

AHMAD QATAMISH

“I hugged him then like I was meeting him for the first time and asked him to promise not to be gone for so long again. Being impeccably honest, he said: ‘I wish I could. They must first get out of our lives before I can make such a promise.’” – Haneen Qatamish

Date of birth: 1 April 1951

Place of residence: Al-Bireh

Occupation: Writer and political scientist

Marital status: Married with one daughter

Place of detention: Ofer Prison

Date of Arrest: 21 April 2011

Number of detention orders to date: 4

Expected end of current detention order: 23 February 2012



ARREST

At 2 a.m. on 21 April 2011, Ahmad Qatamish was arrested by the Israeli Occupying Forces at his brother’s home in Ramallah. One hour earlier, Ahmad’s wife, 22-year-old daughter and two other female relatives, including a 14-year-old child, were taken hostage by Israeli troops in his home in order to compel him to surrender himself. Shortly before 1 am, Ahmad’s daughter, Haneen, and wife, Suha, heard pounding on the door and found thirty to forty heavily-armed soldiers surrounding the house in combat formation. Ahmad was at his brother’s house, where he was spending the night. Haneen, along with her mother, went to alert her 69-year-old aunt and 14-year-old cousin who were sleeping to the presence of the soldiers. Their movement agitated the soldiers who had entered the house, and they ordered them to stop while aiming their guns at the two women’s heads. Some of the soldiers moved to the apartment directly above, whose owners were traveling abroad at the time. Inexplicably, they knocked down the door and ransacked the apartment.

Without yet mentioning any reason for the attempted arrest or producing an arrest warrant, the soldiers confiscated all phones and insisted they would not leave or release the family until Ahmad turned himself in. They then forced Haneen at gunpoint to call her father and demand his surrender. When Haneen reached him, one soldier grabbed the phone and ordered Ahmad to surrender, threatening to destroy the house and continue to hold his family if he did not comply. In response, Ahmad demanded that they leave his family out of his arrest. An hour after invading his house, a group of the soldiers went to arrest him at his brother’s home. Before leaving his



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house, the remaining soldiers continued to taunt and terrorize the four women with insults and threats.

Following his arrest, Ahmad was taken to Ofer detention center in Beitunia.

ADMINISTRATIVE DETENTION ORDER

At 8:30 pm on 3 May 2011, the Israeli military authorities issued a six-month administrative detention order against Ahmad, despite informing him and his lawyer only hours earlier that he would be released that day.

Certain that they would be reunited with him shortly, Ahmad's relatives spent the evening of 3 May 2011 waiting for him at the gates of Ofer Prison, where he is currently held, after the Ofer Military Court informed Ahmad's lawyer at 12:00 pm that his client would be released by 5:00 pm. At approximately 5:00 pm, Ahmad himself was also given the same news by the Israeli Prison Service. Only half an hour later, however, Ahmad's lawyer was told that his client's detention would in fact be extended and was asked to come to court. His lawyer immediately called the military prosecutor in Ahmad's case, who contradicted this information, insisting that he was in fact going to be released. At 7:45 pm, after more than two hours of confusion and uncertainty, the military court informed Ahmad's lawyer that a final decision would be made by 9 or 9:30 pm. At 8:30 pm, he was informed that the Israeli military commander of the West Bank had issued an administrative detention order against Ahmad but was given no further information. Ahmad's lawyer and family had to wait until 11 pm to find out from the Israeli Prison Service that the period of his administrative detention had been set at six months. He was therefore left for at least 3.5 hours without a clear legal status, since his remand officially ended at 5:00pm.

In addition, the detention order issued against him on 3 May 2011 contained several errors. It called for an extension of his administrative detention, despite the fact that it is Ahmad's first order in years, and referred to him being a suspected Hamas activist; this despite the fact that the authorities had originally given the grounds for his arrest as his membership of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, a claim which Ahmad has vehemently denied. It had also been tampered with using correction fluid to include Ahmad's name, making it clear that this was actually a copy of someone else's detention order. Furthermore, although the order was signed by the Head of the Central Military Command, Avi Mizrahi, as required under Israeli military legislation, it was stamped by a less senior Commander for the Region, Yair Kolam.

The Israeli military authorities issued a new detention order the following day in an apparent effort to correct the previous one; however it was once again stamped by Yair Kolam.

Finally, on 8 May at Ofer Military Court, the Military Judge requested that the previous detention orders be discarded and a new one be presented that was stamped and signed by Avi Mizrahi. The current one now states that Ahmad is being held for posing an unspecified security



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risk. The ISA was meant to present any secret evidence against Mr. Qatamish to the Military Judge, in order for her to decide whether to approve the administrative detention order, during a closed hearing on Thursday, 12 May 2011, which neither Ahmad nor his lawyer were permitted to attend. However, the ISA failed to turn up that day, and so the hearing was delayed until 15 May. Ahmad then waited another 4 days, until 19 May, before being told that his detention order was approved by the Military Judge for a period of four months. This unnecessary delay demonstrates one of the many flaws of the Israeli military order regulating administrative detention, which states that reviews of administrative detention should take place 8 days after the order is first issued at the latest but does not impose a limit on how much time a judge can take to reach a decision thereafter. The order was confirmed for four months, due to expire on 2 September. In the three weeks that Ahmad spent in detention before his administrative detention order was confirmed, he was only interrogated once for 10 minutes, when he was first arrested on 21 April.

Addameer's lawyer filed an appeal against the judge's decision on 3 June on the basis of the many errors on his detention orders highlighted above. On the same day, the prosecution also lodged an appeal requesting that Mr. Qatamish be detained for the full six months that it had originally requested. On 21 June, a military judge rejected both appeals, claiming that the court of first instance had already dealt with the issue of the detention order errors, notably by reducing the detention period from six to four months.

On 2 September, a new administrative detention order was issued against Mr. Qatamish for an additional period of 6 months. Although the order was due to be reviewed by a military judge on 5 September, the hearing was postponed upon request by the military prosecution. On 25 September, Mr. Qatamish was brought before the judge but no decision was given regarding the administrative detention order. Finally on 3 October the administrative detention order was confirmed for 6 months, on the grounds that the Judge was still convinced, from information contained in the secret file, that Mr. Qatamish posed a threat to security. On 23 February 2012, Mr. Qatamish's order was renewed once again for another 6-month period, and again on 23 August.

PREVIOUS ARREST

Ahmad was first arrested in 1992 in front of his three-year-old daughter. Following his arrest, he was detained for more than a year - during which time he was tortured - before being placed in administrative detention in October 1993, despite the Military Judge ordering his release. Ahmad's detention orders were repeatedly renewed for the next five and a half years, despite a lack of evidence purported against him. Due to pressure from international campaigns, Ahmad was finally released in 1998, becoming one of the longest-serving administrative detainees held without charge in Israeli prison. His memoir, *I shall not wear your tarboosh [fez]*, accounts his experiences of being tortured while in detention.



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AHMAD'S FAMILY

Ahmad's extensive detention and arrests have been extremely difficult for his wife, Suha, a board member of Addameer and the Palestine Red Crescent Society, and his daughter, Haneen, a university student at the American University in Cairo. Suha recalls of his most recent arrest, "A few days ago, when they arrested my husband, I found out that there are very deep marks on my daughter's spirit. She was three years old at that moment [when they arrested her father in 1992], and the marks are still there. When the soldiers told her that [they] arrested her father again, she almost collapsed." Suha and Haneen hoped that Ahmad would be released before Haneen's graduation in January. The event was very important to Ahmad, particularly because he feels as though he was not able to watch his daughter grow up for much of her childhood.

More than ten years after he was released from his previous detention, it had not occurred to Ahmad's wife Suha that they might have to suffer through the same ordeal once again. The torment of his arrest is made even worse by the uncertainty of administrative detention and not being able to prepare for his release, as the family is already all-too-familiar with the prison authorities' practice of renewing administrative detention orders every six months. She condemns his imprisonment as a prisoner of conscience, arrested for his ideas and political activism, and calls on the international community to continue to assert pressure on his behalf.

Administrative detention is a procedure that allows the Israeli military to hold detainees indefinitely on secret information without charging them or allowing them to stand trial. In the occupied Palestinian West Bank, the Israeli army is authorized to issue administrative detention orders against Palestinian civilians on the basis of Military Order 1651. This order empowers military commanders to detain an individual for up to six month renewable periods if they have "reasonable grounds to presume that the security of the area or public security require the detention." On or just before the expiry date, the detention order is frequently renewed. This process can be continued indefinitely.

For more information about administrative detention and **Addameer's Campaign to [Stop Administrative Detention](#)** please visit our website.

Read Addameer's report on administrative detention: "[Administrative Detention in the Occupied Palestinian Territory: A Legal Analysis Report](#)", updated July 2010.

ACT NOW!

Here is how you can help Ahmad Qatamish:

- Send Ahmad letters of support to his postal address in prison:
Ofer Prison



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Givat Zeev
P.O. Box 3007

- Write to the Israeli government, military and legal authorities and demand that Ahmad Qatamish be released immediately and that his administrative detention not be renewed.

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- Write to your own elected representatives urging them to pressure Israel to release Ahmad Qatamish and to put an end to such an unjust, arbitrary and cruel system of incarceration without trial.

Addameer Prisoner Support and Human Rights Association

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