

President Reuven Rivlin
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Dear Mr. President,

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). On 21 November 2018, Sheikh Sayyah's appeal was rejected by the Israeli Supreme Court.

I urge you to immediately and unconditionally release Sheikh Sayyah as he is a prisoner of conscience and is imprisoned solely for peacefully defending his human rights and those of his community; to immediately stop all demolitions in the village as they systematically violate the Bedouins' right to adequate housing; and to respect the Bedouin population's right to their ancestral land and to officially recognize al-'Araqib and other "unrecognized" villages.

Yours sincerely,