

URGENT ACTION

PALESTINIAN CIRCUS PERFORMER RELEASED

Palestinian circus performer and teacher Mohamed Faisal Abu Sakha was released on 30 August from Ketziot Prison in Israel. He spent nearly two years in administrative detention without being charged or tried. He has now returned home to his family in Jenin in the occupied West Bank.

On 30 August, Palestinian circus performer and teacher **Mohamed Faisal Abu Sakha** was released from Ketziot Prison in Israel after spending 625 days in administrative detention without charge or trial. This came after an Israeli military appeal court decided on 12 July to release him on 30 August, ahead of the annual Muslim Feast of the Sacrifice (Eid al-Adha, Arabic) that took place on 1 September. The Palestinian prisoners' rights NGO Addameer, whose lawyer Mahmoud Hassan represented Mohamed Faisal Abu Sakha, had filed the appeal. He is back home with his family in Jenin, in the occupied West Bank.

Mohamed Faisal Abu Sakha was detained by Israeli soldiers on 14 December 2015 in the occupied West Bank, while he was crossing an Israeli military checkpoint on his way to work at the Palestinian Circus School. He was given a six-month administrative detention order on 25 December 2015, which was renewed twice. On 12 June, he was given a three-month administrative detention order, which was shortened on appeal. Israel's military prosecution had alleged that Mohamed Faisal Abu Sakha carried out illegal activities with the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP, a left-wing political party with an armed wing, which is banned by Israel) but failed to provide any evidence of these activities. Mohamed Faisal Abu Sakha denied the accusation. The 26-year-old was held inside Israel in flagrant violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention, which provides that detainees from the population of an occupied territory must be detained within that territory.

Mohamed Faisal Abu Sakha spoke to Amnesty International on 6 September and delivered the following message of thanks to all those who took action on his behalf: "I love you all. I feel a part of you given how much you stood by me in your actions [...] I want to thank everyone individually. I spent days on Facebook not knowing what to write. No words can express it enough."

On his Facebook page, Mohamed Faisal Abu Sakha wrote to all his supporters: "From my heart, I would like to thank everybody who took a stand with me: in a word, photo, idea, message or a feeling during my detention in the jails of Israel's occupation. Thank you for all the campaigns and efforts to support ending administrative detention."

Speaking to Amnesty International, he added that he looks forward to returning to his work as a teacher at the Palestinian Circus School, where he specialises in teaching children with learning difficulties. He said that this will feel like he has fully returned to his normal life. "The circus school is a place where we connect with our humanity," he told Amnesty. "The Palestinian Circus School, which I belong to, is an important part of building hope in our children for the future and for freedom," he added on Facebook.

Thank you to all those who sent appeals. No further action is requested from the UA network.

This is the seventh update of UA 12/16. Further information: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde15/6498/2017/en/>

Name: Mohamed Faisal Abu Sakha
Gender m/f: m

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