



International Women's Day 2025 Report: Female Palestinian Political Detainees

Palestinian Prisoner's Society (PPS) & the Commission of Detainees' Affairs

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Ramallah, Palestine – At least 21 Palestinian female prisoners, including a 12-year-old-girl, continue to be held in the custody of the Israeli occupation following the most recent prisoner-exchange deal that took place over the past several months. This figure consists of only those whose arrest has been disclosed by the occupation – it is not the total number of Palestinian women held by the occupation. Dozens of other unidentified women, particularly those who were arrested from the Gaza Strip, have been subject to enforced disappearances with occupation forces refusing to disclose how many there are, their identities, and where they are being held.

On the occasion of International Women's Day 2025, the Commission of Detainees' Affairs and the Palestinian Prisoner's Society (PPS) prepared this report, which includes highlighted testimonies, with the hope of drawing attention to the plight of Palestinian women in Israeli jails. The report covers key figures as well as the key historic policies used by the occupation against women which have unprecedentedly spiked in frequency and widespread use since the genocide in Gaza. This includes rape, torture, starvation, systematic medical denial, prolonged solitary isolation, among many other crimes.

Among the 21 Palestinian females in the occupation's prisons, 17 have not yet been charged with an offense and are awaiting military trial, while two are being held under 'administrative detention' without trial or charge. The 21 females include two children – one of whom is 12-years-old. They also include a three-months-old pregnant woman, a cancer patient, a university student, 12 mothers six teachers. One of the 21 females was arrested from the occupied Gaza Strip.

The current phase in the history of the Palestinian people's struggle for liberation is the most violent yet. Women have historically been among the primary targets of the Israeli occupation and they have been among the tens of thousands of Palestinians imprisoned over the years. Since the start of the genocide however, Israel's crimes against Palestinians have only multiplied, with political detainees witnessing some of the worst violence at the hands of occupation authorities.

The rate of arrests of women since the start of the genocide is also unprecedented. Since October 7, 2023, Palestinian prisoner defense groups have documented 490 cases of arrest of women, including minors. This data includes women who were arrested and remain in captivity, as well as those who were later released. This figure includes women who were arrested from the occupied West Bank, including Jerusalem, as well as women who were arrested from the 1948-occupied territories. To date, there is no accurate estimate on the number of women who were abducted from Gaza, particularly those held in military camps, as occupation authorities continue to impose an information blackout on them and all Palestinian prisoners more generally.



It is also worth noting that there are two female prisoners who have been in detention since before October 7. The occupation has refused to release them in any exchange deal between the occupation and Palestinian resistance so far.

Women Held in Appalling Conditions

The conditions for all Palestinian political prisoners – whether men or women – since the genocide in Gaza, are the worst in the history of the occupation.

Israel's prison administration, across all prisons and detention camps, has turned the detainees' every basic human need such as food and adequate shelter into a tool for torture and deprivation. All detainees, including women, are being deprived of the most basic human needs. This includes adequate amounts of food and water, access to medical treatment, access to sanitary products and ability to clean their environment, adequate clothing, blankets and heating for the winter as well as ventilation in the summer, among many other things. Not to mention, Palestinian detainees have been deprived of both verbal and visual contact with their families for over 16 months with the occupation halting all family visits and severely restricting lawyers' visits.

As they historically have, occupation authorities are using the bodies and gender-related specific daily needs of women as an added layer for blackmail and oppression, but at unprecedented rates. This includes sanitary pads, items for sanitation, enough changes of undergarments and clothes, among many other details. When such items are provided, they are nowhere near the amount needed by the female detainees. Even the weather has been exploited for abusing detainees, with occupation authorities depriving them of appropriate clothing for the season. Such abuses can be classified under forms of gender-based violence.

The abuses do not start when Palestinian women are placed in prison. They start prior to the moment of arrest, when women are subject to an array of abuses including physical assault of them and their family members and intentional destruction of their homes which often witness widespread vandalism as well as theft of belongings by Israeli occupation soldiers.

Prior to the prisoner releases that took place in January and February 2025, there were 86 female political prisoners held in the occupation's prisons. At times their number exceeded 100 females including minors.

Use of Palestinian Women as Hostages: Widespread Policy Since the Genocide

The arrest of Palestinian women as hostages to pressure their loved ones to surrender themselves became one of the most widespread practices by Israeli occupation forces following the genocide. While this policy was historically practiced by the occupation, the rate of its use increased dramatically since the genocide.

Dozens of women were arrested for the purpose of pressuring their male family members to surrender. This included the wives and mothers of prisoners and martyrs, some of whom were



elderly women over 70 years of age. Along with abducting women as hostages, Israeli occupation forces also carried out acts of abuse and threats against women, including physically assaulting them and threatening to kill their ‘wanted’ sons or husbands. It is important to note that this policy also affected other segments of society, not just women.¹

Testimonies of Abuse, Torture and Beatings During Arrest

The majority of Palestinian women who have been arrested, particularly since the genocide in Gaza, were subject to physical assault, abuse, torture and other forms of severe maltreatment.

Testimonies of female detainees as relayed to lawyers of the Commission of Detainees’ Affairs and the Palestinian Prisoner’s Society:

- "I was beaten by occupation soldiers at a military checkpoint when I was arrested. They kicked me in the stomach. Immediately, handcuffs were placed on my hands, my eyes were blindfolded, and I was taken to one of the interrogation detention centers. The severity of their beatings lead my clothes to tear, exposing a part of my body. They beat me with their rifles all over my body. This led to excessive bleeding when I got my period. I was bleeding for about 20 days. I remained in the interrogation center for three hours. I was then taken to the Russian Compound (Al-Maskobiya) in Jerusalem and remained there for a month. After that I was transferred to HaSharon Prison, where I was detained in a solitary cell for a single night, during which I was not given any food, and the cell was very dirty, with a very thin mattress without a cover. After the night passed, I was transferred to al-Damon Prison."

- "I was arrested at midnight, taken to one of the settlements, and remained there until seven o'clock in the evening of the next day, without food or drink. My hands and feet were shackled, and I was blindfolded. The soldiers were standing next to me all the time, mocking me. They played music at a very high volume to prevent me from sleeping. They asked me to stand up and sit down several times, mocking me, laughing and cursing me with obscene words. They kept saying ‘death to Islam’ in a loud voice. On the second day, I was transferred to HaSharon Prison, and I stayed there for three days. When I refused to be strip-searched, the female prison guard electrocuted me and forced me to be strip-searched. I was taken to a dirty cell, and then I was transferred to Petah Tikva Interrogation Center. There, I was forced into a stress position on a chair for long hours (*shabel*)*. At the end of the interrogation, they forced me to sign papers (in Hebrew) which I can’t read and did not understand."

- "I was subject to severe beatings during my arrest. When I arrived along with other female detainees to Hasharon prison, they took us to a cell where the floor was flooded with water, and the bathroom that was unfit for human use. We were then taken to another cell where we were strip-searched by female prison guards. One of the female prison guards hit me on the face."²

¹ Prisoner institutions report on International Women’s Day 2024.

² Ibid.



**Shabeh is a widely-recognized form of physical torture.*

Hasharon Prison is usually the final stop before female detainees are transferred to the Damon central prison. It is known to be a station of abuse and torture in the journey of arrest. All the testimonies we obtained from women who were detained there confirmed that they were subjected to strip-searches and were detained in harsh and difficult conditions, in a dirty cell unfit for human life. Many of the women who refused to be strip-searched were beaten. At Hasharon, female prisoners are detained for a day or several days, and are given severely inadequate amounts of food that are not fit for eating. Inside the cells, there is only a very thin, dirty mattress.

- **Testimony** from Hasharon prison: "I was transferred to Hasharon prison, where I was assaulted in the waiting room. One of the guards beat me with keys, leaving clear marks on my hand. I stayed for a single night in Hasharon prison, but it was the worst night of my life. I was detained in a cell with cameras. I was unable to use the bathroom inside the cell and they did not allow me to relieve myself in another bathroom, I could hear the voices of the (Israeli) criminal prisoners who would constantly scream. At night, they brought me a blanket with a foul smell of urine. At five in the morning, they ordered me to take the blanket out of the cell under the pretext of cleaning, but they took away the mattress and blanket, forcing me to sit on my shoes."

Rape, Sexual Assault & Gender-based Violence

One of the most widespread crimes that continues to be committed by Israeli occupation forces against Palestinian women female prisoners is sexual assault, including rape, sexual harassment, strip-searches, and threats of rape and other forms of violence. While these violations existed for decades before the genocide, they increased in frequency and scale after the genocide, reaching unprecedented levels.

Prisoner institutions collected testimonies from female prisoners who were released specifically during the first prisoner-exchange that took place in November 2023. Their testimonies reflect sexual assault and abuse.

In one **testimony** from a female detainee who was arrested after October 7, 2023, the detainee explained she was subject to sexual and verbal assault and harassment. She told her lawyers that one of the soldiers touched her on the head and her feet in an inappropriate manner, and cursed her with obscene words and beat her several times. Despite being in pain from the beatings, she was not subject to any medical review or given any medication. Soldiers threw cigarette butts and leftover food at her to insult her.

In addition to the countless women's testimonies gathered by prisoner institutions, in March 2024 - several months into the genocide in Gaza - the United Nations issued a [statement](#) announcing cases of rape among Palestinian women arrested by the Israeli occupation, also raising alarm about mass executions of women and their families and enforced disappearances.



The UN said it believed at least two women were raped and others were threatened with rape. The statement also said the group was “distressed by reports that Palestinian women and girls in detention have also been subjected to multiple forms of sexual assault, such as being stripped naked and searched by male Israeli army officers.” Additionally, they reported that soldiers took photos of female detainees in degrading circumstances and uploaded them online.

The UN also said “an unknown number of Palestinian women and children, including girls, have reportedly gone missing after contact with the Israeli army in Gaza,” adding that “there are disturbing reports of at least one female infant forcibly transferred by the Israeli army into Israel, and of children being separated from their parents, whose whereabouts remain unknown.”

Majority of Palestinian women held based on expression of opinion

The majority of women who were arrested after the genocide were abducted based on their expression, usually on social media, or are being placed in ‘administrative detention’ without trial or charge. Today, the majority of female prisoners are being held on grounds of “incitement” based on the expression of their opinions, in addition to two female prisoners who are being held without trial or charge.

Recently, the occupation has increased its arrests of women particularly within the field of education. There were at least eight cases of arrests of female teachers, six of whom remain in captivity. Since the war, we have not witnessed an escalation in targeting female teachers as we have in the past few weeks.

71 female political prisoners freed in first phase of ceasefire & prisoner exchange deal (2025)

The release of female prisoners as part of the first phase of the exchange deal was a turning point in the issue of female political prisoners. Seventy-one female prisoners were released in the first phase of the exchange deal that took place during January and February 2025. This figure does not include the 71 women who were released in November 2023 during a week-long pause to Israel’s genocide in occupied Gaza.

Based on over 16 months of testimonies obtained from current and former Palestinian female political detainees, the PPS and the Commission affirm that the Israeli occupation continues to severely violate the rights of Palestinian female prisoners whether in military interrogation centers, central prisons, in hospitals and medical clinics, and at military closures and checkpoints. These violations affect all categories of Palestinian women, including teachers, students, mothers, minors, and others.

Palestinian prisoner institutions call on the United Nations and all Member States to pressure the occupying state to respect and abide by international law and international human rights law, and to implement the Convention against Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, as well as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.



All state parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention must demand an end to the physical and psychological abuse, torture and degradation of Palestinian women by occupation soldiers, particularly those in their custody. Decision makers must pressure for the end of Israel's illegal occupation of Palestine, part of which includes ending the non-stop illegal political arrests, detention and abuse of tens of thousands of Palestinians over decades.

The Commission and the PPS also stress that the rate of Palestinian detainees, particularly men, losing their lives is unprecedented and will only increase with time. Thousands of Palestinians are held behind bars, including women, undergoing a myriad of severe violations including torture, starvation, sexual assault, deprivation of medical treatment, unsanitary conditions leading grave and infectious diseases. **The international community must act now to save the lives of Palestinian political prisoners in Israeli custody.**

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