

Palestinians in Gaza call to save seven hunger-striking prisoners

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Palestinians stage a demonstration in the Gaza Strip in solidarity with hunger-striking prisoners
[File: Mohammed Salem]

Gaza City, October 26 (RHC)-- Dozens of Palestinians staged a sit-in in solidarity with seven prisoners on a hunger strike in Israeli jails protesting their "administrative detention."

The demonstration on Monday was organised by the Palestinian Detainees' Commission and held in front of the International Red Cross Committee headquarters in Gaza City.

Participants called for the immediate release of the seven prisoners, chanted slogans, and held banners reading: "Administrative Detention is a Crime" and "Stop Administrative Detention." The prisoners launched a hunger strike to protest against their administrative detention, according to the Detainees Affairs Commission.

Administrative detention is an Israeli policy that allows the arrest of Palestinians indefinitely based on "secret information" without formal charges or trials.

The hunger-striking prisoners include Kayed Fafous who enters 103 days in detention followed by Miqdad Qawasmeh at 94 days, Alaa Aaraj at 79 days, Hesham Abu Hawwash at 70 days, Shadi Abu-Akr at 62 days, Ayyad Hureimi at 31 days, and Rateb Harebat at 16 days.

Both Fafous and Qawasmeh were transferred to a hospital following the serious deterioration in their health conditions. The two prisoners are demanding their freedom because the alleged evidence against them remains secret, and even their lawyers are not allowed to see it, according to the Prisoners' Committee, an activist group that advocates for the prisoners.

Hassan Qantia, head of Detainees Affairs Committee in Gaza, told Al Jazeera the international community should act to save Palestinian prisoners, especially administrative detainees.

"The hunger striking prisoners are in a serious health condition and some of them are at imminent risk of death," said Qantia. "The world is standing idly by in front of Israeli violations against Palestinian prisoners."

Yassir Mezhir, head of the Muhjat Al Quds Organisation, said Israeli punitive measures have accelerated against inmates, especially after a prison break by six prisoners last September.

According to Mezhir, punishments were directed at prisoners affiliated with the Islamic Jihad movement, which led them to embark on a mass hunger strike. "Now, we continue the protests against the unfair administrative detention policy against Palestinian prisoners in jails," he told Al Jazeera. "The silence of international organisations encourages Israel to accelerate its oppressive measures."

Nisreen Abu Kmail is an ex-prisoner who was freed a week ago after six years in jail. "The Israeli prison service isolates the prisoners by adopting repressive and punitive policies and imposing solitary confinement," she said. "The seven prisoners are in severe conditions. The prisons' situations are very difficult. The policy of administrative detention must be stopped immediately."

Jawad Owaida, the father of prisoner Majod Owaida, who was sentenced to 11 years, said Palestinians are dying slowly in Israeli jails. "We have no connection with our son, no news about his health or about his living conditions."

Owaida said his family has been banned from family visits for a third year without being given any reasons. "My son joined the latest hunger strike with Islamic Jihad and is still in isolation. We don't know anything about his health situation," he said. "The suffering of our sons is endless. Every week we call for their justice and today we call to end the illegal policy of administrative detention."

The period of administrative detention orders ranges between four to six months without trial, and is based on a "secret file" provided by the Israeli intelligence service and is renewed successively.

According to organisations concerned with prisoners' affairs, the number of Palestinian administrative detainees in Israeli prisons is about 500 out of 4,600 detainees.

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