

PUBLIC

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Fear for Safety

PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY

Alan Johnston (m), aged 44, British national, journalist

On 12 March, Alan Johnston, a television news reporter for the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), was abducted from the street near his office in Gaza City by unidentified armed men. There has been no news of his whereabouts since then and Amnesty International fears for his safety.

Kidnappings of foreign and Palestinian journalists in Gaza have been frequent over the past two years as the area has become increasingly lawless. Most journalists have been abducted by armed groups or gangs, usually apparently for ransom, and until now every journalist has been released unharmed. However, Alan Johnston has now been held for far longer than any other journalists, and there are growing concerns that his life may be in danger.

Palestinian journalists in Gaza and the West Bank have held a strike and rallies calling for the release of Alan Johnston. On 1 April, the Palestinian Journalists' Union called a three-day strike in protest against what they said was the inadequate response of the Palestinian Authority (PA) government to Alan Johnston's kidnapping and its failure to protect journalists. According to the news agency *Agence France Presse*, Naim Tubasi, the President of the Palestinian Journalists' Union, said: "We hold the Palestinian Authority and the government responsible [for the continued abduction of Alan Johnston] because up until now they have not made sufficient efforts."

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The abductions and other acts of lawlessness perpetrated by armed groups and gangs, especially in the Gaza Strip, stem from the failure of the PA government to ensure the rule of law and address impunity. More than 80 Palestinians, including civilians, have been killed during the past three months; many of them in clashes between Palestinian armed groups and PA security force units, aligned either with PA President Mahmoud Abbas's Fatah party or with Hamas (Islamic Resistance Movement), which formed the government of the PA after winning the January 2006 Palestinian legislative elections. Since the formation of a unity government in the PA on 17 March 2007, armed factional clashes have diminished, but assaults and abductions continue. No-one has been brought to justice for these abuses.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in Arabic or English or your own language:

- calling on the Palestinian Authority to redouble its efforts to ensure the immediate release unharmed of Alan Johnston;
- urging the authorities to restore the rule of law in the Palestinian Authority;
- calling on the authorities to ensure that all attacks against journalists and other civilians are investigated thoroughly, and that those responsible for such crimes are brought to justice in fair trials without recourse to the death penalty.

APPEALS TO:

His Excellency Mahmoud Abbas
President
Office of the President
Ramallah
Palestinian Authority
Fax: + 970 2 296 3170

Salutation: Your Excellency

Isma'il Abd al Salam Ahmad Haniyeh
Prime Minister
Gaza office:
Prime Minister's Office
Jerusalem Street
Tal al-Hawa
Gaza
Palestinian Authority
Fax: + 970 8 282 2159
Email: diwan@pmo.gov.ps
Salutation: Dear Prime Minister

COPIES TO:

Palestinian Journalists' Union
P.O.Box 219
Ramallah
Palestinian Authority

and to diplomatic representatives of Palestinian Authority accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 17 May 2007.