

13 June 2001

Further information on UA 132/01 (MDE 15/047/2001, 31 May 2001) and follow-up (MDE 15/051/2001) - Torture/ill-treatment/prisoner of conscience

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

'Abed al-Rahman al-Ahmar is being tortured or ill-treated in custody at the Moskobiyya Detention Centre in Jerusalem. At an 11 June hearing, judges at the Israeli High Court of Justice refused to examine the marks of shackles on his wrists, and prison doctors apparently agreed the marks were made by shackles but did not testify. The judges rejected a petition filed by two human rights groups calling for the torture to stop.

The petition, filed by the Public Committee Against Torture in Israel (PCATI) and the Palestinian Human Rights Monitoring Group (PHRMG) demanded that the authorities stop torturing 'Abed al-Rahman al-Ahmar during interrogation, provide him with proper medical care and clothing and house him in more humane conditions.

According to his lawyer, on 10 June 'Abed al-Rahman al-Ahmar was kept shackled to a sloping chair by his wrists and ankles from 9am to 6.15 pm. This form of torture is known as *Shabeh* and is often combined, as in his case, with sleep deprivation. When he begged to be released from *Shabeh*, his interrogator apparently told him, "We are allowed to do this."

During the hearing his lawyer tried to show the judges the marks of the shackles on 'Abed al-Rahman al-Ahmar's wrists. The judges refused to move from their chairs to see the marks, and refused to let the lawyer move her client to show them. During the break in the hearing, two prison doctors came to examine the marks on 'Abed al-Rahman al-Ahmar's wrists, and both agreed that there were marks of shackles. However, they did not speak during the hearing.

'Abed al-Rahman al-Ahmar's health is deteriorating. According to his lawyer, he has lost about seven kilograms in the last ten days and is suffering severe stomach pain as result of torture during interrogation. He has told her that he is being held in a small, damp, filthy cell. The air conditioning is on all the time, increasing the coldness of the small cell, but his blankets are old and worn. There are mice and cockroaches in the cell, and three days ago a snake came in from an open sewer. 'Abed al-Rahman al-Ahmar was apparently vomiting during the court hearing

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

- expressing concern at reports that 'Abed al-Rahman al-Ahmar has been tortured during interrogation and asking the authorities to stop the torture and ensure that he is treated in accordance with international standards and with the Israeli High Court of Justice decree of September 1999, which prohibited the use of torture during interrogation;
- 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;
- reminding them that while he is in custody 'Abed al-Rahman al-Ahmar has the right to communicate with his lawyer, to see a doctor of his choice 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 26 July 2001.