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Israel and the Occupied Territories

@David Ish Shalom - prisoner of conscience

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David Ish Shalom entered Ma'ashiyahu Prison on 9 April 1992 to begin a seven-month prison term after conviction under a 1986 amendment to the Prevention of Terrorism Ordinance which forbids unauthorized contacts between Israelis and members of organizations designated as "terrorist" by the Israeli authorities.

David Ish Shalom was born in 1949 in Israel. He studied psychology and for the past ten years has devoted himself to public activity. In his teens he changed his name from de Buton to "Ish Shalom" which means "man of peace". He lives in Moshav Beit Zayit on the outskirts of Jerusalem.

David Ish Shalom was charged with having met representatives of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and al-Fatah (one of its factions) in Cyprus and Greece in February 1988. He was planning to participate in the voyage of the ship *al-'Awdah* (the Return) which was due to carry over 100 Palestinian refugees and deportees to Israel. The ship was damaged by a bomb and never left Cyprus.

David Ish Shalom was also accused of participating in a conference with PLO representatives in Budapest along with 21 other Israelis in June 1987 and of having met PLO representatives, including PLO leader Yasser Arafat, in Geneva in September of the same year. Seven of those who attended the meeting in Budapest are still on trial.

David Ish Shalom did not deny having met PLO representatives, but claimed in his defence that at the time of his meetings the PLO and al-Fatah were not terrorist organizations in the meaning of the Prevention of Terrorism Ordinance, but were rather political organizations. He is quoted as having said, "I and my friends met with these people in order to bring about a decrease in violent acts, and we are able to claim some success in this respect." This defence was however rejected by the Jerusalem Magistrates Court, and he was sentenced in October 1991 to nine months' imprisonment, with an additional 12 months suspended for three years.

David Ish Shalom appealed against his conviction and sentence to the Jerusalem District Court which resulted in his sentence being reduced from nine to seven months despite a request from his appeal lawyer, and a recommendation from the social worker involved, that his sentence be no longer than six months so as to allow him to serve by community service. Four other Israelis sentenced to six months actual imprisonment in 1988 under the same law were allowed to spend it performing community service. David Ish Shalom then petitioned the High Court of Justice for permission to appeal again, but this was denied in April 1992, after which he entered prison. He is apparently intending to ask the President for a pardon, having stated that he would not carry out further meetings with PLO representatives as long as the law remains in force.

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL'S CONCERNS

Amnesty International believes that David Ish Shalom is a prisoner of conscience, imprisoned solely on account of his non-violent political beliefs and peace activities. It believes that the internationally recognized rights to freedom of expression and to peaceful association fully encompass peaceful actions such as those carried out by David Ish Shalom in the course of his meetings with PLO representatives. It therefore calls for his immediate and unconditional release.

Amnesty International is also concerned that the law under which David Ish Shalom was charged and convicted may lead to further people being sentenced to imprisonment solely for having exercised their right to peaceful political activity. It urges the Israeli authorities to review the law to ensure that it does not result in the imprisonment of prisoners of conscience.

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