

URGENT ACTION

PALESTINIAN UNIVERSITY PROFESSOR IN DETENTION

An Israeli military judge confirmed a three-month administrative detention order against Ahmad Qatamesh on 13 June. The Palestinian academic was arbitrarily detained under an administrative order issued on 17 May. He has been held since 14 May without charge or trial in Ofer prison. Ahmad Qatamesh is a prisoner of conscience.

Ahmad Qatamesh, 67, was issued a three-month administrative detention order by the Israeli army's military commander in the occupied West Bank on 17 May. According to his lawyer, Mahmoud Hassan from Addameer Association, Ahmad Qatamesh's detention order was confirmed in a hearing on 13 June. Ahmad Qatamesh was initially arrested by Israeli soldiers during a pre-dawn raid on his home on 14 May.

Ahmad Qatamesh is a political commentator and university professor. He has been an outspoken critic of both the Israeli and Palestinian authorities and the Oslo agreement, an interim deal which transferred partial control to Palestinian authorities in some areas of the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT). He has called for a fundamental change in the political landscape and strategy of Palestinians, an end to the divisions between Hamas and the Palestinian authorities in the West Bank, and has highlighted the Palestinian population's discontent with their leadership. Most recently, he has spoken out strongly in support of the mass Palestinian prisoner hunger strike, which began on 17 April when approximately 1,500 prisoners refused all food for over 40 days to challenge the conditions of their detention in Israeli prisons. Amnesty International believes that he has been detained solely due to his non-violent political activities and writing and to deter activism by other Palestinians.

This is not the first time Ahmad Qatamesh has been a prisoner of conscience or has been held in Israeli prison without charge or trial. In total he has spent more than eight years in administrative detention at the hands of the Israeli authorities. He was last released from administrative detention in December 2013. Ahmad Qatamesh's wife told Amnesty International that the rough treatment and medical neglect he had endured in prison during his previous detentions had damaged his inner ear affecting his balance. She said that, since his release in 2013, he has had recurring episodes of fainting and blackouts, and that she remains concerned for his health.

Please write immediately in Hebrew, English or your own language:

- Calling on the Israeli authorities to immediately and unconditionally release Ahmad Qatamesh, and all other prisoners of conscience held in Israeli prisons;
- Calling on the authorities to ensure Ahmad Qatamesh has prompt access to adequate healthcare and medical treatment, pending his release;
- Urging the authorities to take immediate steps to end the practice of administrative detention.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 27 JULY 2017 TO:

Minister of Defence
Avigdor Liberman
Ministry of Defence
37 Kaplan Street, Hakiryia
Tel Aviv 61909, Israel
Email: minister@mod.gov.il
pniot@mod.gov.il
Fax: +972 3 691 6940
Salutation: Dear Minister

Commander of the IDF – West Bank
Major-General Roni Numa
GOC Central Command
Military Post 02367, Battalion 877
Israel Defense Forces, Israel
Fax: +972 2 530 5741, +972 2 530 5724
Salutation: Dear Major-General Roni Numa

And copies to:
Minister of Public Security
Gilad Erdan
Kiryat Hamemshala
PO Box 18182
Jerusalem 91181, Israel
Fax: +972 2 584 7872
Email: gerdan@knesset.gov.il
Salutation: Dear Minister

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. HIS EXCELLENCY MR MARK REGEV, Embassy of Israel, 2 Palace Green Kensington W8 4QB, 020 7957 9500

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

According to eyewitnesses, the military operation that led to Ahmad Qatamesh's arrest started on 14 May at around 4am, when between 40 and 50 Israeli soldiers in at least seven military jeeps and an armoured vehicle arrived in the al-Bireh neighbourhood of Ramallah in the occupied West Bank where Ahmad Qatamesh once lived. The witnesses said that the soldiers broke down the front door to his former home only to find it empty. They then broke down the neighbours' doors, before moving on to the family homes of Ahmad Qatamesh's brothers.

At approximately 4:30am, the soldiers entered the homes of two of his brothers, waking both their families. When they couldn't find him there, they forced his brother Khaled to direct them to Ahmad Qatamesh's current home located nearby. Khaled, Ahmad Qatamesh's brother, said the soldiers made him walk in front of them and knock on the door, as if they were using him "as a kind of shield". Ahmad Qatamesh was then arrested from his home and was taken by soldiers in an armoured vehicle. The soldiers did not search the home, nor did they take any materials, according to Khaled Qatamesh.

Prior to his arrest, Ahmad Qatamesh has often appeared on local television and radio shows. His writings have analysed various proposals for alternative governance systems between Palestinians and Israelis. According to his family, Ahmad Qatamesh was called for interrogation by the Israeli military intelligence authorities twice in 2016. He was warned to stop his political writing and public speaking, otherwise he may "get in trouble". Both times he refused, telling the military intelligence that he is a writer and an academic and would speak and write what he wanted.

Ahmad Qatamesh's wife informed Amnesty that, in a meeting with his lawyer on 21 May at Ofer prison, near Ramallah, her husband announced he would no longer take his medication in prison in protest at his arbitrary arrest and imprisonment, and continues to refuse to take them unless he is allowed an independent doctor.

Administrative detention – ostensibly introduced as an exceptional measure to detain people who pose an extreme and imminent danger to security – is used by Israel as an alternative to the criminal justice system to arrest, charge and prosecute people suspected of criminal offences, or to detain people who should not have been arrested at all. Orders can be renewed indefinitely and Amnesty International believes that some Palestinians held in administrative detention by Israel are prisoners of conscience, held solely for the peaceful exercise of their right to freedom of expression and association. According to Israeli NGO, HaMoked, at the beginning of June 2017 there were 477 administrative detainees held without charge or trial by Israel.

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