

URGENT ACTION

PROMINENT BEDOUIN LEADER RELEASED

On 22 July 2019, 70-year-old human rights defender and prominent Bedouin leader Sheikh Sayyah Abu Mdeighim al-Turi was released from Maasiyahu Prison, in the city of Ramle in central Israel. He was granted an early release by the Israeli Prison Service. Sheikh Sayyah had spent seven months in detention for exercising his rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly. He is the head of al-'Araqib, a Bedouin village in the Negev/Naqab that is unrecognized by the Israeli authorities.

NO FURTHER ACTION IS REQUESTED. MANY THANKS TO ALL WHO SENT APPEALS.

On 22 July 2019, 70-year-old human rights defender and prominent Bedouin leader Sheikh Sayyah Abu Mdeighim al-Turi was released from Maasiyahu Prison, in the city of Ramle in central Israel. He was granted an early release by the Israeli Prison Service due to overcapacity in the prison. He was initially meant to be released in October 2019, at the end of his 10-month sentence.

Following his release, Sheikh Sayyah thanked Amnesty International and all those who took action on his behalf: "I thank you all very much for standing up for the right of my people and the protection of our land. While I was in prison, I felt and heard your support loud and clear, and it meant the world to me." He added: "I'm free now, but the struggle is ongoing. Our village has been demolished at least 150 times. Not only are the Israeli authorities trying to destroy our property, they are also trying to destroy my will to continue protecting my land. I was detained again on 19 August 2019 by Israeli police who tried to have me removed from the land. However, on 20 August, an Israeli judge rejected the police's request and ordered my release. I hope that Amnesty will continue to campaign on my case and the case of al-'Araqib in the face of injustice and discrimination we face. The support and mobilization should continue until Israeli authorities stop all demolitions in our village, respect our right to live on our ancestral land and to officially recognize al-'Araqib and other 'unrecognized' villages in the Naqab/Negev."

On 25 December 2018, Sheikh Sayyah Abu Mdeighim al-Turi began to serve a 10-month sentence for his role in building structures in his village. Sheikh Sayyah is a prominent leader of the non-violent struggle for Bedouins' rights, as well as the head of the Bedouin village of al-'Araqib in the Negev/Naqab in southern Israel, which the Israeli government considers illegal. On 24 December 2017, the Beersheba Magistrate Court convicted him of 19 counts of trespassing, 19 counts of unlawful entry into public land and one count of breach of law and sentenced him to 10 months in prison, five months' probation and a fine of 36,000 ILS (9,700 USD).

The charges against Sheikh Sayyah were part of a years-long struggle between the State of Israel and the Negev Bedouins. The village of al-'Araqib is one of more than 40 Palestinian villages in Israel, many of which are located in Israel's Negev desert, not recognized by the Israeli authorities, despite the residents having Israeli citizenship and long-established claims to their lands.

NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN: Sheikh Sayyah Abu Mdeighim al-Turi (he/him)

THIS IS THE SECOND AND FINAL UPDATE FOR UA 04/19

LINK TO PREVIOUS UA: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde15/0435/2019/en/>

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