

AI Index: PRE 01/335/2012
10 July 2012

Israel's release of Palestinian footballer shows need to end unjust detention without charge

The release of Palestinian footballer Mahmoud al-Sarsak from Israeli detention today highlights the secretive and arbitrary nature of administrative detention of Palestinians by the Israeli authorities, Amnesty International said.

“While the long overdue release of Mahmoud al-Sarsak is a huge relief to [his family and friends](#), it doesn't reflect any fundamental change in the use of administrative detention as state policy by the Israeli authorities,” said Ann Harrison, Amnesty International's Middle East and North Africa Deputy Director. “In fact it further underscores just how unjust, arbitrary and secretive this measure is.”

“Israel must immediately end the use of administrative detention, and release all Palestinians held under any legal provisions allowing its use, or charge and try them fairly in a court of law consistent with international standards. In particular, the Internment of Unlawful Combatants Law should be repealed.”

Mahmoud al-Sarsak, a footballer in the Palestinian national team, was detained without charge or trial for almost three years. In June 2012 he ended a 92-day hunger strike in protest at his continued administrative detention which brought him to the verge of death after his lawyer reached an agreement with the Israel Prison Service (IPS) to secure his release.

Amnesty International also called for the release of Samer al-Barq and Hassan Safadi, who remain on hunger strike in protest against the renewal of their administrative detention orders.

Like Mahmoud al-Sarsak before his release, both are detained at the IPS medical facility at Ramleh, which cannot provide the specialized medical care needed for detainees on prolonged hunger strikes, and have been denied access to independent doctors since renewing their hunger strikes in May and June.

“Palestinians detained without charge should not have to put their lives in danger to obtain either their release or their right to a fair trial,” said Ann Harrison.

“Hassan Safadi and Samer al-Barq should be released or charged with recognizable offences and tried according to international standards.

“The Israeli authorities must also guarantee them, and all other detainees and prisoners on hunger strike, regular access to independent doctors and lawyers. Samer al-Barq, who has been on hunger strike for almost 50 days, should be immediately admitted to a civilian hospital so that he can receive proper medical care.”

Background

Mahmoud al-Sarsak was the only Palestinian held under the Internment of Unlawful Combatants, Law,

used to administratively detain Palestinians from the Gaza Strip.

Last month Amnesty International issued [*Starved of justice: Palestinians detained without trial by Israel*](#), a report on the use of administrative detention in Israel and associated violations against detainees and prisoners, which highlighted Mahmoud al-Sarsak's case, among others.

The human rights organization campaigns against administrative detention throughout the world. In recent years Amnesty International has documented abusive systems of administrative detention – and called for an end to administrative detention – in countries including Sri Lanka, Egypt, China, and India (Jammu and Kashmir).