

URGENT ACTION

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER SIGNS PLEA BARGAIN

Human rights defender and former prisoner of conscience Anas Barghouti has agreed to a plea bargain to avoid prison. However, he remains subject to two suspended sentences should he be found to have violated the conditions of the plea deal by participating in protests in the next three years or being found to belong to the Palestinian Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine in the next five years.

Anas Barghouti, a prominent Palestinian human rights lawyer, was arrested on 15 September 2013 at a military checkpoint north of Bethlehem, in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. He was subsequently charged with “membership of the Palestinian Front for the Liberation of Palestine” (PFLP), an organization Israel has banned, and “leadership of a committee to organize demonstrations”. He denied both charges.

Anas Barghouti was released on bail on 23 October 2013 after a military judge ruled that there was insufficient evidence in order for him to be regarded a security threat. At the time, Amnesty International considered Anas Barghouti a prisoner of conscience, detained solely for his work as a lawyer supporting the human rights of Palestinian prisoners and the peaceful expression of political views. Since he was released on bail, Anas Barghouti has had to attend court every three months, but each time the military prosecution has failed to produce its witnesses. A hearing on 6 December 2016 at Ofer military court, in the occupied West Bank, was meant to be the Israeli military prosecutor’s last opportunity to do so. However, the military judge at the 6 December 2016 hearing, granted the prosecution yet another chance by issuing an arrest warrant for one of the witnesses. The hearing was adjourned until 24 January 2017.

The final hearing took place on 19 February 2017, during which Anas Barghouti accepted a plea bargain. In return for pleading guilty to the charges against him, Anas Barghouti will avoid a prison sentence subject to the following conditions:

- a fine of 7,000 NIS (USD 1,887) (to be deducted from the 12,000 NIS that he paid for bail in 2013);
- a suspended sentence of 18 months in prison if he is found to belong to the PFLP in the next five years;
- a suspended sentence of eight months in prison if he is found to be participating in protests in the next three years.

Speaking to Amnesty International, Anas Barghouti said that he accepted the plea bargain in order to avoid a prison sentence in the immediate term. However, he feels that this is the beginning of a five year sentence to life under threat of imprisonment. He said: “I don’t believe that we can ever receive justice in the Occupation’s military courts, which participate actively in our oppression. This is the Israeli authorities’ way of intimidating me and trying to silence me. For the next five years of my life I will live in fear. They could make up an allegation for any reason or someone could testify against me and I will have an 18 month sentence waiting for me.”

This is not the outcome we were campaigning for so, while we request that no more appeals be sent at this time, we will continue to monitor the situation closely.

No further action is requested from the UA network. Many thanks to all who sent appeals.

This is the fourth update of UA 276/13. Further information: **Error! Hyperlink reference not valid.** <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde15/5329/2016/en/>

Name: Anas Barghouti
Gender: m

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