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Palestinian Authority: Abductions must stop and French media worker Mohammed al-Ouati must be released immediately

Amnesty International calls for the immediate release of Mohammad al-Ouati, a sound technician with the French TV *France 3*, who was abducted by armed Palestinians in the Gaza Strip on 14 August and whose whereabouts remain unknown.

Mohammed al-Ouati, a French citizen of Algerian origin, was seized by Palestinian gunmen outside his hotel in Gaza City as he was returning to the hotel with three colleagues. He was forced into a car at gunpoint by three gunmen and taken to an unknown location. No Palestinian armed group is known to have claimed responsibility for the abduction so far.

The gunmen also tried to seize Mohammed al-Ouati's three colleagues, all French citizens and members of the *France 3* team. They reported that the gunmen were not wearing masks.

The abduction of Mohammed al-Ouati is the latest in a series of kidnapping by Palestinian armed groups and gunmen in recent months. In the past two months alone at least a dozen people, most of them foreign nationals, have been abducted in the Gaza Strip. They were all released unharmed within hours of being seized. However, Mohammed al-Ouati, has now been held for three days, longer than any of those previously abducted.

Among those abducted in recent weeks in the Gaza Strip are several UN and other relief workers, both foreign nationals and Palestinians. Such actions violate international law. The abduction of journalists and media workers also constitutes a clear attack on freedom of expression and information, both cornerstones of human rights law.

Amnesty International calls for Mohammed al-Ouati to be released immediately and to be protected from any harm. The organization calls on all Palestinian armed groups to put a immediate end to the practice of abductions.

The organization reiterates its call on the Palestinian Authority (PA) to take immediate steps to secure the release of Mohammed al-Ouati, to bring to justice those responsible for his abduction and to take concrete action to prevent the recurrence of such abuses by Palestinian armed groups.

