

URGENT ACTION

ACADEMIC RECEIVES THIRD DETENTION ORDER

Palestinian academic Ahmad Qatamesh received a new six-month administrative detention order on 1 March. He has been held without charge or trial since 21 April 2011.

Ahmad Qatamesh was given a third administrative detention order on 1 March, the day that his second administrative detention order was due to expire. At the judicial review of the order, which took place on 5 March 2012, the military prosecutor sought the confirmation of the order by the military judge. It is expected that the military judge will confirm the detention order in the coming days.

Ahmad Qatamesh, together with other administrative detainees at Ofer prison in the occupied West Bank, have declared that they do not recognize the legitimacy of the military courts and administrative detention procedures, and have refused to attend judicial hearings. Because the judicial review normally takes place in the presence of the detainee, the prosecution insisted that Ahmad Qatamesh be brought to the court room on 5 March 2012. He again reiterated his rejection of the military court process and immediately returned to his cell.

According to both his wife and his lawyer, Ahmad Qatamesh has been interrogated for no more than a total of 10 minutes by Israel Security Agency (ISA) officers, who alleged that he was a member of the political office of a leftist Palestinian party which has an armed wing: the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP). While Ahmad Qatamesh was a political and intellectual supporter of the PFLP in the 1990s, he says he has not been involved with them for 13 years. To Amnesty International's knowledge, he has never been involved with PFLP-affiliated armed groups or advocated violence. His latest work focuses on political solutions that put an end to the violent conflict between Israelis and Palestinians, which he calls a "nightmare".

It is Amnesty International's assessment that the reasons for Ahmad Qatamesh's arrest and continued administrative detention are his peaceful expression, in his writing and teaching, of non-violent political views and the fact that he is considered a mentor for left-wing students and political activists, some of whom may be affiliated to the PFLP. As such, his detention may be part of the Israeli authorities' strategy to put pressure on the PFLP organisation. Therefore, Amnesty International considers him to be a prisoner of conscience and is calling for his immediate and unconditional release.

Please write immediately in Hebrew or your own language:

- Expressing concern that Ahmad Qatamesh is a prisoner of conscience, detained solely for the peaceful exercise of his right to freedom of expression, and calling for his immediate and unconditional release;
- Calling on the authorities to end the use of administrative detention.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 17 APRIL 2012 TO:

Military Judge Advocate General

Major General Avihai Mandelblit

6 David Elazar Street

Hakiryia, Tel Aviv, Israel

Fax: +972 3 569 4526

Email: avimn@idf.gov.il

Salutation: Dear Judge Advocate

General

Commander of the IDF – West Bank

Major-General Avi Mizrahi

GOC Central Command

Military Post 01149

Battalion 877

Israel Defense Forces, Israel

Fax: +972 2 530 5724

Salutation: Dear Major-General Avi

Mizrahi

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of

Defence

Ehud Barak

Ministry of Defence

37 Kaplan Street, Hakiryia

Tel Aviv 61909, Israel

Fax: + 972 3 69 16940 / +972 3 691

7915

Salutation: Dear Minister

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the third update of UA 127/11. Further information:

<http://amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE15/031/2011/en>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Ahmad Qatamesh is an academic and writer who has previously criticized both the Israeli authorities and the Palestinian Authority. In 1992, he was arrested and held for over a year before being placed under administrative detention after a judge had ordered his release on bail. He reported that he was tortured during his interrogation, and he later documented his experiences in a publication called *I shall not wear your tarboosh* [fez]. His administrative detention order was renewed repeatedly until he was eventually released on 15 April 1998. During these years, Amnesty International campaigned against his continued detention without charge.

Ahmad Qatamesh was arrested on 21 April 2011 at 2am at the house where he was staying in al-Bireh, in Ramallah in the occupied West Bank. The security forces had first gone to his family's home to arrest him and, when they did not find him there, broke down the door of the neighbour's house to search for him. According to his daughter, they then ordered her at gunpoint to telephone him. His wife told Amnesty International that Ahmad Qatamesh gave the security forces directions to reach the house where he was staying so they could arrest him. She said that during the arrest, the security forces made no attempt to search the contents of either their home or the house where they arrested him.

Before he was handed a six-month administrative detention order on 3 May 2011, a military court official told Ahmad Qatamesh's lawyer that he would be released at 5pm that day, and a prison officer gave him the same message. The order of 3 May seemed to have been produced for another detainee, since Ahmad Qatamesh's name was written over correction fluid. The order was for an "extension" of administrative detention even though this was Ahmad Qatamesh's first administrative detention order since the 1990s. His lawyer was subsequently informed that the ISA requested his detention based on undisclosed "evidence" relating to allegations that he is active in the PFLP, which he has consistently denied. As in all administrative detention cases, neither Ahmad Qatamesh nor his lawyer have been allowed to examine or challenge this "evidence".

On 19 May 2011, the military judge confirmed the detention order, but reduced it to four months. She acknowledged that the original order of 3 May had contained factual errors and had been produced for another detainee and adapted for use in Ahmad Qatamesh's case. Nonetheless, she concluded that the ISA's secret evidence against him justified his detention for security reasons. He received a second six-month administrative detention order on 2 September 2011. This was later confirmed by a military judge, and his appeal against the second order was rejected by the Military Court of Appeals.

Administrative detention is an Israeli procedure under which detainees are held without charge or trial for periods of up to six months which are renewable indefinitely. For Palestinians in the occupied West Bank, administrative detention orders are issued by an Israeli military commander based on Military Order 1651. No criminal charges are filed against administrative detainees and there is no intention of bringing them to trial. Detainees are held on the basis of "secret evidence" which the Israeli military authorities claim cannot be revealed for security reasons. Hence the "secret evidence" on which the military authorities base their decision to issue an administrative detention order is not made available to detainees or their lawyers, and detainees cannot challenge the reasons for their detention.

As of 31 January 2012, 309 Palestinians were being held as administrative detainees, according to Israel Prison Service statistics, including 21 Palestinian Legislative Council members.

Name: Ahmad Qatamesh
Gender m/f: male

Further information on UA: 127/11 Index: MDE 15/011/2012 Issue Date: 6 March 2012

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