



FREE

HUSSAM KHADER

Free Hussam Khader,
Palestinian Parliament Member

Free all Palestinian Political Prisoners

Hussam Khader was arrested by the Israeli army in March 2003 and has been detained since then. International human rights organisations, including the *Inter-Parliamentary Union* and the *World Organisation Against Torture* have expressed concerns about the breach of international law in his case, and that he has been subjected to torture and inhuman treatment.

The *Popular Committee in Solidarity with Hussam Khader* believes that Khader's imprisonment has been, for the most part, motivated by political objectives that aim to break his will and undermine his determination to challenge Israel's occupation, his firm commitment to the right of return for Palestinian refugees, and his stand against corruption and for improved financial accountability.



'There is no life without dignity,
freedom and without our state'

Hussam Khader, March 2002

'I went to the Knesset, and they introduced me as a man of peace. I went to Cairo and preached normalization. But now I am just another number in the Israelis' computer. There is nothing in my file that says, 'He was a peace partner.' Now I am another Palestinian face into which the soldiers can shine their flashlights.'

Hussam Khader, quoted in New York Times magazine, February 2002



PHOTO: Hussam Khader at his Court hearing 19/04/04 (Photo: IOR, Ben Naji)

Hussam Khader's trial has been postponed over 9 times since his arrest in March 2003. During his detention, he has been subjected to inhumane treatment, including sleep deprivation, has been subjected to lengthy periods of interrogation and held in solitary confinement for long periods of time. During the first three weeks of his arrest, he was denied the right to meet with a lawyer. Like other prisoners from Nablus and 'security' prisoners, he has been denied all family visits since his arrest. Contrary to international law, Khader is being detained inside Israel and not the Occupied Territories.

Hussam Khader is the Chair of the *Committee for the Defence Palestinian Refugees' Rights* and is a staunch advocate of reform and in the fight against corruption. He is also an independent member of the *Palestinian Human Rights Monitoring Groups* Board of Trustees, a member of the *Palestinian Legislative Council's* Monitoring and Political Committees, and was Chairman in the Palestinian Ministry of Youth and Sport.

Khader has denied the charges against him and claimed that they were fabricated and obtained from a state witness under pressure. The prosecution is also using secret evidence in Khader's case and are seeking to prevent him and his defence team from seeing this evidence. The Israeli newspaper, *Ha'aretz*, reported in March 2004 that Khader's lawyer had said that all the charges against his client are based on the testimony of one single witness. This witness is also being tried and told the court that he had not had any access to a lawyer for more than six weeks during his own interrogation, and that he had never met Khader, nor had any contact with him.

'We have succeeded in convincing much of the world that the right of return is at the heart of the Palestinian issue and that without granting the refugees that right there can be no enduring peace in the region, we can't allow ethnic cleansing to triumph, the refugees' cause is the Palestinian cause.'

Hussam Khader, quoted in *Al-Ahram Weekly*, Jan 2001

Illegal and inhumane conditions of detention

After Hussam Khader's arrest in March 2003, the *World Organisation Against Torture* (OMCT) issued an appeal (Case ISR 190303) expressing their grave concern 'for the physical and psychological integrity of Mr Khader, given the excessive use of force during his arrest, and the fact that he was detained incommunicado, with the heightened risk that he will be subjected to ill-treatment or torture that this entails'.

To protest these unlawful and inhumane detention conditions, Khader went on hunger strike in March 2004 to protest at his solitary confinement for over a year. He ended his hunger strike after 9 days after he was moved to a cell with another prisoner. Again in August 2004, Palestinian political prisoners, including Hussam Khader and Marwan Barghouti, went on hunger strike which ended 19 days later after negotiations with the Israeli Prison Service. During his pre-trial detention, Khader's legal team has been denied access to him on approximately 8 occasions. As a result, his lawyer was compelled to petition the Israeli Ministry of Justice demanding lifting the prohibition on meeting Khader.

Human rights organisations criticise Israel's illegal treatment of prisoners

According to human rights groups, Israel has systematically tortured or ill-treated approximately 80% of all Palestinian detainees. As of September 2004, there were over 7500 Arab and Palestinian political prisoners detained in Israeli prisons and military detention facilities. *Amnesty International*, among other human rights groups, have long reported a history of violent abuse towards Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails. The detainees, many of whom are being held without charge, are subjected to harsh treatment including prohibitions on family visits, torture or other cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment, inadequate health care and access to medical facilities and inadequate and nutritionally deficient supplies of food.

Recent reports have criticised these conditions of detention, and the torture and inhumane treatment to which Palestinian prisoners are subjected on a regular basis. In February 2003, the *International Federation of Human Rights* (FDIH), in co-operation with Israeli and Palestinian human rights groups, released a lengthy report detailing several violations of international law. The *Public Committee Against Torture in Israel, Adameer Human Rights Association, Adalah*, and other organisations have also published reports highlighting the human rights abuses of Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails. In July 2004, Israel's Public Defenders Office criticised prison conditions in Israeli detention facilities. It found these facilities overcrowded, violent and unsanitary, with many prisoners having to eat and sleep on bare floors. Under the *Fourth Geneva Convention* political prisoners detained by an occupying power are guaranteed basic standards of treatment. Palestinian and Arab prisoners are not being afforded these rights. And under Common Article 1 of the Geneva Convention, the High Contracting Parties to the Convention have an obligation to 'ensure respect' for its provisions. In addition, Israel is violating the UN Basic Minimum Rules for the treatment of Prisoners.

International support for Hussam Khader

Hussam Khader is an elected member of the *Palestinian Legislative Council*. The Governing Council of the *Inter-Parliamentary Union*, the international organization of Parliaments of sovereign States, has adopted 4 resolutions expressing its deep concern about Khader's arrest, the conditions of his detention, the lack of medical treatment despite his health problems, including severe spinal pain, and the lack of evidence supplied to his legal defence team. The resolutions can be viewed at: <http://www.ipu.org/english> (search 'Hussam Khader').

Eminent Palestinian politicians, including Dr. Azmi Bishara, Dr. Jamal Zahalka and Mohammed Barakeh, members of the Israeli Knesset, have attended Khader's trial hearings. No one other than his lawyers has been allowed to visit him.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION AND HOW YOU CAN SUPPORT THE CAMPAIGN, SEE:

www.hussamkhader.org

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