

On international Women's Day 2024: The deadliest year for Palestinian women

Around (240) cases of detention among women from the West Bank, occupied Jerusalem, and the occupied territories in 1948 after October 7th

Gazan female prisoners face enforced disappearance crime, No clear information about the number of detentions of Gazan women.

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Ramallah - This year has been the deadliest year for Palestinian women throughout the years of occupation, in light of the ongoing comprehensive aggression and genocide against our people in Gaza. This is in addition to the heinous crimes and serious violations suffered by women, including field executions, systematic arrests, and accompanying horrifying violations, including sexual assaults.

On International Women's Day, which falls on the 8th of March every year, the Palestinian Prisoner organizations (The commission of Detainees Affairs, the Palestinian Prisoners' Club, and Addameer for Prisoner Support and Human Rights Association) stated in their report that the history of targeting Palestinian women has been one of the most prominent and systematic policies since the early years of the occupation. The crimes witnessed by Palestinian women throughout the decades of occupation, and the post-October 7th period, were not an exceptional phase in terms of the level of horrifying crimes. Although we documented numerous testimonies, the difference lies in the intensity and unprecedented escalation of these crimes when compared to periods that saw uprisings and popular waves in the occupied Palestine.

The arrests of women, including minors, constituted one of the most prominent policies adopted by the occupation, unprecedentedly so after October 7th. The number of arrests among women after October 7th reached approximately (240). This figure includes women who were arrested in the West Bank, Jerusalem, and women from the occupied territories in 1948. There is no clear estimate of the number of women who were arrested from Gaza, as some were released later. However, it is certain that there are still women detained in the occupation's military camps, subjected to enforced disappearance.

The organizations stated that, as of the issuance of this report, the number of female prisoners held in the occupation's prisons, the majority of whom are detained in Damon Prison, reached (60) detainees. Among them are two prisoners from Gaza held in Damon Prison. Once again, it is emphasized that there is no information about the number of female prisoners from Gaza in the Israeli occupation camps.

Here are the key details about the female prisoners held in Israeli occupation prisons as of the report's preparation date. As mentioned earlier, the number of female prisoners is (60), including two prisoners from Gaza. Among the female prisoners, there are two minors, (24) mothers, and (12) administrative detainees. Additionally, there is one lawyer and one journalist among the

detainees, along with (12) student prisoners and (11) prisoners facing various health issues, including two injured prisoners. Furthermore, there are prisoners who are wives, mothers, and sisters of other prisoners, in addition to one prisoner who is a mother of a martyr.

It is noted that three female prisoners have been held since before October 7th, whom the Israeli authorities refused to release in the last exchange deal in November 2023.

The organizations highlight the prominent issues reflected in the post-October 7th period during the wide-scale arrest campaigns:

Targeting women through massive arrest campaigns and using them as hostages:

The Israeli occupation forces intensified systematic arrest operations against Palestinian women after October 7th, across all Palestinian territories, without exempting minors. This included the arrest of women as hostages with the aim of pressuring a family member targeted by the occupation to surrender to the Israeli authorities. This policy became one of the most prominent crimes that escalated significantly after October 7th. It involved wives and mothers of prisoners and martyrs, including elderly women over seventy years old. It is noteworthy that this policy also affected other groups, not just women. The detention of women as hostages was accompanied by acts of torture, threats, including threats to kill the targeted family member or spouse. In addition to the assaults they endured during the arrest process, their homes were vandalized, and their children were terrorized, in addition to confiscating and stealing their money and jewelry.

Sexual assaults and violence against Palestinian women, including female prisoners:

The prisoners' organizations affirmed that one of the most prominent crimes committed by the Israeli occupation forces against Palestinian women, including female prisoners, is sexual assault. This includes harassment, strip searching, and threats of rape. Additionally, the United Nations has reported reliable accounts of detainees from Gaza being subjected to rape.

The organizations managed to gather testimonies from released female prisoners, specifically during the exchange deal that took place in November 2023. They also collected testimonies from incarcerated female prisoners and from women whose relatives' faced arrests and persecution.

Hasharon Prison served as a temporary detention facility for female prisoners before their transfer to Damon Prison. It witnessed strip searches procedures, which the majority of female prisoners were subjected to, according to dozens of documented testimonies by the organizations. These testimonies also highlighted the degrading and humiliating conditions of detention, as well as various assaults, including brutal physical beatings.

In a testimony from a female prisoner who was arrested from her home after October 7th, she reported experiencing sexual assault and harassment during the arrest and interrogation process. A soldier inappropriately touched her head and feet, used obscene language, and threatened her multiple times. The soldiers threw cigarette butts and food remnants at her to humiliate her. The

prisoner was also subjected to multiple beatings by the occupation soldiers, causing pain throughout her body, with no medical treatment provided.

Gazan Female Prisoners: Horrifying Testimonies Detailing Their Arrests

The occupation carried out and continues to commit the crime of enforced disappearance against Gazan female prisoners. Since the beginning of the aggression and genocide, and with the occupation's ground invasion of Gaza, widespread arrests of women from Gaza have been carried out. They were detained in military camps, and some of them in Damon Prison. In light of the occupation persisting in the crime of enforced disappearance against Gaza detainees, the organizations lack clear data on their numbers or those who remain detained in military camps under the administration of the occupying army. In Damon Prison, two female prisoners from Gaza are still held separately from the female prisoners from the West Bank, occupied Jerusalem, and occupied territories 1948.

Despite the release of dozens of Gazan female prisoners, harrowing and tragic testimonies have emerged about their arrest operations, transfer to military camps, the humiliation, torture, deprivation of their rights, threats of rape, and subjecting them to degrading strip searches. They have also experienced harassment, offensive language, and insults deliberately used by occupation soldiers. The soldiers forced them to remove their "hijabs" throughout the detention period, in addition to stripping them naked. Here, we reiterate the United Nations report pointing to reliable accounts of Gazan detainees being subjected to rape.

(60) Female Prisoners in Damon Prison Facing Harsh Detention Conditions:

The Israeli occupation authorities detain the majority of female prisoners in Damon Prison, historically used as a central prison for Palestinian female detainees. Currently, there are (60) female prisoners facing severe and challenging detention conditions due to the collective isolation policy adopted against male and female prisoners in the occupation's prisons after October 7th. Specifically, in the early period after October 7th, female prisoners were subjected to widespread assaults. This included solitary confinement, attacks by suppression forces, confiscation of all their belongings, and deprivation of their rights, such as communication with their families.

Today, in addition to the previously mentioned policies, female prisoners are suffering from hunger because the Israeli occupation is imposing a starvation policy against them.

This involves depriving prisoners of additional food items from the canteen, as well as denying them medical treatment, falling under the category of medical crimes. The overcrowding imposed by the Israeli prison service has weighed heavily on the female prisoners, resulting in numerous tragic detention conditions inside Damon Prison. Many prisoners were forced to sleep on the floor, and there is a severe shortage of clothing and blankets, exacerbated by the harsh cold wave. Some prisoners remain in the same clothes they were arrested in and have been unable to replace them.

The Israeli prison service deliberately deprived female prisoners of clean water, and the only available water is unfit for drinking.

The majority of female prisoners are either held under administrative detention or face charges of “incitement”:

Palestinian women have been targeted by unprecedented historical escalation in administrative detention operations. By the end of February, the number of administrative detainees in Israeli prisons reached (3558), including (12) female detainees held administratively at the time of preparing this report. Among them are journalists, lawyers, and university students.

Furthermore, the remaining female prisoners, the majority of whom face charges related to incitement on social media platforms, constitute one of the main pretexts used by the occupation for arresting Palestinians in the West Bank, occupied Jerusalem, and from the occupied territories 1948. It is noteworthy that one of the significant milestones in the history of the female prisoners' issue was the exchange deals that took place in November, where (71) female prisoners were released, some of whom had been serving sentences for up to 16 years. They were among the 240 released during the exchange deal that occurred at that time.

It is worth mentioning that the occupation authorities re-arrested two women prisoners who were released as part of the deal, while two Jerusalemite prisoners were summoned to civilian courts under the pretext of having files against them while they were inside the prisons.

We, as organizations defending prisoners' rights, and based on testimonies and permits obtained from Palestinian female prisoners and detainees, confirm that the Israeli occupation continues to violate the rights of Palestinian female prisoners in detention and interrogation centers, prisons, hospitals, medical clinics, checkpoints, and inspection points. These violations affect all categories of Palestinian females, including teachers, students, mothers, children, and others.

We urge the United Nations and all member states to exert pressure on the occupying state to respect and comply with international law and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.

We call on the contracting parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention to end the physical and psychological assaults perpetrated by occupation soldiers during the arrest of Palestinian women, their unlawful detention in the occupied Palestinian territory, and to put an end to physical and psychological torture and treatment that undermines dignity against Palestinian women during interrogation.