

# URGENT ACTION

## ISRAEL DETAINS CIRCUS PERFORMER

**A 23-year-old Palestinian man, Mohammad Faisal Abu Sakha, has been detained by the Israeli military, without charge or any explanation, since 14 December. He has not been allowed visits from his family.**

**Mohammad Faisal Abu Sakha** was detained by Israeli soldiers on 15 December, as he was on his way from his parents' home, in the occupied West Bank city of Jenin, to his work at the Palestinian Circus School in Birzeit, next to Ramallah. Israeli soldiers detained him at the Zaatara checkpoint, close to the West Bank city of Nablus, and took him to the nearby Hawara military detention centre. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has told his parents that he is now in Megiddo prison, in northern Israel, though his family have not been allowed to visit him. The Israeli military handed him a six-month administrative detention order in late December, allowing them to detain him without charge indefinitely. Detainees are denied the right to defend themselves or effectively challenge the legality of their detention because the authorities largely withhold the "evidence" against them from them and their lawyers. A military judge is understood to have reviewed the order on 5 January, at the Salem military court in the north of the West Bank. The military judge can cancel, reduce or uphold the order but has not yet made a decision. The Al Jazeera news website quoted an Israeli military spokesperson that day as saying that Mohammad Faisal Abu Sakha was being held because he posed a "danger... to the security of the region" and that the details of his case were "confidential".

The Israeli authorities have increased their use of administrative detention dramatically since October 2015: over 580 Palestinians were in administrative detention by the end of the year.

Mohammad Faisal Abu Sakha began studying at the Palestinian Circus School in 2007 and became one of its performers in 2011, also training children in circus acts. He specializes in teaching children with learning difficulties, who make up 30 of the more than 300 students at the school.

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

- Calling on the authorities to release Mohammad Faisal Abu Sakha, and all other administrative detainees, unless they are to be charged with recognizably criminal offences and tried fairly and promptly;
- Urging them to ensure that he is given access to a lawyer of his choosing and visits from his family.

### **PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 26 FEBRUARY 2016 TO:**

#### Military Judge Advocate General

Brigadier General Sharon Afek  
Hakiryia, Tel Aviv, Israel  
Fax: +972 3 569 4526  
Email: avi\_n@idf.gov.il

**Salutation: Dear Judge Advocate  
General**

#### Commander of the IDF – West Bank

Major-General Roni Numa  
GOC Central Command  
Military Post 01149, Battalion 877  
Israel Defense Forces, Israel  
Fax: +972 2 530 5741, +972 2 530 5724

**Salutation: Dear Major-General Roni  
Numa**

#### 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. 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.

**AMNESTY  
INTERNATIONAL**



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### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The Palestinian Circus School, which is funded by various charities and other bodies, including the European Commission, has said that there is no basis to claims that Mohammad Faisal Abu Sakha is a security threat, that his only crime is “making children happy” and that his life is dedicated to the circus. Established in 2006, the school’s mission is to train Palestinian children and youth in circus arts and thereby “strengthen the social, creative and physical potential of the Palestinians, seeking to engage and empower them to become constructive actors in society.”

When Mohammad Faisal Abu Sakha was 17 years old, he was arrested by Israeli security forces and held for one month, accused of throwing stones at an Israeli military jeep when he was aged between 12 and 14, which he denied. He told Palestinian Circus School colleagues that, during his detention, a military judge told him he would “never go back to the circus”.

Mohammad Faisal Abu Sakha is now detained inside Israel. This violates the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, which stipulates that detainees from the population of an occupied territory must be detained within that territory. Relatives of Palestinians residing in the occupied West Bank have great difficulty obtaining permits to visit their family members detained in Israel.

Administrative detention – ostensibly introduced as an exceptional measure to detain people who pose an extreme and imminent danger to security – has for years been used by Israel as an alternative to using 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.

Many administrative detainees go on hunger strike in protest at being detained without charge. One such detainee, journalist Mohammed al-Qiq, has been on hunger strike since late November; and under new legislation the Israeli military have recently been able to threaten him with being force-fed. Another administrative detainee, Mohammed Allan, who had been on hunger strike for about eight weeks, was transferred on 10 August 2015 to the intensive care unit of Israel’s Soroka Medical Center, where medical staff refused to force-feed him. He stopped his hunger strike on 20 August after an Israeli High Court ruled his detention should be suspended because of his poor health and was subsequently transferred to Barzilai Medical Center. Israeli police rearrested him on 16 September as he was leaving the centre. He was finally released in November.

The level of violence in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories has escalated since 1 October 2015, and Israel’s use of apparently punitive measures against the Palestinian population has become more widespread. These measures include mass arrests and arbitrary detention, including administrative detention, and also demolition of houses belonging to families of Palestinians accused of carrying out attacks against Israelis and the imposition of additional, arbitrary restrictions on Palestinians’ freedom of movement. Israeli forces have made increasing use of excessive, in some cases lethal, force against Palestinians throughout the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip. Israel has failed to protect Palestinians from a wave of attacks by settlers, particularly in Hebron and East Jerusalem. A growing number of Palestinians have targeted Israeli forces and civilians in stabbing and shooting attacks.

Name: Mohammad Faisal Abu Sakha  
Gender m:

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