

# PCHR strongly condemns 4th kidnapping in less than 3 weeks in the Gaza Strip

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PCHR  
Palestinian Centre for Human Rights  
  
PRESS RELEASE

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PCHR strongly condemns 4<sup>th</sup> kidnapping in less than 3 weeks in the Gaza Strip

***Two UN employees were kidnapped in the Gaza Strip on 29 July 2005, the latest in a spate of kidnappings over the past three weeks. The two officials were***

***released later the same day unharmed but the kidnappings indicate a dangerous trend in criminal activity and the inability of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) to ensure the rule of law in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT).***

PCHR is alarmed by the kidnapping of two UN officials on Friday 29 July 2005 in Gaza City. Zoi Constantine (Australian) and Steve Sabella (Palestinian with Jerusalem ID) from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) were kidnapped along a busy street in Gaza City's beach front area of El Remal at approximately 13:40. This is the third kidnapping of foreign internationals in approximately three weeks with the previous kidnapping of British and Austrian nationals from the same area of Gaza City on 13 July and an American in Rafah on 24 July 2005.

The two were forced into their UN vehicle by armed members of the Abed family and driven to Jihad Mahmoud Abed house in Ibad Rahman area of Jabalia. The two UN officials were held in the house in the northern Gaza Strip where other armed persons set fire to the streets and alleyways around the house.

The Abed family has said that the kidnapping was in response to the earlier kidnapping of their family member, Jihad, by an armed group referring to themselves as the Jenin Martyrs Brigade. Abed had been kidnapped as he crossed back in the Gaza Strip from Egypt with his family at Abu Houli checkpoint on 28 July 2005 at approximately 14:30 and held in al Burreij Refugee camp. Abed is a Colonel in Military Intelligence and a senior aide to the former Head of Military Intelligence, Mousa Arafat. The Abed family demanded his release in return for the UN officials' release.

After direct intervention from both official and other mediators, including Rashid Abu Shabak (Head of Preventive Security Services), the two were released at approximately 18:35 that evening.

Jihad Abed was later released at approximately 01:00 on Saturday, 30 July 2005.

PCHR is deeply concerned by this latest illustration of the deteriorating internal security situation across the Gaza Strip. PCHR demands that the PNA take real and effective measures to enforce the rule of law including seriously investigating and taking immediate criminal action against

those believed responsible for kidnappings. PCHR believes that this phenomenon will continue until the PNA is seen to take strong and immediate action against all those responsible.

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For more information please call: +972 8 2824776 – 2825893.\*

\*Office Hours are between 08:00 – 16:00 hours (05:00 GMT – 13:00 GMT) Sun – Thurs.

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