

EXTERNAL

AI Index: MDE 15/45/96

26 June 1996

Further information on EXTRA 70/96 (MDE 15/34/96, 20 May 1996) and follow-ups (MDE 15/35/96, 24 May; MDE 15/36/96, 28 May; MDE 15/39/96, 10 June; MDE 15/40/96, 14 June) - Prisoner of Conscience

PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY Dr Iyad al-Sarraj, human rights defender

Dr Iyad al-Sarraj was released at 2.00am on 26 June. He had been detained for 17 days. Amnesty International considered him to have been a prisoner of conscience.

Dr al-Sarraj was charged with what appeared to be a fabricated charge - possession of drugs, following a search of the Gaza Community Mental Health Program (of which he is Director). On 13 June he was ordered to be released on bail by the Magistrate's Court on the drugs charge for lack of evidence. He was also charged with assaulting a policeman, and was remanded in custody for 15 days by the State Security Court. Amnesty International has criticised this court for holding blatantly unfair trials, falling far short of international standards for fair trial. Dr Iyad al-Sarraj firmly denies he assaulted a policeman, and stated in court that the policeman beat him, and later came back with a bandaged hand, saying Dr Sarraj had injured him.

Also on 13 June, Raji Sourani, Dr Iyad al-Sarraj's lawyer filed a petition to the Palestinian High Court asking it to consider the lawfulness of Dr Sarraj's arrest and detention, including denying him access to a lawyer and bringing a matter of criminal law before the State Security Court. On 16 June the Palestinian High Court gave the Attorney-General five days to respond to this petition. No response has yet been submitted. A further hearing in this case is set for 1 July.

FURTHER RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express/airmail letters in Arabic or English or in your own language:

- welcoming the release of Dr Iyad al-Sarraj, and seeking assurances that it is unconditional;
- calling on the Palestinian Authority to protect those working on human rights issues;
- calling for a full and independent investigation of the reported beating in custody of Dr al-Sarraj and for those who participated in or authorized this to be brought to justice.

APPEALS TO:

Chairman Yasser Arafat
Head of the Palestinian Authority
Palestinian Authority
Al-Muntada,
Gaza,
Palestinian Authority
Telegrams: Chairman Arafat, Gaza, via Israel
Faxes: +972 7 823 744
Salutation: Dear Mr. Arafat

Khaled al-Qidreh
Attorney General
Palestinian Authority

2

Attorney General Building
Yarmouk,
Gaza,
Palestinian Authority

Telegrams: Attorney General, Palestinian Authority, Gaza via Israel

Faxes: +972 7 824 503

Salutation: Dear Attorney General

COPIES TO:

The Palestinian Independent Commission for Citizen's Rights
Ritz Hotel
Jerusalem
via Israel

Faxes: +972 2 282 869

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

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.