

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL WEB FEATURE

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Amnesty International welcomes release of Alan Johnston

The release of journalist Alan Johnston is welcome news for all those who campaigned over the last 114 days for his release. It is also good news for the people of Gaza, where Alan Johnston was well liked and respected as the only international correspondent permanently based there.

During his captivity, Alan Johnston became a symbol of the dangers journalists face in conflict areas. Those campaigning for his release included not only his colleagues in the BBC and his trade union in the UK, but also the Palestinian journalists union who held strikes and ordinary Palestinians who held rallies in Gaza demanding his release.

Journalists and press freedom organisations around the world took up the cause and over 200,000 people signed a BBC petition calling for his release. As the world celebrates, however, we should not forget the insecurity, poverty and unemployment faced by the 1.5 million people who remain in Gaza, many of whom joined in the call for his release.

Unfortunately, Alan Johnston is only one of hundreds of journalists who have been kidnapped, attacked and killed in recent years. These journalists should not be forgotten. As in captivity he was a symbol of journalists in danger, Alan Johnston's release should bolster the calls for greater protections for journalists around the world.

Too often, journalists are targeted by all sides in conflict situations. The conflict in Iraq, in particular, has, year on year, produced the highest annual of journalist casualties since the beginning of the conflict in March 2003. Many more have been kidnapped.

On Press Freedom Day 2007, Amnesty International called for global action to protect journalists and protect the freedom of the press. Alan Johnston's plight inspired global action and this should continue to protect all journalists in similar situations.

For further information, please see:

Alan Johnston's release greeted in Gaza (News from Gaza, 4 July 2007)

<http://web.amnesty.org/pages/pse-040707-news-eng>

Palestinian Authority: Amnesty International renews its appeal for release of Alan Johnston (Public Statement, 25 June 2007)

<http://web.amnesty.org/library/index/engMDE210122007>

Press Freedom Day: Global action needed to protect journalists (Feature, 3 May 2007)

<http://web.amnesty.org/pages/315-030507-feature-eng>

AI calls for release of journalist held in Gaza (Feature, 15 April 2007)

<http://web.amnesty.org/pages/pse-160407-news-eng>

