

EXTERNAL

AI Index: MDE 15/40/96

14 June 1996

Further information on EXTRA 70/96 (MDE 15/34/96, 20 May 1996) and follow-ups (MDE 15/35/96, 24 May; MDE 15/36/96, 28 May; MDE 15/39/96, 10 June) - Prisoner of Conscience and new concern: Ill-treatment

PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY Dr Iyad al-Sarraj, human rights defender

Amnesty International is concerned that Dr Iyad al-Sarraj, the human rights defender who was arrested on 10 June, was reportedly beaten in custody and remains in detention on accusations which appear to be fabricated. Amnesty International considers Dr Iyad al-Sarraj to be a prisoner of conscience.

Following his arrest, the Gaza Community Mental Health Program, of which Dr Iyad al-Sarraj is Director, was searched by officials from the Attorney General's office, who confiscated material. They claimed that they had found hashish in the office, and charged Dr Iyad al-Sarraj with possession of drugs. On 11 June, a note from Dr Sarraj smuggled out of prison said that he had been beaten by police and that he was being framed with a drugs charge. A police spokesperson responded to this by saying that he had resisted arrest, and that they may have treated him roughly.

On 13 June Dr Iyad al-Sarraj was remanded in custody for 15 days by the State Security Court, a court Amnesty International has criticised for holding blatantly unfair trials, falling far short of international standards for fair trial. During the hearing, his lawyer was not present. The prosecution alleged that Dr Sarraj had injured a policeman. Dr Sarraj states that the policeman beat him in detention, then went away and was brought back with his hand bandaged, saying that Dr Sarraj had hurt his hand. Dr Sarraj has firmly denied that he injured a policeman.

Later on 13 June, Dr Iyad al-Sarraj was taken before a Magistrates Court, on charge of possessing drugs. The Magistrates Court refused to extend his detention for two weeks due to lack of evidence, and ordered him released on bail. However, he remains in custody, as specified by the State Security Court.

Amnesty International strongly believes that the detention of Dr Iyad al-Sarraj is based on his political beliefs and criticisms of the Palestinian Authority.

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

- stating that Amnesty International believes that Dr Iyad al-Sarraj is a prisoner of conscience who is detained on the grounds of his criticisms of the Palestinian Authority;
- calling for his immediate and unconditional release;
- calling for an investigation into the allegations that Dr Iyad al-Sarraj was beaten in custody;
- calling on the Palestinian Authority to ensure that organizations and employees engaged in protecting human rights are supported and protected.

APPEALS TO:

1) President Yasser Arafat
Palestinian Authority
Al-Muntada
Gaza, Palestinian Authority

Faxes: +972 7823 744 (ask to send a fax)

Telegrams: President Arafat, Palestinian Authority, Gaza, via Israel

Salutation: Dear President Arafat

2) Minister of Justice Mr Freih Abu Meddein

Ministry of Justice

Abu Khadra Building

Omar al-Mukhtar Street

Gaza, Palestinian Authority

Faxes: +972 7 867 109

Telegrams: Minister of Justice, Palestinian Authority, Gaza, via Israel

Salutation: Dear Minister

3) Khaled al-Qidrah

Attorney-General

Attorney-General Building

Yarmouk

Gaza, Palestinian Authority

Faxes: +972 7824 503

Telegrams: Attorney-General, Palestinian Authority, Gaza, via Israel

Salutation: Dear Mr al-Qidrah

COPIES TO:

Palestinian Independent Commission for Citizens' Rights

Ritz Hotel

Ibn Khaldun Street

PO Box 54627

Jerusalem

Via Israel

Faxes: +972 2 28 28 69

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 15 July 1996.