



**His Excellency President Mahmoud Abbas,
President of the State of Palestine,
Commander-in-Chief of the Palestinian Forces,**

Subject: National Security Forces in Ramallah hold a child hostage for three days¹

Al-Haq is gravely concerned about the Ramallah-based Palestinian National Security Forces (NSF), who took hostage Husam Jamal Nassr Abu Saleem, 16 years old. Husam was held for three consecutive days in order to exert pressure on his father, Jamal Abu Saleem, so that he surrender himself to the NSF. The child was immediately released after his father had turned himself in to the NSF. This is a grave violation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which the State of Palestine has acceded to. Hostage taking is an encroachment on human dignity and is a crime under international law and the amended Palestinian Child Law of 2004. It is also a criminal offence under the amended Palestinian Basic Law and the Revolutionary Penal Law of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO).

Al-Haq has collected affidavits from the child, who is in the 11th grade, his mother Kawthar Abu Saleem, who witnessed the criminal offence, and from witnesses who confirmed the incident. The affidavits are as follows:

Husam Abu Saleem's Affidavit:

On Thursday 18 September 2014 at approximately 3:30 pm, I was on the roof of my house. Our apartment is in a building which houses the Amal al Mustaqbal School and is located in the town of Beituniya, Ramallah. That day, I saw two NSF jeeps stopping in front of the building. NSF officers dispersed around the area. I also saw a white civilian jeep stopping in front of the NSF jeeps. I climbed down the roof to the building entrance, where the jeeps had stopped. An officer grabbed my arms and took me to the civilian jeep. A man looked out of the window and asked about my father. I said he was not at home. That man told an officer to put me in the car. The officer, who grabbed my arm, put me in a military jeep.

The man who issued the order to the NSF officer to put me in the military jeep was white with grey hair. He was around 60 years old. (Based on Husam's mother's affidavits and witnesses, the NSF officer mentioned is Brigadier General Sharif from the NSF.)

After forcing me inside the jeep, my mother Kawthar Abu Saleem came along with my brother Ahmed, who is 11 years old. I saw an officer holding my brother's arm. It seemed to me that he was about to arrest him as well. "We don't need him. Leave him," I heard the man in the civilian car (Brigadier General Sharif) telling the officer. Officers let go of my brother and did not put him in the military jeep. Some people gathered in the area, but the NSF officers

¹ DISCLAIMER: This is a nonofficial translation of the original letter in Arabic sent to the President on XX.



did not allow them to get closer. Then two NSF officers got into the military jeep and sat beside me on the rear seat. I was in the middle. They grabbed my arms, each from one side. Then the military jeep drove off and took me to the NSF Headquarters near the Ramallah Cultural Palace. There, I was taken to the ground floor of the building. I was forced to sit in a room with two military officers. When I inquired why I was arrested, they said it was “from the Brigadier General”.

I asked to call my mother to tell her where I was but they refused. I was detained in that room without knowing why. I was held from Thursday 18 September 2014 until 9:30 pm on Saturday 20 September 2014. I was released and taken back home. I realised that my father had turned himself in. He is detained by the Military Intelligence Agency. He has not been released yet. While I was detained, they brought me a mattress to sleep on. They offered me breakfast and lunch but not dinner.

Kawthar Abu Saleem’s Affidavit, Husam’s mother:

At approximately 3:30 pm on Thursday 18 September 2014, I was at the Amal al Mustaqbal School and Kindergarten that I run. I live in an apartment in the same building. I saw NSF officers holding my sons Ahmed and Husam, 11 and 16 years old respectively. They had put my son Husam in a NSF military patrol car, which was parked in front of the building.

I asked the NSF officers why they arrested my sons. An officer told me to talk to the Brigadier General, and pointed at him. I knew the Brigadier General, whom the officer pointed to. He was Brigadier General Sharif, the officer in charge of control and inspection at the NSF. He was in a civilian jeep. I asked him why they detained my son. He responded “Shut up. Don’t intervene.” When I asked the Brigadier General again, he said that my husband Abu Husam was supposed to turn himself in, but he did not. He demanded that I call my husband, but I said I did not know where he was. “You can search the house,” I told him.

“Then the boy will stay with us until your husband surrenders himself,” Brigadier General Sharif replied. I should note that my husband Jamal Abu Saleem, 48 years old, works with the NSF. I continued to argue with the Brigadier General for about 15 minutes. Meanwhile, Mohammed Halasah, a lawyer, arrived to pick up his three children from the kindergarten. When he saw the incident, Halasah asked Brigadier General Sharif why they arrested the child while his father was not present. “This is an illegal procedure,” Halasah said. “This is our business, not yours. If you intervene, you’ll be arrested,” Brigadier General Sharif addressed Halasah. There are other witnesses to the incident. They tried to intervene, but it was in vain.

I told Brigadier General Sharif and the NSF officers that my son was a student. “This does not concern us. Even if he stays for three months, he will not be released until his father surrenders himself,” Brigadier General Sharif replied. They then left and took my son Husam with them. I tried to call some acquaintances in the NSF to check on my son, but it was in vain. He was detained until around 9:30 pm on Saturday, 20 September 2014. They released and brought him back home after my husband had surrendered himself. Since then, my husband has been detained

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by the Military Intelligence Agency in Um ash Sharayet. He has not been presented to the Military Prosecution or Military Justice Authority.

Your Excellency,

Al-Haq is gravely concerned with the event as mentioned in the affidavits. Especially that these confirm that a child was taken hostage for three consecutive days in order to exert pressure on his father to turn himself in to the NSF. Al-Haq is seriously concerned about the detention conditions of Husam's father, who continues to be held by the Military Intelligence Agency. We hope that Your Excellency issues instructions to take the necessary legal action and conduct impartial and expedited investigations into this incident, supported by affidavits and witness statements. In order to achieve justice, those proven to be involved in these grave violations of human rights and human dignity should be held to account.

Please accept the assurances of our highest consideration.

Shawan Jabarin
Director General, Al-Haq