



FACTSHEET

SADAKA صدقة

The Ireland Palestine Alliance ♦ www.sadaka.ie

PALESTINIAN CHILDREN POLITICAL PRISONERS

Since the beginning of September 2000, over 2500 children have been arrested. Currently there are at least 340 Palestinian children being held in Israeli Prisons.

According to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted on 20 November 1989 and entered into force on 2 September 1990 (to which Israel is a signatory), and to relevant Israeli law, a child is defined as every human being under the age of 18 years. This is reiterated in the UN Rules for the Protection of Juveniles Deprived of their Liberty, adopted by General Assembly Resolution 45/113 of 14 December 1990. However, Palestinian children from the age of 16 years are considered adults under Israeli military regulations governing the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

As is the case with adult prisoners, child detainees are transferred to prisons located within Israel. The primary prisons in which Palestinian child male detainees are held are Hasharon (Telmond), near Netanya, and Megiddo, near Haifa. Girl child prisoners are transferred to Neve Tertzza Prison (Ramleh). Interrogation of child detainees takes place at Beit El and Huwarra Interrogation Centers, and occasionally other interrogation centers, and Palestinian child administrative detainees are held with adult administrative detainees at both Ofer and Negev Military Prison Camps. Palestinian children are primarily arrested at Israeli military checkpoints, from their homes, or from the street.

Arrests from Military Checkpoints

Palestinian children arrested from Israeli military checkpoints are often made to wait for hours at the checkpoint, with their hands cuffed, before they are transferred to detention and interrogation centres. More often than not, Palestinian child detainees are subject to beatings, curses and threats during the transfer. In most cases, their families are not informed of their arrest, with child prisoners additionally being transferred from one prison to another without informing the family. As a result, it often takes some time before a child detainee is located and the family informed of his/her location.

Arrests from Home

Arrests of Palestinian children often happen in the middle of the night from the child's home, with tens of soldiers surrounding the house and then raiding it. Soldiers usually do not have a warrant for arrest or searches. The entire house is searched, often ransacked and personal property destroyed, occupants humiliated and harassed.

Conditions of detention in which Palestinian children are held

Palestinian child prisoners are held in inhumane conditions of detention, made to live in overcrowded and filthy cells. Often, children are placed in small solitary confinement cells, measuring 1.5 square metres, that are extremely humid and have no windows for natural light, or with bright artificial light that is continuously kept on. This forces prisoners to remain awake at all times, depriving the prisoner of sleep for days in some cases. Prisoners do not receive sufficient

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food to meet the daily nutrition requirements for children, are prevented from going to the toilet at their will, and are not allowed a change of clothing.

Interrogation

Palestinian child detainees are subject to physical and psychological torture during their interrogation in order to force them to confess to activities they may or may not have done. The majority of confessions and sentences are related to throwing stones. Under extreme physical and psychological pressure, children often confess to such activities to end the circumstances in which they find themselves, often confessing to things they didn't do.

During interrogation, children are isolated from their families and lawyers are often not informed of the place of their detention. The child is usually not allowed to meet with a lawyer during the first period of interrogation, confining the child's world to the interrogation room and the interrogator, adding to the psychological stress the child already finds himself/herself in.

Child detainees are interrogated by either the Israeli police or by officers of the Israeli General Security Services (GSS). The initial interrogation period lasts for 4 days, with the possibility of renewal for another 4 days by the interrogation team. After this 8-day period, the child detainee must be brought before a military judge.

Health Conditions

Like all Palestinian prisoners, Palestinian child prisoners are subject to medical negligence from the prison administration. Simple medical treatment, such as painkillers, is often refused the prisoners if the doctor is not available in the prison at the time. Prisoners must wait until the next morning, when the doctor or nurse is in the prison, before they are administered painkillers or examined. Prisoners are not given regular medical checkups, and it can take up to 6 months before a prisoner is seen by a specialist, if the medical conditions warrant it.

Israeli authorities are in clear violation of international law in the medical negligence practiced against Palestinian child prisoners

Food

Food provided to Palestinian child prisoners is prepared by Israeli criminal prisoners and is poor in both quality and quantity. The food is often undercooked, lacking in flavour, and does not meet the daily nutritional requirements for children. Article 20 (1) of the **UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners** states that "every prisoner shall be provided by the administration at the usual hours with food of nutritional value adequate for health and strength, of wholesome quality and well prepared and served." This is clearly not the case for Palestinian child prisoners held within Israeli prisons.

Right to education

Despite the fact that the majority of Palestinian child prisoners are arrested whilst they are still school students, the Israeli authorities clearly neglect the child's right to education whilst in detention. The prison administration does not provide the conditions or materials required to continue their education, despite the fact that international law clearly

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states that children must be afforded the right to education in all circumstances. In particular, the Israeli authorities neglect of child prisoners right to education is a clear violation of the educational requirements of prisoners stipulated in the **UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners**:

Summary of violations

- Attacks by Israeli criminal prisoners, including threats and stabbings.
- Subject to sexual, physical and verbal harassment. Sexual harassment has been practiced against a number of child prisoners and threats of beatings if the child reports the incident to the administration. One child prisoner who complained to the administration about sexual harassment was attacked by Israeli criminal prisoners with knives and injured in his leg.
- Theft of personal belongings, including phone cards, shoes and foodstuff that is purchased from the prison canteen.
- Absence of newspapers and recreational facilities.
- Prevention of family visits, and the subsequent psychological impact on child prisoners.
- Held in sections with criminal prisoners.
- Deprived of continuation of education whilst in detention.
- The absence of the psychological care and counselors within the prison.
- Tortured during the interrogation period.
- Feeling alone and isolated from the outside world.
- Attempts to coerce children to work as collaborators with Israeli security agencies.
- Absence of entertainment and cultural items.
- Medical negligence.

Additional issues regarding child prisoners

It is prohibited to use forms of torture such as shackling as a means of punishment against child prisoners. However, this is common practice in Israeli prisons with child prisoners.

Child prisoners held for security reasons should be detained in separate sections and apart from criminal prisoners. In violation of this principle, Palestinian child prisoners detained for security reasons are held with Israeli criminal prisoners.

Source: www.addameer.org