

On Mother's Day...

The Israeli Occupation Deprives Palestinian Mothers of their Children's Embrace

Date: 21 March 2022

As March 21 marks Mother's Day in the Arab world, the Israeli occupation continues to incarcerate 10 Palestinian mothers in Damon Israeli occupation prison, depriving them and their families of commemorating the day together. Currently, the Israeli occupation holds 31 Palestinian female political prisoners, including one administrative detainee held without charge or trial, 14 detainees held under trial, 16 prisoners serving their sentences, and one minor. Collectively, the 10 Palestinian female political prisoners are the mothers of 40 sons and daughters deprived of their mothers' embrace, all forms of physical contact, and their childhood is taken from them by their mothers' absence.

The Israeli occupation deprives about 4,400 Palestinian mothers of their sons and daughters imprisoned in occupation prisons. The Israeli occupation authorities prohibit a large number of mothers from visiting their children under the pretext of 'security' bans or claims that there are no 'links of kinship' between the two. All such practices aim further to isolate Palestinian prisoners and detainees from the outside world and exacerbate their suffering. particularly in light of the outbreak of COVID-19 and the arbitrary restrictions and prohibitions imposed on family visits.

Further, the Israeli occupation authorities abuse Palestinian women and mothers upon the arrest of their sons, imposing arbitrary and cruel punishments on claims that they aided in "covering up the actions of their children." Among the most prominent cases is the mother of former Palestinian prisoner Muhammad Abu Akar and the Palestinian female prisoner Attaf Jaradat, the mother of Palestinian prisoners Al-Muntasirbillah, Omar, and Ghaith Jaradat.

Manal Abu Akar - Mother of Former Prisoner Muhammad Abu Akar, and Wife of Prisoner Nidal Abu Akar

On 10 March 2022, at around 4:00 am, the Israeli Occupation Forces (IOF) stormed Manal Abu Akar's home, as her son Muhammad woke her up, and she went to wake up her daughters to prepare themselves. During the raid, a large contingent of IOF stormed the house, as a soldier informed Muhammad that they did not intend to arrest him but to beat them and wreck the house. IOF took Muhammad to the living room and physically beat him, as his mother could hear them from the other room.

Several masked soldiers gathered around Manal and her daughters and started beating them. Manal was hit with a soldier's weapon and pushed against the wall; then, IOF pushed Manal and her daughters to the ground, kicking them all across their bodies. IOF also tied her daughters' hands with plastic zip-tie tightly behind their backs, pointing their weapons near their heads and that of Manal's and threatening to shoot them. During the raid, IOF thoroughly searched the house, to the point of searching the bathroom trash and violently and arbitrarily

ransacking the house, sabotaging and destroying the property. The raid was carried out without any female soldier in violation of the law.



**Pictures following IOF raid and destruction of property of the house of Muhammad Abu Akar*

The physical assault and beatings of Manal and her daughters by IOF resulted in scratches and bruises across their bodies, with visible marks remaining for days after the assault. On that day, IOF detained Muhammad Abu Akar for hours, before releasing him the same day, following a “meeting” with the Israeli district officer, who screamed at him and threatened to arrest him.



**Lingering bruises and scratches following IOF physical assault of Muhammad Abu Akar's mother and sisters*

It should be noted that Manal's husband is a Palestinian political prisoner, Nidal Abu Akar, who continues to be held in Israeli occupation prisons under administrative detention without charge or trial. Nidal is also a former prisoner who has spent over 16 years in prison. Her son, Muhammad, is a former prisoner who spent years in Israeli occupation prisons. As such, Manal, a wife, and mother, has only ever been able to be with her entire family for a few days.

The case of Manal Abu Akar points to the Israeli occupation and apartheid regime's broader systematic practice of collective punishment, through property destruction and physical assault of family members, to target the families of Palestinian political prisoners.

The detained mother, Attaf Jaradat

The Palestinian female prisoner Attaf Jaradat has been held in Israeli occupation prisons alongside her three sons for nearly three months. She was arrested from her home on 27 December 2021, after IOF stormed the house, subjecting her to a search inside her home, and confiscated four phones. Attaf was transferred to Salem military base, where she stayed in the open-air for about two hours, handcuffed with plastic zip-tie and blindfolded, before being transferred to Al-Jalameh Interrogation Center.

Attaf was interrogated for four days, in three interrogation sessions that lasted for hours on end. During the interrogation, Attaf was subjected to screaming, threats, and attempts to force a confession, and was kept in a small and dirty cell with no ventilation. Afterward, Attaf was transferred to Damon Prison, where she remains until now and was prohibited from meeting with her lawyer for 40 days under the pretext of a gag order.

Attaf was arrested with her sons following a shooting attack carried out against settlers in the illegal Israeli settlement of 'Homish,' under allegations that she covered up for her sons accused of carrying out the attack and not reporting them. Attaf suffers from diabetes and hypertension and an irregular heartbeat, yet she remains incarcerated pending trial for the charges against her.

More still, IOF continues to persecute and levy collective penalties against the family. On 8 March 2022, IOF stormed the town of Al-Sileh Al-Harithiyeh and demolished three houses, two of them belonging to Attaf's family and her sons Omar and Ghaith, and the third house belonging to her brother Muhammad, who is also accused of being involved in the attack. Home demolitions prominently contravene international law prohibiting collective punishment, including Article 33 of the Fourth Geneva Convention and Article 50 of the Hague Regulations.¹

Collective Punishment Affect Palestinian Mothers

¹ For an extensive review of the Israeli occupation's practice of home demolitions and international law, specifically International Humanitarian Law and International Human Rights Law, see Al-Haq's factsheet, "Punitive House Demolitions," 31 October 2015, <https://www.alhaq.org/advocacy/6475.html>

The Israeli occupation and apartheid regime's systematic practice of collective punishment, in blatant contravention of international law, affects Palestinians of all categories, particularly mothers whose children are arrested in front of their eyes and subject to physical assault during the moments of arrest, as was the case with the mother and sisters of Muhammad Abu Akar, who were subject to physical and psychological abuse as a collective punishment for the entire family, as explicitly stated by the officer. Such practices and outright admission comes in light of the continued impunity of Israeli occupation authorities for their crimes committed against the Palestinian people within broader apartheid and a colonial regime that has committed gross violations over the past several decades.

The case of Palestinian female prisoner and mother Attaf Jaradat is no different than that of the mother of a Palestinian prisoner, Manal Abu Akar—both were subjected to abuse, assault, and punishment for actions they did not commit. The arrest and charges levied against the mother, Attaf Jaradat, for not informing Israeli occupation authorities of alleged plans carried out by her children are tantamount to demanding that mothers side allegiance with the occupation against their children for the benefit of the “security of the occupying state,” and in a broader attempt to damage the family and community fabric of Palestinian society. Attaf's case is not the first of its kind; several Palestinian mothers have already been tried on this charge, as is the case with the former Palestinian female prisoner Wafaa Na'alwa, mother of Ashraf Na'alwa.

Palestinian mothers also suffer from the Israeli occupation's practice of home demolitions after Israeli occupation authorities claim that their sons or husbands carried out military operations. Home demolitions compound upon the mother's suffering in addition to IOF raids, arrests, and abuse of family members are considered a collective punishment against her and her family.

To mark Mother's Day, which falls every year on 21 March, Israeli occupation authorities continue to persecute, arrest, and abuse Palestinian mothers, separating them from their children for months and years and levying collective penalties that aim to compound their suffering.

Palestinian Mothers Incarcerated in Israeli Occupation Prisons

	<u>Name</u>	<u>Date of Arrest</u>	<u>Residence</u>	<u>Legal Status</u>	<u>Number of Children</u>
1	Israa Ja'abees	10 October 2015	Jerusalem	11 years sentence	1 Child
2	Fadwa Hamada	13 August 2016	Jerusalem	10 years sentence	5 Children

3	Amany Al-Hashim	13 December 2016	Jerusalem	10 years sentence	2 Children
4	Khitam Sa'afin	2 November 2020	Ramallah	16 months sentence	3 Children
5	Shatha Odeh	7 July 2021	Ramallah	Under-trial	3 Children
6	Fatima Alyan	7 November 2021	Jerusalem (Qalandia)	Under-trial	
7	Shurouq Al-Badan	8 December 2021	Bethlehem (Tuqoo')	Administrative Detention	1 Child
8	Sa'eedeh Farajallah	18 December 2021	Hebron	Under-trial	8 Children
9	Attaf Jaradat	27 December 2021	Jenin (Al-Sileh Al-Harithiyeh)	Under-trial	9 Children
10	Yasmeen Sha'ban	1 March 2022	Jenin (Al-Jalameh)	Interrogation	4 Children