



Update on the Palestinian Prisoners' Hunger Strike

Ramallah, 25 April 2012 – On 17 April 2012, Palestinian prisoners held in Israeli prisons launched a mass hunger strike demanding an end to administrative detention, isolation and other punitive measures taken against Palestinian prisoners including the denial of family visits and access to university education.

Approximately 1,200 Palestinian prisoners from all factions began an open hunger strike on 17 April, with the campaign gaining further momentum over this past week and additional prisoners joining daily. Addameer estimates that the current number of prisoners engaged in open hunger strike is around 2,000. This number includes the 19 prisoners currently held in isolation for “security reasons.” Ahmad Sa’adat, the imprisoned Secretary General of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), who has been held in isolation for over three years, reported on 23 April that since the beginning of his hunger strike on 17 April, he had already lost 6 kg.

As during hunger strikes in the past, the Israeli Prison Service (IPS) has escalated its punishments of hunger striking prisoners in an effort to undermine the campaign. Methods of punishment currently being employed against hunger striking prisoners include attacks on prisoners’ sections; confiscation of personal belongings; transfers from one prison to another; placement in solitary confinement; fines; and denial of family and lawyer visits. Addameer lawyers have been denied access to all hunger striking prisoners.

Forty prisoners who began their hunger strike today in Ofer prison were informed that they will be transferred to another section of the prison and will not be permitted to bring with them any personal belongings except clothes. In Ashkelon prison, the 150 hunger strikers are experiencing daily raids and attacks on their rooms by Israeli special forces. In addition to all personal belongings being confiscated, the IPS also confiscated the hunger-striking prisoners’ only nourishment: salt for their water. Hunger striking prisoners in Nafha prison have also had their salt confiscated, raising serious health concerns for the prisoners engaged in hunger strike. Of the approximately 400 prisoners on hunger strike in Nafha, at least 40 were transferred out of their sections. Hunger strikers in Nafha have also been subjected to fines and electricity was cut in their rooms. On 23 April, six prisoners joined in the hunger strike in Naqab prison and were all immediately placed in solitary confinement. Female prisoner Lina Jarbouni also declared an open hunger strike on 19 April and was taken to solitary confinement on the same day. These aforementioned measures are only a few examples of the widespread punishments, particularly the use of transfers and solitary confinement, currently facing the hunger striking prisoners, as an attempt by the IPS to further isolate them from the outside world and from other prisoners involved in the campaign.

Meanwhile, eight prisoners, including five administrative detainees, remain on extended hunger strikes launched prior to 17 April. Seven of these prisoners have been transferred to Ramleh prison medical center. Thaer Halahleh and Bilal Diab are on their 57th day of hunger strike today. Despite their rapidly deteriorating medical condition, both of their appeals against their administrative detention orders were rejected by an Israeli military judge on 23 April. Yesterday, 24 April, Hassan Safadi’s petition to the Israeli High Court against his administrative detention was rejected. He is on his 52nd day of hunger strike. Administrative detainees Omar Abu Shalal and Jaafar Azzedine are on their 50th and 35th days of hunger strike respectively. Also now in

Ramleh prison medical center are Mohammad Taj, on his 39th day of hunger strike demanding to be treated as a prison of war, and Mahmoud Sarsak, on his 34th day of hunger strike in protest of being held under Israel's Unlawful Combatants Law. Lastly, Abdullah Barghouti, held in isolation in Rimon prison, is on his 14th day of hunger strike. Addameer reiterates its grave concern that these hunger strikers are not receiving adequate healthcare in the IPS medical center and that independent doctors are still being denied visits to them.

Despite the punitive measures being taken against hunger striking prisoners, the campaign of hunger strikes continues to grow. The six female prisoners in Hasharon who are not already on hunger strike have announced that they will begin an open hunger strike on 1 May. Additional prisoners are also expected to gradually join the campaign, including 120 in Ofer prison, who will start their hunger strike on 29 April. As the mass hunger strike picks up even more momentum, it will become that much more crucial for hunger striking prisoners to have unrestricted access to their lawyers and independent doctors.

In light of these developments, an upsurge of action at the international level is necessary to bring attention to the legitimate demands of Palestinian prisoners. Addameer therefore renews its call on all political parties, institutions, organizations and solidarity groups working in the field of human rights in the occupied Palestinian territory and abroad to support the prisoners in their campaign of hunger strikes.