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Israeli decision to release Palestinian detainee in April 'insufficient'

The Israeli authorities' decision to release a Palestinian detainee by mid-April is insufficient, Amnesty International said amid reports that he has agreed to end his 66-day hunger strike.

The organization has urged Israel to release Khader Adnan immediately to allow him to receive urgent medical treatment. The 33-year-old baker – allegedly affiliated with the Islamic Jihad movement – is at immediate risk of death after more than nine weeks on hunger strike.

“A deal which will see Khader Adnan released on 17 April unless significant new evidence emerges is insufficient when he needs urgent medical treatment to save his life now,” said Philip Luther, Amnesty International’s Interim Director for the Middle East and North Africa.

“Even if reports that Khader Adnan has agreed to end his hunger strike are true, this does not mean he is out of danger nor does it lessen the need for highly specialized medical care.”

“He cannot constitute a ‘security threat’ in his current condition and should be released from custody immediately. The Israeli authorities have revealed no evidence justifying his continued detention.”

Khader Adnan was given a four-month administrative detention order on 10 January. Israeli military orders allow the Israeli authorities to detain Palestinians from the occupied West Bank without trial indefinitely if they are deemed to be a “security threat”.

The Israeli Supreme Court had been due to address Khader Adnan’s appeal on Tuesday, but the hearing was cancelled following a reported agreement between his lawyer and the Israeli authorities.

Both the Palestinian Authority and Israeli governmental spokespeople have reported that Khader Adnan has agreed to end his hunger strike, something Amnesty International has not been able to verify independently.

“Amnesty International has repeatedly called on the Israeli authorities to release Khader Adnan and other Palestinians held in administrative detention, unless they are promptly charged with internationally recognizable criminal offences and tried in accordance with international fair trial standards,” said Philip Luther.

Khader Adnan was arrested on 17 December last year at his home in the village of Arrabe near Jenin in the occupied West Bank, after Israeli security forces burst into his house in the early hours of the morning.

His prolonged hunger strike was begun in protest against his ill-treatment, the conditions of his detention, and the policy of administrative detention.

Amnesty International has called on Israel to end the practice of administrative detention because it violates the internationally recognized right to a fair trial which must be upheld for all detainees, even during states of emergency.

The baker has been hospitalized since 30 December as his health deteriorated. He is currently being held in the Ziv hospital in northern Israel under armed guard.

As of 19 February, doctors from Physicians for Human Rights - Israel reported that he was still shackled to his hospital bed, despite commitments by the Israel Prison Service that the shackles would be removed.

Some 309 Palestinians, including more than 20 members of the Palestinian Legislative Council are currently being held in administrative detention. One man has been held for over five years.