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Administrative Detention

1 February 1991

ISRAEL AND THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES:

Dr Sari Nusseibeh

Dr Sari Nusseibeh, professor of Philosophy at Bir Zeit University and a leading Palestinian figure in the Occupied Territories, was arrested late on 29 January at his home in Abu Dis (Jerusalem) and served with a six-month administrative detention order. He is currently held in the Moscobiyyah detention centre in Jerusalem.

Dr Nusseibeh was taken before a judge for a review of his detention order on 31 January. The Israeli authorities are accusing him of being a leader of al-Fatah, a faction of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), and of having been involved in the drafting of literature inciting violence. They are also accusing him of having gathered intelligence since the beginning of the Gulf crisis for the benefit of the PLO and Iraq. Israeli security sources were quoted by the media as saying that he had passed on information on where Iraqi missiles recently launched on Israel had landed. The hearing was adjourned to 6 February. Apparently, the authorities are to consider what if any evidence could be disclosed to Dr Nusseibeh. The proceedings are held in camera.

In a public statement given after his arrest Dr Nusseibeh said: "I am and have always been clearly and unequivocally opposed to all forms of violence and in favour of a peaceful solution (of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict)". Dr Nusseibeh also said he was against war and categorically denied having ever been engaged in "any intelligence gathering on behalf of any government or organization". He pointed out that since the outbreak of the war in the Gulf he had been confined at home under curfew, "with my only access to the outside world being the radio, television, and my well-watched telephone line".

Dr Nusseibeh is known for his stand and public activities in favour of negotiations between Palestinians and Israelis aimed at a peaceful settlement of their conflict. All available evidence suggests to Amnesty International that he is a prisoner of conscience, held on account of his peaceful political opinions and activities.

Amnesty International is concerned that administrative detention has been used by the Israeli authorities to detain prisoners of conscience and to avoid the safeguards of a criminal justice system. Detainees are virtually never given sufficient information to be able to defend themselves against the authorities' accusations.

Some 14,000 Palestinians have been administratively detained since December 1987. They include at present Radwan Abu 'Ayyash, Ziyad Abu Zayyad and Dr Ahmad al-Yazji, three other prominent Palestinians known for their public promotion of a peaceful dialogue with Israel.

Amnesty International is calling for the immediate and unconditional release of Dr Nusseibeh unless the authorities are ready to produce the evidence necessary for him to exercise the right to challenge his detention.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Telegrams/telexes/faxes/express and airmail letters:

- expressing concern at the detention of Dr Nusseibeh, stating that all available evidence suggests that he is a prisoner of conscience;

- calling for his release unless any evidence of his involvement in violence or espionage is made available to him so that he can exercise his right to challenge his detention;

APPEALS TO:

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and to diplomatic representatives of Israel in your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat or with your section office if sending appeals after 15 March 1991.

