

Anatot Camp

The Camp's Strategic and Military Changes

Since the onset of the genocide in Gaza on October 7, Israeli occupation forces have escalated their large-scale arrest operations in both the enclave and the West Bank. This surge in arrests has necessitated the establishment of additional detention facilities beyond the main ones, leading Israeli authorities to utilize undisclosed detention centers. This has resulted in the abhorrent practice of enforced disappearance, with detainees vanishing for months without any accountability.

Anatot Camp is located inside an illegal Israeli settlement near Jerusalem in the occupied West Bank¹, and was built on the ruins of the Palestinian town of Anata that Israel confiscated in occupied Jerusalem.² This camp uniquely serves as the transfer point for women detainees from Gaza before they are either moved to Damon Prison or released. However, it is important to note that Anatot Camp is not exclusively for women; it also houses Palestinians from Gaza who reside in the West Bank or hold medical treatment permits.

The tireless efforts of human rights organizations to uncover details about the camp have revealed that it also serves as a detention facility for males, albeit in separate sections from the women. Although information about this camp is limited and the occupying forces maintain a strict silence regarding the crimes committed and the harsh conditions of detention, there is also an ongoing effort to conceal the identities of those detained. Since the search for the missing began in early May, the Israeli army has remained unresponsive to inquiries about individuals missing from Anatot Camp. In stark contrast, at Sde Teiman Camp, it has been confirmed that thousands of Gazans are currently being held.

Detention Conditions

"Even if we yearn to share our thoughts, we still won't grasp the true essence of what was unfolding around us."

20 August 2024, telephone interview, (Y. Kh.) –Released prisoner (S

The conditions of detention at Anatot Camp mirror those found in Sde Teiman and other Israeli prisons. Although there are limited accounts regarding this facility, it is evident that the occupying authority has institutionalized the torture of detainees. Testimonies from individuals who have been held there reveal that the conditions are exceedingly severe. Furthermore, human rights organizations have uncovered that women are also being detained alongside men in this facility.

The individuals held in this camp endured constant handcuffing and blindfolding and were forced into excruciating positions, such as kneeling for extended periods. Despite being confined in large groups, they were prohibited from communicating with one another. This was just a part of the broader punitive strategy employed by the Israeli army, which included a deliberate policy of starvation and dehydration. Detainees faced severe restrictions on bathroom access, allowed only once a day, and were denied basic hygiene, including bathing and changing clothes. Medical neglect was rampant, as detainees were often denied necessary treatment for injuries sustained during the war.

(Y. Kh.), a released prisoner, experienced this brutality firsthand. She was arrested after witnessing the execution of her elderly husband, aged 70, by the occupying forces on 8 December 2023. During her transport in army buses, her hands were bound, and she was blindfolded alongside several family members. Shockingly, despite her age, she was subjected to physical violence, being

¹ Amnesty. "Israel must end mass incommunicado detention and torture of Palestinians from Gaza". 18 July 2024. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2024/07/israel-must-end-mass-incommunicado-detention-and-torture-of-palestinians-from-gaza/>

² Al Jazeera. "Thousands of Gaza workers go 'missing' in Israel amid wartime mass arrests". 28 Oct 2023. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/10/28/thousands-of-gaza-workers-go-missing-in-israel-amid-wartime-mass-arrests>

struck on the head during the transfer. Upon arriving at Anatot Camp, (Y. Kh.) underwent a strip search. She recounted the harsh realities of life in the camp.

"We were held in Anatot for approximately six days, constantly restrained with cuffs positioned in front of us. The blindfolds were removed, yet we were forced to sit on the ground, unable to move or speak to one another. Due to my health issues, I struggled to get up, and the other girls would assist me, even while they were also chained. We had to use the bathroom while still restrained. The bathroom facilities were elevated, requiring us to climb stairs to access them. I relied on my granddaughters to help me navigate this, as I needed assistance to lower my pants while being chained.

The conditions in Anatot were dire. Sleep was elusive, and the girls had no mattresses to rest on. The food provided was inadequate, consisting mainly of bread with *labneh*. We were required to adhere to strict sleeping hours. Thankfully, I received my alternative medications for blood pressure and heart conditions, and they arranged for me to see a doctor."³

The condition of the prisoner (S. Kh) reflects the reality of the conditions in Anatot camp

On Monday, 18 December 2024, around 11:00 a.m., we learned that the occupying forces had started to encircle the Baptist Hospital, instructing everyone inside to evacuate. The men exited first, followed by the women, who left in small groups. As we stepped outside, they filmed us and took our eye prints. I was pulled aside and detained along with four other women. We were then subjected to a strip search within the hospital premises, after which my hands were bound and I was blindfolded. We were positioned in front of military tanks while the occupying forces opened fire on civilians. We remained there, tied up, from noon until sunset, sitting on the street.

Subsequently, we were moved to Nahal Oz, where tents were set up. We sat on the ground for about three hours, barefoot and exposed to the cold. When we requested blankets, they provided us with damp ones. The temperature was frigid, and they gave us gray clothing without any undergarments and confiscated all of our clothing.

We were then taken to Anatot. During the transfer, we were blindfolded and bound, subjected to provocative treatment and physical assaults. Even while seated and restrained, my head was forced down, and when I attempted to lift it due to dizziness, a female soldier struck me on the head with a stick, causing me to lose consciousness. Following that brutal encounter, I experienced persistent dizziness and a noticeable decline in my hearing.

Life in Anatot was incredibly harsh. For five days, we were prohibited from speaking to one another, kept blindfolded, and our hands and feet were shackled, even when we needed to use the bathroom. I required assistance to navigate the steps to the bathroom due to my shackles, making movement a significant challenge. The bathroom conditions were appalling, lacking cleanliness, with only toilet paper available and no water for proper hygiene. Maintaining personal cleanliness was nearly impossible without any necessary tools.

The roll calls occurred sporadically, and each time, we were forced to rise despite the biting cold. It was essential to stand before them so they could see us clearly. Our sleeping conditions were harsh, with only thin mattresses and a single blanket each. The camp was exposed, surrounded by a wire fence, and when it rained, we were left to endure the downpour. For our meals, we received two packets of sliced Jewish toast and two cans of *labneh* for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. When they noticed us using the cans as makeshift cups to drink water, they confiscated them.

After several days in Anatot, I was moved with a group of women to Damon Prison. The transfer was conducted via buses, and we underwent strip searches beforehand. Each time, a female soldier would inappropriately grab and squeeze my body and chest, making the experience feel like harassment. During the bus ride, a soldier would place his hand on my leg, touching me inappropriately on my lips and face.

³ Phone interview conducted by Addameer with released prisoner Y. Kh. On 21 August 2024.

We were finally released on 1 February 2024. Upon transport, we were searched and restrained. Our hands were tied behind our backs, and our belongings were attached to us. My legs were bound to another woman's, causing a tear in my shoulder from being tied together with the bag for seven hours. I was blindfolded, and I was forced to keep my head down, unable to lift it. Throughout the entire journey, we were denied water and food. They brought us back to Anatot, where we spent one night. Around 1:00 a.m., they came to take us away again, and we arrived at the Karem Abu Salem crossing by 6:00 a.m."⁴

The story of S. Kh. highlights the profound anguish experienced by Palestinian women prisoners at every stage of their ordeal. During transfers, they endure severe mistreatment and are held in conditions that fall far below the basic requirements for human dignity. Furthermore, these women face a disturbing rise in crimes against them, including sexual violence, exacerbated by the lack of any genuine accountability mechanisms within the occupying state for these violations against those who have been unlawfully arrested and imprisoned in Israeli facilities.

Ongoing Enforced Disappearance in Anatot

Over a year has elapsed since the genocide that resulted in numerous crimes and atrocities, notably the disappearance of over 25,000 individuals from Gaza. Despite extensive field searches conducted for months with minimal resources in the enclave, many of these missing persons remain unaccounted for. Human rights organizations have turned their attention to Israeli prisons and military facilities, and some have begun to receive responses from the military regarding the status of individuals whose names were submitted for inquiry. The search encompassed all major Israeli prisons, interrogation centers, and detention camps, yet Anatot Camp stood out as the only facility where, despite housing hundreds of prisoners, no women detainees were included in any search operations.

A year post-conflict, the Israeli army continues to withhold information about the detainees in Anatot, including their treatment and legal standing. While human rights organizations have managed to connect with some former detainees from this camp, the information remains limited. Furthermore, with the renewed arrest campaigns initiated by the occupying forces in early October and ongoing efforts to locate detainees, human rights groups have received confirmation that some individuals are being held in Anatot. However, as of the time of this report, no detainee has been granted a visit.

Israeli Detention Camps: A Disturbing Parallel to Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo

The detention and torture methods employed in Israeli prisons against Palestinians since October 7 bear striking similarities to the abuses recorded at Abu Ghraib in Iraq and Guantanamo Bay in Cuba. In all these instances, authorities have resorted to torture techniques designed to psychologically and physically humiliate detainees, effectively stripping them of their humanity and mental stability.

Psychological torture emerges as a critical element in undermining the morale of those detained. In Israeli prisons, parallel to the practices seen in Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo, the Israeli military has utilized tactics such as loud music, sleep deprivation, and the cultivation of an atmosphere filled with fear and uncertainty. Additionally, military dogs have been employed to intimidate and terrorize prisoners. Sexual violence has also been a grim reality in Israeli facilities, mirroring the horrors of Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo, with incidents ranging from forced stripping and the photographing of detainees to instances of rape and sexual harassment affecting numerous individuals.

The practice of isolating detainees from the outside world has been a systematic approach since October 7. The occupying forces not only cut off these individuals from external contact but also enforced a complete communication ban among the 150-200 detainees confined in the same

⁴ Phone interview conducted by Addameer with released prisoner S. Kh. on 20 August 2024.

cramped cage-like barracks. This isolation has left each person feeling utterly hopeless and powerless, leading to a significant decline in their mental and psychological well-being.

The underlying objective of these oppressive tactics appears to be the dismantling of the detainees' will and the erosion of their humanity. Whether in Israeli prisons, Abu Ghraib, or Guantanamo, these methods are designed to extract confessions or information, exert control, and extinguish any spirit of resistance among those imprisoned.

Commonalities in the treatment of detainees across these facilities include the denial of adequate food and limiting bathroom access to just once a day. Such arbitrary measures are intended to humiliate and diminish the detainees' physical and mental resilience. Similar strategies were evident in Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo, where individuals faced isolation and severe food deprivation, leading to deteriorating health and heightened psychological distress.

In Abu Ghraib, the use of torture through shackling was evident, with detainees forced into painful positions for extended periods, sometimes enduring electric shocks while restrained. In Israeli detention camps, individuals have been shackled for over 100 consecutive days, resulting in severe physical harm, including limb swelling, muscle fatigue, and loss of sensation in extremities.

Subjecting detainees to incessantly loud music is yet another form of psychological torture designed to erode their focus and disrupt their sleep, ultimately rendering them more vulnerable to mental distress. This tactic mirrors the infamous practices employed at Guantanamo, where 'enhanced interrogation' methods, including the use of loud music, were implemented to break down detainees and impair their rational thinking. Furthermore, subjecting individuals to extreme temperatures in confined spaces is another technique that was similarly utilized at Guantanamo.⁵

The parallels between the treatment of individuals in Israeli prisons and the abuses witnessed at Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo are not mere coincidences; they reveal a deliberate strategy of employing both psychological and physical torture to oppress and degrade detainees. Such actions are blatant violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, leaving lasting psychological and physical scars on those subjected to them.

⁵ BBC News Arabic. "White Torture: From Tazmamart, Evin, Abu Ghraib, and Guantanamo, Stories of Tortured People Without Touching." 18 May 2023. <https://www.bbc.com/arabic/articles/cpegxe8qvkqo>