against him and other human rights defenders involved in weekly demonstrations in villages across the West Bank. Murad Shtewi was arrested twice before during demonstrations and released without charge. His first arrest took place on 16 March 2012 after an Israeli security forces dog attacked his nephew Ahmad Shtewi during a demonstration. A video shows Murad asking soldiers to help his nephew and order the dog to stop attacking him. Israeli forces sprayed Muarad Shtewi in the face with pepper spray and arrested him. He was released after paying bail of around US$1,500 and was not charged. He was assaulted and arrested again on 20 December 2013 during the demonstration in the village, and released four days later after paying bail of around US$1,500; he was not questioned during this detention and was not charged.

Another activist in Kufr Qadum, Saqer Obeid, told Amnesty International that he and other village activists, including Murad Shtewi, were facing a pattern of harassment. He said that Murad Shtewi was pressured several times by members of the ISA to stop the weekly peaceful demonstration in Kufr Qadum. He added: "What they need to understand is that the demonstrations are an expression of what the whole people of Kufr Qadum want, and not only Murad."

Name: Murwad Shtewi
Gender m/f: m

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