



# Aid agencies call for release of Polish aid worker detained by Israel

September 10, 2013

-For immediate release-

The Association of International Development Agencies (AIDA), a network of more than 80 international aid and development agencies working in the occupied Palestinian territory and Israel, has today condemned the detention of a Polish humanitarian aid worker, Kamil Qandil, who has been denied entry to Israel. For more than a week Qandil has been held in an Israeli detention center pending a court hearing to determine if he will be allowed entry or forced to terminate his work and return to Poland.

The agencies said the International Community must act urgently to press the government of Israel to respect internationally recognized principles regarding humanitarian access by immediately releasing Qandil and facilitating his entry into Israel.

The agencies noted that Qandil, who is a Polish national and employee of Polish Humanitarian Action (PAH), has a valid work visa issued by the state of Israel, which affords him multiple entries into the country.

Despite the work visa, Qandil was detained at the Ben Gurion airport on September 2, 2013 on “security grounds,” which Israeli authorities have declined to reveal.

As an employee of PAH, Qandil has been working on projects to bring vital water resources to Palestinian families in the South Hebron Hills section of the occupied West Bank, where the Israeli Civil Administration (ICA) maintains full military and civil control. PAH receives funding from the Polish government to rehabilitate rain water cisterns, which Palestinian families depend on to irrigate their agricultural fields and earn an income from farming. A number of cisterns rehabilitated by PAH have been previously demolished by Israel, prompting a diplomatic response from Warsaw.

Yadin Elam, Qandil's attorney has said:

“Kamil's case presents serious questions about the way Israel's immigration authorities and the Israel Security Agency (ISA) operate, as well as, about the ability

of me, as his lawyer, to defend Kamil in a legal process where both him and me are behind a veil of ignorance as we know nothing about the nature of the allegations against Kamil.”

Marta Kaszubska, Head of Mission from Polish Humanitarian Action (PAH) has said:

“The humanitarian community is providing Palestinians with water because the Israeli government has not met its obligation to provide for the basic needs of the population it occupies. The Israeli government is setting a worrying precedent by denying the entry of humanitarian workers who are at the forefront of ensuring that the needs of vulnerable people are met.”

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**Notes to editors:**

Kamil Qandil’s case is scheduled to be heard in the Israeli Supreme Court in Jerusalem on September 11, 2013 at 12:00 PM.

Under International Humanitarian Law, Israel, as the Occupying Power, has the primary responsibility to provide for the well-being of the Palestinian population and ensure that their basic needs are met (Article 55 Geneva Convention IV.) In the context of a protracted occupation where Israel has been unwilling or unable to meet this obligation, Israel is obliged to facilitate the work of humanitarian organizations, which includes facilitating rapid and unimpeded access for humanitarian workers, regardless of their nationality, religion, or political affiliation (Article 59 Geneva Convention IV.)

The 2010 Minimum Framework For Securing Humanitarian Operational Space in the Occupied Palestinian Territory states that in cases where the government of Israel has specific and substantiated security concerns about an agency’s individual staff member, these should be communicated to the agency in question and to the Humanitarian Coordinator and subject to an agreed upon process of review. The Framework is based on core principles of humanity, impartiality, and operational independence, which were endorsed by the 194 States Parties to the Geneva Conventions and recognized by the UN General Assembly (Resolutions 46/182 of 19 December 1991 and 58/114 of 17 December 2003).