

URGENT ACTION

PALESTINIAN PRISONER OF CONSCIENCE SENTENCED

An Israeli military court sentenced Palestinian human rights defender Munther Amira on 12 March 2018 to six months in prison, five years of probation and a fine. He was convicted on charges relating to his peaceful participation in protests.

Munther Amira, a Palestinian activist and human rights defender, was sentenced to six months in prison, five years of probation, and a fine of 2,000 Israeli shekels (around US\$ 581) by Ofer Military Court in the occupied West Bank on 12 March. Convicted on four of the 13 charges against him, his prison sentence is expected to end on 28 June 2018. Munther Amira is currently being held in Hadarim prison in central Israel.

He was arrested by Israeli soldiers on 27 December 2017 while peacefully participating in a protest. The protest was organized by Palestinian residents and activists in the city of Bethlehem, in the occupied West Bank, and called for the release of activists Ahed and Nariman Tamimi.

Munther Amira was originally charged with 13 offences relating to his participation in five separate demonstrations. He was convicted on four counts of "disturbing public order" and participating in a "march without a licence" in relation to four demonstrations that took place in November and December 2017. Some the charges such as "participating in a march without a permit", which falls under Military Order 101, should not be considered criminal offences under international standards. Evidence brought to court against Munther Amira included holding signs "rebuking the USA" and "the Balfour Declaration" and holding a sign with activist Ahed Tamimi's picture on it.

Munther Amira had also been charged with throwing objects towards people or property and throwing stones at Israeli Border Police officers. These charges, which he denied and the court dropped, relate to a protest, which took place on 22 December 2017, against US President Donald Trump's decision to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel.

Please write immediately in English, Hebrew, Arabic or your own language calling on the authorities to:

- Immediately and unconditionally release Munther Amira as he is a prisoner of conscience and is imprisoned solely for exercising his human rights to freedom of expression and to peaceful assembly;
- Ensure his conviction is quashed;
- Rescind Military Order 101 and fully respect the right of Palestinians in the occupied West Bank to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 30 APRIL 2018 TO:

Prime Minister
Benjamin Netanyahu
Office of the Prime Minister
3 Kaplan St, PO Box 187
Kiryat Ben-Gurion
Jerusalem 91950, Israel
Email: pm_eng@pmo.gov.il
Salutation: Dear Prime Minister

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

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

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation

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

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the first update of UA 26/18. Further information:

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde15/7841/2018/en/>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Munther Amira, aged 48, is a Palestinian activist and human rights defender, currently serving as the coordinator of the Popular Struggle Coordination Committee (PSCC). PSCC describes itself as a community-based resistance movement that believes in the power of popular struggle, through various forms, such as strikes, peaceful protests and legal campaigns. The group also provides legal aid, communication and advocacy support to activists and seeks to encourage the emergence of new committees and initiatives in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT).

Munther Amira is a Palestinian refugee from the village of Deir Aban, located south of Jerusalem. He is a resident of Aida Refugee Camp, near Bethlehem, where he works as a social worker and director of the Aida Youth Community Center. According to PSCC, Munther Amira provides support to Palestinian farmers affected by Israeli settlements through his campaigning and advocacy efforts and promotes locally produced Palestinian products. Amira is committed to a platform of non-violence in his popular struggle and regularly organizes peaceful protests against Israeli actions in the city of Bethlehem.

Following his arrest, Munther Amira was presented with 13 charges in relation to five different demonstrations near the Rachel's Tomb checkpoint in Bethlehem. Most of these charges fall under Israeli Military Order 101, which punishes Palestinians for peaceful political expression. The counts of the indictment were as follows: Offense against public order, for having participated in demonstrations and "unlicensed marches" which took place on 1 November, 13 December, 22 December, 23 December and 27 December 2017; obstructing a soldier on 27 December 2017 and throwing an incendiary object and stones towards Israeli soldiers on 22 December 2017. All of the charges in the indictment sheet were strictly concerned with Munther Amira's participation and role in leading marches, except for those on 22 December 2017.

Human rights defenders in the OPT have long been the target of Israeli smears and harassment campaigns aimed at delegitimizing their activism. According to PSCC, Israeli forces had been pressuring Munther Amira to stop his activism, and had threatened him with harm and arrest three months before his detention. PSCC believes that Amira's arrest is intended to silence active voices in the nonviolent popular struggle for Palestinians' rights.

Israeli Military Order 101 regulates the right of Palestinians in the West Bank to demonstrate and express themselves freely. It prohibits all gatherings of 10 or more persons "for a political purpose or for a matter that could be interpreted as political" unless they have received authorization from the Israeli military commander in the area. Anyone breaching the order faces imprisonment for up to 10 years and/or a hefty fine.

Name: Munther Amira
Gender m/f: Male

Further Information on UA: 26/18 Index: MDE 15/8054/2018 Issue Date: 19 March 2018