

March 10, 2024

The Committee against Torture (CAT)

Urgent action required: Palestinian prisoners face torture and death in Israeli prisons

Dear Esteemed Members of the United Nations Committee against Torture (CAT),

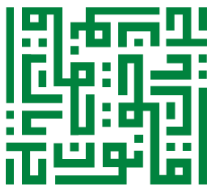
Palestine Independent Commission for Human Rights (ICHR) urgently highlights the grave situation of Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails.

Since October 7, systematic arbitrary arrests in the West Bank have affected all demographics, with 7,510 Palestinians detained, including 215 women and 430 children. Reports and testimonies reveal severe mistreatment, torture, and extrajudicial killings, evidenced by 11 prisoners, including one prisoner from Gaza, dying under suspicious circumstances in the last five months.

The precise number of detainees from the Gaza Strip, which is experiencing acts of genocide by the Israeli occupation forces, is not clearly known. An Israeli newspaper reported on Thursday, March 7, 2023, on information regarding the death of 27 Palestinian prisoners from the Gaza Strip in Israeli military facilities since October 7, 2023, many of whom died under torture or due to deliberate denial of treatment.

These reports come amid Israel's ongoing practice of enforced disappearance of prisoners from the Gaza Strip. Testimonies from released prisoners from Gaza confirm that the Israeli occupation authorities' subject Palestinian prisoners to inhumane conditions, torture, and ill-treatment. ICHR has credible information on systematic torture, killing, rape, and harassment of Palestinian men and women in undisclosed detention center basements. According to the testimonies we received, most of these atrocities were committed at the Anatoth interrogation center near Jerusalem and the Zikim military base near Gaza, closely resembling the occurrences in Guantanamo, Abu Ghraib, and Bagram prisons in the first decade of the twenty-first century.

This is in addition to reports of field executions of unarmed citizens carried out by Israeli soldiers after taking control and subduing them.



INDEPENDENT
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Since October 7, Israeli authorities have not thoroughly investigated the deaths of Palestinian detainees and have continued to enforce the "prison emergency" state, granting extensive powers to severely restrict detainees' access to the outside world. This includes denying family and legal counsel visits, placing detainees in overcrowded conditions, and subjecting them to enforced starvation, limited water supply, extreme cold, and the denial of fundamental rights without charge or trial under the "Unlawful Combatants Law." These measures, along with the International Committee of the Red Cross's (ICRC) restricted access since the same date, highlight profound issues of accountability and transparency within Israeli prisons.

These egregious actions constitute flagrant violations of international human rights laws, including the Convention against Torture. The substantiated reports of torture inflicted upon Palestinian prisoners demand immediate and unequivocal condemnation, yet the Independent Commission for Human Rights (ICHR) notes with grave concern the committee's alarming silence and inaction. The situation necessitates urgent, forceful measures to rectify these severe human rights abuses. Consequently, ICHR implores the committee to act with the utmost urgency to protect the lives of Palestinian prisoners, to commence a comprehensive investigation into the reported torture and killings within Israeli detention facilities, and ***to undertake an urgent special review of the Israeli state's practices***. This review is critically needed to address the mass, significant, and widespread violations, including torture, enforced disappearances, arbitrary detentions, and summary executions, all starkly evident in the context provided.

We implore you to demand unrestricted access for independent monitors, including the ICRC, to Israeli prisons and detention centers to assess the conditions of Palestinian prisoners and protect their lives, safety and their rights. and pressure on the Israeli government to immediately stop all forms of torture, ill-treatment and extrajudicial killing of Palestinian prisoners, and fulfill its obligations under international law .

We are grateful for your attention to this urgent matter and stand ready to provide any further information and assistance required.

Sincerely,

Issam Aruri

Commissioner-General