

URGENT ACTION

GAZAN AT IMMINENT RISK OF LOSING SECOND LEG

20-year-old journalist Yousef al-Kronz is being denied permission by Israeli authorities to travel to Ramallah in the occupied West Bank for urgent medical treatment. Yousef al-Kronz was seriously wounded by Israeli forces on 30 March during Land Day protests in Gaza and is at imminent risk of losing his second leg.

On 30 March, **Yousef al-Kronz**, 20, and **Mohammad al-'Ajouri**, 17, from Gaza City, were among the hundreds of people shot and wounded with live ammunition by Israeli forces during Land Day protests near the fence that separates Gaza from Israel. Both young men were transferred to al-Shifa Hospital in Gaza City for treatment of serious injuries that placed them at risk of losing their legs. As al-Shifa Hospital did not have the required medical equipment to save their legs, doctors referred both men to Al Istishari Arab Hospital in Ramallah. On 1 April, human rights groups Adalah and the Gaza-based al-Mezan Centre submitted a request to exit Gaza on behalf of both men to the Israeli military Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT).

As in many other cases, COGAT did not respond to the request and the two rights organizations sent an urgent letter on 4 April requesting authorization for Yousef al-Kronz' and Mohammad al-'Ajouri's immediate transfer from Gaza to Ramallah. On 5 April, Adalah was informed that COGAT refused the men's requests apparently because of their participation in mass protests on 30 March. On 8 April, both organizations filed a petition to the Israeli Supreme Court demanding that Israel allows the two seriously wounded young men to leave the Gaza Strip to Ramallah, where their legs could possibly be saved. Despite the urgency of the request, the court decided not to hold an immediate session and gave the government three days to respond.

Due to the delay and the state's refusal to grant the exit permits, Yousef al-Kronz and Mohammad al-'Ajouri have each had one of their legs amputated. Yousef al-Kronz may require another amputation if he does not receive immediate and adequate medical treatment in Ramallah. On 12 April, a hearing on the matter was held at the Israeli High Court, where the court ordered the state to explain why it will not allow al-Kronz to leave the Gaza Strip for urgent medical care in the West Bank. Adalah's request for an urgent hearing on 13 April has been rejected, and a second hearing is to be held on 15 April.

1) TAKE ACTION

Write a letter, send an email, call, fax or tweet:

- Urging the Israeli authorities to facilitate the immediate transfer of critically injured Yousef al-Kronz, and other ill patients, to hospitals outside the Gaza Strip in order to receive life-saving specialized treatment;
- Urging the Israeli authorities to lift the illegal blockade on Gaza and respect their obligation, as the occupying power, to ensure that residents of the Gaza Strip have access to adequate medical care.

Contact these two officials by 04 May, 2018:

Minister of Defence
Avigdor Liberman
Ministry of Defence
37 Kaplan Street, Hakirya
Tel Aviv, Israel 61909
Email: minister@mod.gov.il -OR- pniot@mod.gov.il
Fax: +972 3 691 6940
Salutation: Dear Minister

Ambassador Ron Dermer, Embassy of Israel
3514 International Drive NW, Washington DC 20008
T: 202.364.5500
Email: info@washington.mfa.gov.il
Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/ambdermer>
Twitter: [@AmbDermer](https://twitter.com/AmbDermer)
Salutation: Dear Ambassador

2) LET US KNOW YOU TOOK ACTION

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Yousef al-Kronz, aged 20, is a media and journalism student at al-Azhar University in Gaza City, and works with the Palestinian Media Association. He told Amnesty International that he was covering the Land Day protests, east of al-Borej refugee camp, when he was shot in both his legs on 30 March near the Israel-Gaza fence. As a result, Yousef al-Kronz has had his left leg amputated and is now at risk of losing his right leg if he does not receive a proper treatment in Ramallah.

Several groups in Gaza have organized a series of demonstrations and marches, beginning on 30 March, to coincide with Land Day, to demand the right of return for millions of refugees to villages and towns in what is now Israel. The protests are expected to last until 15 May, when Palestinians commemorate the Nakba or “great catastrophe”. The day marks the displacement and dispossession of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians in 1948-9 during the conflict following the creation of Israel.

On two consecutive Fridays, tens of thousands of Palestinians, including men, women and children, have gathered in five camps set up around 700 meters away from the fence that separates the Gaza Strip from Israel to reassert their right of return and demand an end to nearly 11 years of Israel’s blockade. While protests remained largely peaceful, a minority of protesters have thrown stones and, according to the Israeli army, Molotov cocktails in the direction of the fence. The Israeli forces claim that those killed were trying to cross the fence between Gaza and Israel or were “main instigators” and therefore gunfire of their forces is justified. There have been no Israeli casualties.

By 11 April, the protests had resulted in the death of 26 Palestinians, including three children and a photojournalist, Yasser Murtaja. In addition, more than 3,000 Palestinians had been injured including around 445 children, at least 21 members of the Palestinian Red Crescent’s emergency teams, and 15 journalists. The Ministry of Health in Gaza stated on 11 April that some 1,236 people had been hit by live ammunition since the protests begun. Others were injured by rubber bullets or treated for tear gas inhalation dropped by drones. The World Health Organization expressed concern that nearly 350 of those injured may be temporarily or permanently disabled as a result of their injuries. So far, at least four people have had leg amputations. Eyewitness testimonies as well as videos and photographs taken during demonstrations point to evidence that, in some instances, unarmed Palestinian protesters were shot by Israeli snipers while waving the Palestinian flag or running away from the fence.

The Israeli authorities routinely deny or delay exit permits for patients seeking potentially life-seeking medical treatment outside Gaza. In 2017, the Israeli authorities approved permits for medical appointments for only 54 percent of those who applied, the lowest rate since the World Health Organization (WHO) began collecting figures in 2008. WHO reported that 54 Palestinians, 46 of whom had cancer, died in 2017 following denial or delay of their permits. For the last two decades, and especially since 2007 when Israel imposed a land, air, and sea blockade on Gaza, Israel has kept Gaza mostly closed, unlawfully depriving its population of basic rights. The United Nations and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), among others, have declared this policy “collective punishment” and called for Israel to lift its closure. Israel controls all Gaza access, with the exception of the Rafah crossing via the Egyptian border, and all crossings between Gaza and the West Bank, including the border between the West Bank and Jordan. The Israeli authorities do not allow Palestinians in Gaza to reopen their airport or build a seaport, leaving Palestinians dependent on foreign ports for travel abroad.

The Israeli government’s restrictions on movement are directly connected to patient deaths and compounded suffering as ill patients seek permits. These practices form part of the closure and permit regime that prevents patients from a life of dignity, and violates the right to life. The closure system must be abolished so that patients have safe access to healthcare in Palestinian hospitals in the occupied Palestinian territories and elsewhere.

Name: Yousef al-Kronz
Gender m/f: m

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