

URGENT ACTION

ACTIVIST FACES PRISON FOR PEACEFUL PROTEST

Prominent Palestinian activist and advocate of peaceful protest, Abdallah Abu Rahma, will be sentenced by an Israeli military judge on 23 February. If sent to jail he will be a prisoner of conscience held as a punishment and in order to silence him and put an end to his peaceful protests in the occupied West Bank.

During a sentencing hearing on 8 February the Israeli military prosecution argued that, although the accusations against **Abdallah Abu Rahma** relate to non-violent activity, he should go to prison for “many months” thereby sending an “unequivocal message [to] demonstrators [that they] have an absolute duty to obey orders given by the security forces [and that] whoever disobeys them should expect to be imprisoned...”. They also noted in support of their appeal for a custodial sentence that Abdallah Abu Rahma is unlikely to abandon his method of protest. The military court will deliver the sentence on 23 February.

Abdallah Abu Rahma was convicted on 21 October 2014 of obstructing a soldier in the line of duty after he had placed himself in front of Israeli military bulldozers carrying concrete blocks for use as road blocks and defences during a Palestinian protest in May 2012 to commemorate the Nakba (the displacement in 1948 of over 700,000 Palestinians) and in support of Palestinian prisoners and detainees.

When handing down the sentence in this case, the court also has the option to agree to the prosecution's plea, made during the 8 February hearing, to activate two six-month suspended prison sentences given to him in 2010 for convictions arising from his legitimate and peaceful participation in protests against Israel's military occupation of the West Bank. He could face up to five years in jail.

Please write immediately in Hebrew, English or your own language:

- Calling on them to drop all charges against Abdallah Abu Rahma which are punitive and intended to silence him and curtail his rights to freedom of expression and assembly;
- Calling on them to guarantee the right to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly to Abdallah Abu Rahma and other Palestinian activists.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 25 MARCH 2015 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
Hakiryia, 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, Hakiryia
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. This is the second update of UA 320/14. Further information: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE15/004/2015/en>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Abdallah Abu Rahma was arrested on 10 May 2012 in a demonstration at the Bitunya checkpoint near the Israeli Ofer Military Prison in the occupied West Bank to commemorate the Nakba (Catastrophe) (events in 1948 when more than 700,000 Palestinians lost their homes) and in support of Palestinian prisoners and detainees. He was released on bail after a few hours and was not summonsed until February 2013 on charges of obstructing a soldier in the line of duty. He was finally convicted on 21 October 2014. He was due to be sentenced on 5 January but the hearing was adjourned until 8 February.

He is now due to be sentenced on 23 February, when the court could also decide to activate two six-month suspended prison sentences which were handed to him in 2010. Those sentences followed his convictions on charges that included, in one case, "incitement" and "organizing and participating in illegal demonstrations" between 2005 and 2009 and, in the other, violating a military curfew on his village, Bil'in, between June and September 2005. In the first case, the military judge accepted the prosecution's argument that Abdallah Abu Rahma had encouraged demonstrators in Bil'in, in the occupied West Bank, to throw stones at Israeli soldiers. This was based on the statements of three children, who later retracted them in court, saying they had been coerced. They did not understand Hebrew, the language in which their statements were written.

Abdallah Abu Rahma is well known to Amnesty International as a political activist with a long-term public commitment to using peaceful means to raise international awareness of the human rights violations suffered by Palestinians as a result of Israel's fence/wall. He is the head of the Popular Committee Against the Wall in the West Bank village of Bil'in, in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT). The committee holds weekly protests against the approximately 700km fence/wall, which is built mainly on Palestinian land, separating many Palestinians from their land. Since 2005, the villagers of Bil'in, together with Palestinian, Israeli and international supporters, have been holding weekly demonstrations in protest against the fence/wall and the confiscation of their land by the Israeli authorities for its construction. In September 2007 the Israeli High Court of Justice issued a ruling instructing the Israeli military authorities to reroute the fence/wall in Bil'in to give the villagers access to more of their land, but this ruling has yet to be fully implemented. The right to peaceful protest is very important for Palestinians in the OPT, as they have no other way, such as voting, to influence the policy of the occupying power. They are frequently met by the use of excessive force by Israeli forces.

Palestinians in the occupied West Bank are also protesting against other repressive policies and practices of the prolonged Israeli occupation, including the ever-expanding unlawful Israeli settlements established within the occupied West Bank, house demolitions, Israeli military checkpoints, roads reserved for use by Israeli settlers from which Palestinians are excluded, and other restrictions on the movement of Palestinians in the OPT. More than a dozen Palestinian villages and communities in the West Bank that are most directly affected by the location of the fence/wall or of Jewish-only settlements built on Palestinian land hold weekly demonstrations to protest against Israeli policies and their impact. They include the villages of Nabi Saleh, Bil'in, Ni'lin and Kufr Qadum, and urban centres such as Hebron and East Jerusalem. Protests are also held against the imprisonment and detention of thousands of Palestinian activists and their treatment in Israeli prisons, and in response to developments such as Israeli military strikes in Gaza and the killing or injuring of Palestinians in protests or during raids.

Name: Abdallah Abu Rahma

Gender m

Further information on UA: 320/14 Index: MDE 15/006/2015 Issue Date: 11 February 2014