

PUBLIC

AI Index: MDE 15/31/2001

UA 109/01

Fear of torture/Legal concern/Prisoner of conscience

2 May 2001

ISRAEL/OT 'Adnan al-Hajjar, 33, lawyer, human rights defender

Lawyer 'Adnan Ibrahim al-Hajjar, who works for the Palestinian al-Mezan human rights centre, was arrested by the Israeli security forces on 23 April. Amnesty International considers that he may be a prisoner of conscience, arrested solely for his work in defence of human rights.

He is now held at Shikma Prison, in Ashkelon, Israel. Amnesty International has received reports of torture or ill-treatment of Palestinian detainees at Shikma Prison over the past months. Amnesty International is concerned that 'Adnan al-Hajjar is reportedly detained without charge or trial, and that his family have not been allowed to see him. On 30 April an Israeli military judge remanded him in custody for a further 30 days.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Adnan Ibrahim al-Hajjar is the coordinator of the Legal Unit of the al-Mezan Human Rights Centre in Gaza, which carries out research on violations of economic and social rights of Palestinians by the Israeli authorities. He was arrested at the Rafah border crossing, when he tried to return from Egypt to the Gaza Strip, where he lives in the Jabalia refugee camp. He had been part of a Palestinian delegation at a two-week legal training seminar financed by the US government organisation USAID, which funds a range of projects and training courses in many parts of the world. The seminar was on "Empowering the Work of the Palestinian Legislative Council", the main legislative body in the Palestinian Authority. The seminar was organised by the Cairo-based Arab World Centre for Research and Training.

Israeli media have suggested that 'Adnan al-Hajjar was arrested because he has links with the militant Islamist leader 'Usama Bin Laden's organisation. His interrogators apparently told 'Adnan al-Hajjar that they have a secret file of evidence against him, and, if he has been accused of links with 'Usama bin Laden, this would increase fears that he will be tortured or otherwise ill-treated. However, his lawyer, who has been able to visit him in prison, has stated that his interrogators have mainly been questioning him about his work for the al-Mezan human rights centre.

Denying prisoners access to their families contravenes the basic principles of international law, particularly Principle 19 of the Body of Principles for the Protection of all Persons under any form of Detention or Imprisonment, which states: "A detained or imprisoned person shall have the right to be visited by and to correspond with, in particular, members of his family and shall be given adequate opportunity to communicate with the outside world, subject to reasonable conditions and restrictions as specified by law or lawful regulations."

Rule 92 of the Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners states: "An untried prisoner shall be allowed to inform immediately his family of his detention and shall be given all reasonable facilities for communicating with his family and friends, and for receiving visits from them, subject only to restrictions and supervision as are necessary in the interest of the administration of justice and of the security and good order of the institution."

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express/airmail letters in English, Hebrew or your own language:

- asking the authorities to release 'Adnan al-Hajjar immediately and unconditionally, as he appears to be a prisoner of conscience;
- expressing concern at reports that other Palestinian detainees have been tortured or ill-treated during interrogation, and asking the authorities to ensure that 'Adnan al-Hajjar is treated in accordance with international standards;
- reminding them that while he is in custody 'Adnan al-Hajjar has the right of access to his family.

APPEALS TO:

Prime Minister Ariel Sharon
Office of the Prime Minister
3 Kaplan Street, PO Box 187
Kiryat Ben-Gurion
Jerusalem 91919

Telegrams: Prime Minister, Jerusalem

Fax: + 972 2 651 2631

Salutation: Dear Prime Minister

Uzi Landau
Minister of Public Security
Ministry of Public Security (Police)
Kiryat Hamemshala
PO Box 18182
Jerusalem 91181

Fax: + 972 2 584 7872

Salutation: Dear Minister of Public Security

Meir Shetrit
Minister of Justice
Ministry of Justice
29 Salah al-Din Street
Jerusalem 91010

Fax: + 972 2 628 8618

Salutation: Dear Minister of Justice

Eli Yishai
Minister of the Interior
Ministry of Interior
2 Kaplan Street
PO Box 6158
Kiryat Ben Gurion
Jerusalem 91061

Fax: + 972 2 670 1628

Salutation: Dear Minister of Interior

Elyakim Rubinstein
Attorney-General
Ministry of Justice
29 Salah al-Din Street
Jerusalem 91010

Fax: + 972 2 628 5438

Salutation: Dear Attorney-General

COPIES TO: diplomatic representatives of Israel accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 13 June 2001.