

## WEB FEATURE

### AI calls for release of Gaza Strip journalist

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Amnesty International (AI) is deeply concerned about the continuing abduction of Alan Johnston. The BBC correspondent is being held by an unknown armed group in the Gaza Strip. AI calls for his immediate release.

The organization is particularly concerned at unverified reports, said to come from a previously unknown armed group, that he may have been killed. AI urges the Palestinian Authority (PA) to redouble its efforts to secure his freedom and to end all hostage-taking by Palestinian armed groups.

Alan Johnston, who was seized by Palestinian gunmen in the Gaza Strip on 12 March 2007, has now been held for longer than any other journalist kidnapped in the Gaza Strip. His case, which is symbolic of the difficulties facing journalists in Gaza and of all journalists covering dangerous situations around the world, has aroused worldwide protest.

Palestinians have held rallies in Gaza demanding his release while members of the Palestinian journalists union in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank have held strikes in his support.

Alan Johnston's kidnapping and disappearance is the latest in a series of abductions and other acts of lawlessness, especially in the Gaza Strip, which stem from the failure of the PA government to ensure the rule of law. More than 80 Palestinians have been killed during the past three months, including civilians.

Many of these have been in armed clashes between Palestinian armed groups and PA security force units aligned either with PA President Mahmoud Abbas' Fatah party or the Hamas movement that formed a government after winning the January 2006 elections. Kidnappings have also been rife but in previous cases journalists abducted have been freed unharmed usually within hours or a few days. As yet, no-one has been brought to justice for these abuses.

The BBC News website is running a petition demanding the release of Alan Johnston. Sign up at: [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle\\_east/6518185.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/6518185.stm)

For further information, please see:

Palestinian Authority: Alan Johnston should be released and the Palestinian Authority should heighten efforts to ensure respect for the rule of law (Public Statement, 29 March 2007)

<http://web.amnesty.org/library/index/engMDE210032007>