

**Joint Statement on Palestinian Prisoners' Day:
Israel must heed international calls to respect human rights of Palestinians held in Israeli prisons
and end torture of detainees**

16 April 2015

On 17 April 2015, Palestinians around the world commemorate Prisoners' Day in solidarity with thousands of Palestinian prisoners and detainees, including minors, held in Israeli prisons, and with those subjected to torture and ill-treatment.

To mark this important day, four human rights organizations – Adalah - The Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel, Al Mezan Center for Human Rights, Physicians for Human Rights-Israel, and the Public Committee Against Torture in Israel – are issuing this joint statement to call upon the international community to urge Israel to heed international standards and recommendations to guarantee and protect the human rights of Palestinian prisoners and detainees at a time when torture and cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment (CIDT) is increasingly reported in Israel. The United Nations in particular has a responsibility to work towards the best interests of the child during conflict, including in preventing torture and CIDT.

Policies of arrest and detention

Since 1967, Israel has detained and imprisoned over 800,000 Palestinians from the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt). Around 70% of Palestinian families have had at least one relative detained, with vast social and political repercussions. As of March 2015, [5,820 Palestinian political prisoners](#), including women and children, are being held in prisons located inside Israel, in contravention of the Fourth Geneva Convention.

Israel's policies of detention and imprisonment are used in large part as political tools to suppress and maintain control over Palestinian society. These policies are intended to obstruct the daily lives and social fabric of Palestinians, and undermine their ability to oppose the Israeli occupation by criminalizing basic political affiliation and/or activities and employing methods such as torture and ill-treatment to target and intimidate individuals and communities.

The recent arrest of Khalida Jarrar on 2 April 2015 and a six-month administrative detention order coupled with an indictment filed against her, reflects Israel's sweeping use of administrative detention, including against Palestinian elected officials, in violation of basic human rights. Further, the arrest and detention of Gaza residents under Israel's 'Unlawful Combatants' Law is impermissible; the practice falls short of legal safeguards in international law and must be abolished.

Torture and child detainees

This year Prisoners' Day comes at a time of heightened concern over the drastic rise in torture complaints filed against Israel's security agency and the increased use of torture that the trend represents. During Israel's recent full-scale military operation on Gaza, at least 98 Palestinians of Gaza were arrested, with most subjected to torture and CIDT. Dozens other Gaza residents were arrested; and some tortured, at sea or as they were crossing Erez Crossing on their way to hospitals. In 2014, 59 complaints of torture were filed, whereas 16 and 30 complaints were filed in 2013 and 2012. Impunity for torture also continues; of 860 complaints filed between 2001-2014, [no investigations were opened](#).

Palestinian children are the most vulnerable detainees and are subject to psychological and physical harm during relatively brief periods of detention. As of February 2015, [182 Palestinian children](#) were being held as 'security prisoners' in Israeli prisons. Between [500 and 700 children](#) are prosecuted in the Israeli military courts each year, most commonly for the 'security offense' of stone throwing. A September 2014 military order to reform court requirements to include use of audio-video recordings and standardize language during interrogations does not apply for security offenses.

The international community has highlighted the serious violations of rights against Palestinian minors in Israeli prisons. The **European Neighborhood Policy** [progress report on Israel](#) of March 2015 noted particular concern over reports of "blindfolding, painful hand-ties, physical violence, lack of adequate notification of legal rights, verbal abuse, strip searches and solitary confinement while under interrogation." The **UN Human Rights Committee's** [concluding observations](#) in November 2014 that the implementation of reforms by the Israeli government was not effective, and that minors remained exposed to arbitrary arrest and detention and denied full procedural rights.

The international community has repeatedly called on Israel to address these issues faced by Palestinian minors in detention. According to the **UN Special Rapporteur on Torture's** [report in March 2015](#): "the unique vulnerability of children deprived of their liberty requires higher standards and broader safeguards for the prevention of torture and ill-treatment." However, to this day, Israel has no legislation that establishes or prohibits torture as a crime, as obligated in the UN human rights treaties to which Israel is a party.

Recommendations

The four human rights organizations: call upon the international community to demand that Israel incorporate the international recommendations of the UN and EU bodies in order to address the deteriorating human rights conditions of Palestinian prisoners and to end its violations of international law. We demand that Israel cease its systematic use of administrative detention as a mechanism of deterrence and punishment against Palestinian society, and interference with political processes. We demand that Israel end the practice of torture and ill-treatment against Palestinian prisoners, and end the severe tactics of arrest and detention of Palestinian minors, including abuse that amounts to torture and CIDT. We further demand that Israel revokes all discriminatory legislation that target the rights of Palestinians in Israeli prisons, and that it ensures transparency and accountability of Israeli security and prison authorities.

Signing organizations:

Adalah - The Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel
Al Mezan Center for Human Rights
Physicians for Human Rights-Israel (PHR-I)
Public Committee Against Torture in Israel (PCATI)



PROJECT FUNDED BY THE EUROPEAN UNION - JOINT PROJECT OF ADALAH, PHYSICIANS FOR HUMAN RIGHTS-ISRAEL AND AL MEZAN (GAZA)

The contents of this joint statement are the sole responsibility of Adalah, Al Mezan, PHR-I and PCATI and under no circumstances should be regarded as reflecting the position of the European Union.