

PUBLIC

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UA 132/01 Torture/ill-treatment/prisoner of conscience

31 May 2001

ISRAEL/OT 'Abed al-Rahman al-Ahmar, aged 32, human rights defender

'Abed al-Rahman al-Ahmar, who works for a Palestinian human rights organisation, was arrested and beaten by the Israeli General Security Service (GSS) on 24 May. His arrest appears to be part of a pattern: at least four Palestinian human rights defenders have been arrested over the past five weeks. Amnesty International considers 'Abed al-Rahman al-Ahmar a prisoner of conscience, and believes he is at risk of torture.

He is now held without charge or trial at the Moscobiyya detention center in Jerusalem, where other Palestinian detainees have reportedly been tortured. His family have not been allowed to see him. He appeared in court today; his lawyer tried to obtain information about the hearing but was told nothing, and so was not present. In the absence of his lawyer Abed al-Rahman al-Ahmar's detention was extended for 20 days. His lawyer was later able to see him, and said that though he was apparently not being otherwise ill-treated his physical condition was poor. He has not been charged with any offence.

'Abed al-Rahman al-Ahmar is a field worker for the Palestinian Human Rights Monitoring Group (PHRMG), a non-governmental organisation working to end human rights violations against Palestinians, regardless of who is responsible, in the West Bank, Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem. In a recent interview on Israeli television he argued for peaceful coexistence between Jews and Palestinians on the basis of full equality. He was speaking to a correspondent for the Israeli newspaper *Ha'aretz*, Gidon Levy.

He was apparently on his way home from Jerusalem to Deheisheh refugee camp, in the West Bank, when he was arrested. He had been released in May 1998 after more than two years in administrative detention: he had been tortured continually from February to April 1996. Amnesty International campaigned for his release throughout his time in prison. 'Abed al-Ahmar sued the General Security Services (GSS) for damages a year ago and the case is still outstanding.

He still suffers from a hiatal hernia and back problems which were caused or worsened by the torture he suffered in the past, and, although the Israeli security services say he has received medical attention, he is apparently being denied medicine for this. He wrote to Amnesty International in May 1998, describing what happened to him: "I was in a very intensive and cruel interrogation for two months that included every type of pain and suffering to the body. I requested over and over again medical treatment and no one answered me. They would all smile and express happiness over my body's deterioration. Once when I vomited on the floor they yelled at me and said 'You are such a beast, don't vomit on the floor'".

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

- asking the authorities to release 'Abed al-Rahman al-Ahmar immediately and unconditionally, as he appears to be a prisoner of conscience, arrested solely for his work in defence of human rights;
- expressing concern at reports that members of the security forces beat him after he was arrested, and that other Palestinian detainees have been tortured or ill-treated during interrogation, and asking the authorities to ensure that 'Abed al-Rahman al-Ahmar is treated in accordance with international standards;

- reminding them that while he is in custody 'Abed al-Rahman al-Ahmar has the right to communicate with his lawyer, and to receive visits from 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:

Palestinian Human Rights Monitoring Group
PO Box 19918
East Jerusalem 91198

Fax: + 972 2 582 3385

And 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 July 2001.