



Flood of the Free: Stories of Hostages and Political Prisoners, from Palestine to Syria

January 2025



Sawtuna
Our Voices

London | Washington

Contents

01

Overview of The Israeli Occupation Forces' Palestinian Hostages

6

02

Overview of Political Prisoners in the Middle East and South Asia

10

03

Flood of the Free

15

04

Prisoners Released in the First Flood of the Free

20

05

Prisoners Released in the First Al-Aqsa Flood Prisoner Liberation

28

06

Torture Chambers from Sde Teiman to Sednaya

33

07

Bashar Al-Assad's Hostages Freed in Syria

39

08

The Enduring Scars of Imprisonment

48

09

On Language: Prisoners or Hostages?

51

10

Western Media Bias

54

*

Footnotes

59

The victorious Flood of the Free – the release of hundreds of Palestinian hostages from Israeli torture camps – is the result of the perseverance of the Palestinian resistance and the steadfast Palestinians in Gaza.

Our joy and relief at witnessing the liberation of 90 Palestinian hostages from Zionist torture camps was cut short by the occupation's arrest of at least 64 Palestinians in Qalqilya and 13 Palestinians in Beit Furik, and murder of at least nine Palestinians in Jenin, besiegement of Jenin refugee camp, and the wounding of dozens more Palestinians in Jenin.

Our joy at the freedom of Palestinian hostages is incomplete until all 10,000+ Palestinian hostages have been released, Palestinians in Gaza have achieved liberation from the concentration camp that the Zionists have created in the Gaza Strip, and all of Palestine is liberated.

We also remember the Zionist entity's history of **repeatedly violating ceasefire agreements and rearresting Palestinians freed from Israeli torture camps** and know that **we cannot trust Zionists in any capacity.**

May we soon witness the destruction of all prisons, the freedom of all political prisoners, and the reunification of all separated families.

May the joyous scenes of Palestinian and Syrian hostages returning to their families and their homes soon be replicated throughout all of occupied Palestine and the occupied Syrian Golan Heights.

**Glory to our martyrs.
Victory to the resistance.
May we witness the imminent liberation of Palestine.**

At A Glance

750,000

Palestinians have been held hostage in occupation torture camps since 1967

Source: AP News⁴²

1 in every 5

Palestinians has been arrested and charged at some point in their lives

Source: Al Jazeera¹⁷⁵

20

Israeli torture camps in occupied Palestine

Source: Al Jazeera¹⁷⁷



Total Number of Political Prisoners

10400



Administrative Detainees

3376



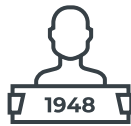
Child prisoners

320



Female prisoners

88



1948 Territories prisoners

200



Jerusalemite prisoners

300



Palestinian Legislative Council members

500

“Our freedom is incomplete without the liberation of all of Palestine and the liberation of all prisoners and the liberation of Al-Aqsa Mosque, and we ask God to protect all our steadfast people and preserve and protect them. God willing, we will see the day of joy when there is no more suffering for any Palestinian. [...]

The situation [inside the prisons] has been difficult since the beginning of the war and is getting worse.”

Sajaa Maadi

one of the Palestinian hostages released in the Flood of the Free.¹⁶⁸



01

[← BACK TO CONTENTS](#)

Overview of The Israeli Occupation Forces' Palestinian Hostages



© Jaafar Ashtiyeh - AFP

01

Overview of The Israeli Occupation Forces' Palestinian Hostages

Since 1967, over 750,000 Palestinians have been held hostage in occupation torture camps, including 40% of Palestinian men.⁴²

In the occupied Palestinian territories, one in every five Palestinians has been arrested and charged at some point in their lives.¹⁷⁵ Palestinian hostages are tried in military courts rather than civilian ones.¹⁷⁶

There are 20 Israeli torture camps in occupied Palestine that imprison Palestinian hostages, including one in the occupied West Bank.¹⁷⁷

In October 2023, the IOF doubled the number of Palestinians taken hostage from 5,200 people to more than 10,000, including over 4,000 Palestinians in Gaza who worked outside of the Strip.⁴³

Since October 2023, the conditions of Palestinians held hostage has worsened significantly, with increased instances of torture, sexual assault, starvation, and beating – often resulting in broken limbs.⁴⁴ Many Palestinian hostages have been killed due to the extent of their abuse.⁴⁵

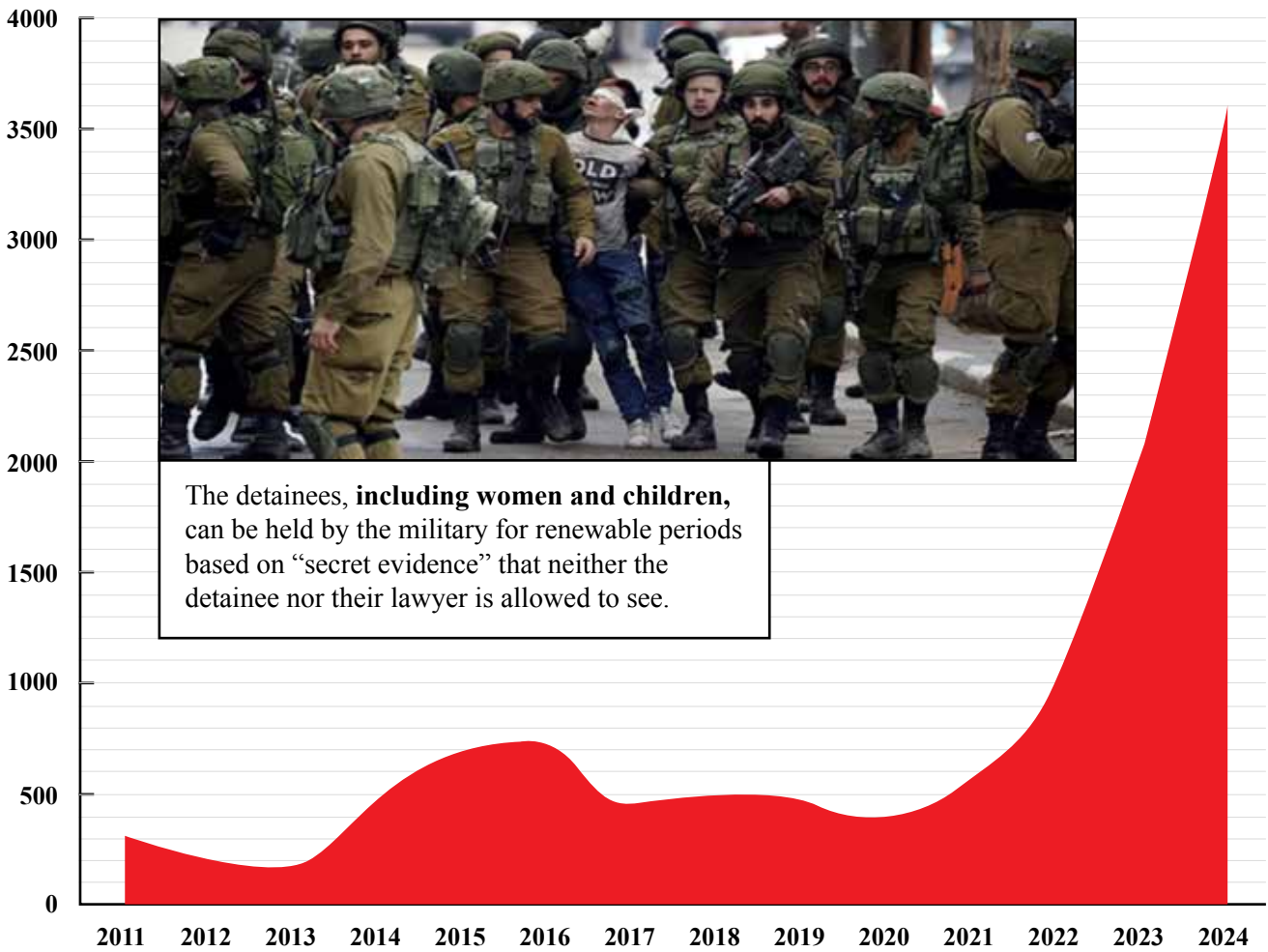
The IOF stopped allowing independent humanitarian organisations to visit Israeli torture chambers in October 2023, so the total numbers and conditions of Palestinian hostages is unknown.¹⁷⁸

Many Palestinian hostages are held indefinitely without charge on 'administrative detention'. Although administrative detention initially lasts for six months, it can be renewed indefinitely and without evidence or charges being brought.¹⁷⁹

Overview of The Israeli Occupation Forces' Palestinian Hostages continued...

Palestinians in Israel's administrative detention

Israel is holding at least **3,660 Palestinian detainees** without being charged or allowed to stand trial.



Source: Addameer via Al Jazeera¹⁸⁰

“[The conditions of my detention] were absolutely tragic and oppressive. There were numerous violations against female prisoners as women. Honestly, it’s difficult to even describe them on air or even in private conversations. There was significant infringement of basic rights.

Headscarves were removed, strip searches were conducted repeatedly, and there were sudden night inspections. There was repression beyond imagination, a purely oppressive situation.”

Rula Hassanein

a Palestinian journalist and one of the Palestinian hostages released in the Flood of the Free.²⁵



02

[← BACK TO CONTENTS](#)

Overview of Political Prisoners in the Middle East and South Asia

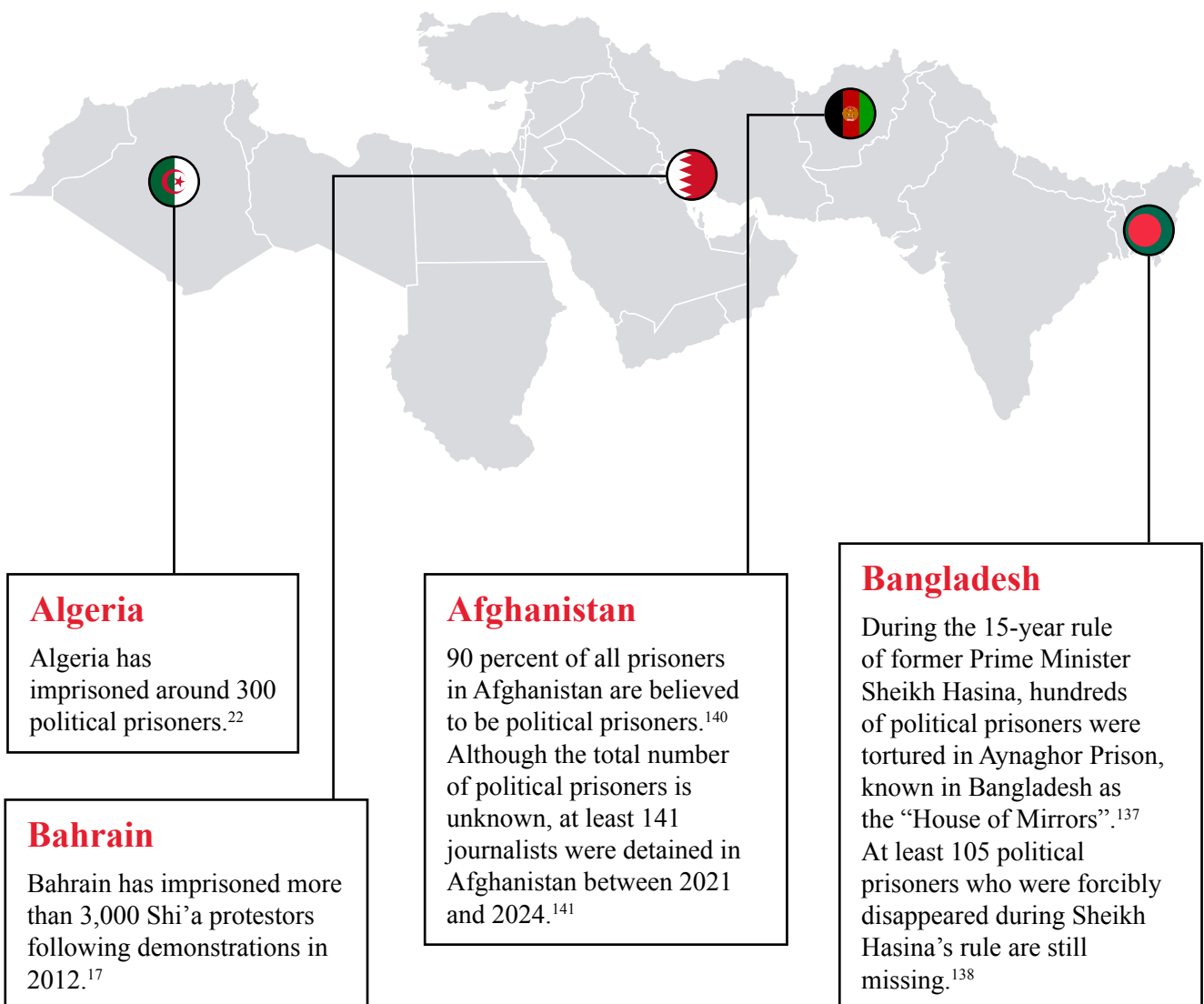


02

Overview of Political Prisoners in the Middle East and South Asia

From Palestine to Syria and beyond, imprisonment is often the price of speaking out against political injustices in the Middle East.⁴ Political prisoners are often subjected to worse treatment inside prison than other categories of prisoners, and suffer from longer detention lengths, often without charge.⁵

The number of political prisoners in the Middle East has increased hugely since 2010, as the Arab Uprisings marked the start of more than a decade of popular revolutions across the region, from Tunisia to Iran.⁶



Overview of Political Prisoners in the Middle East and South Asia continued...

Egypt

President Abdel-Fattah al-Sisi has imprisoned more than 60,000 Egyptian political prisoners since taking power, which required the construction of 13 new prisons in Egypt since 2013.¹¹

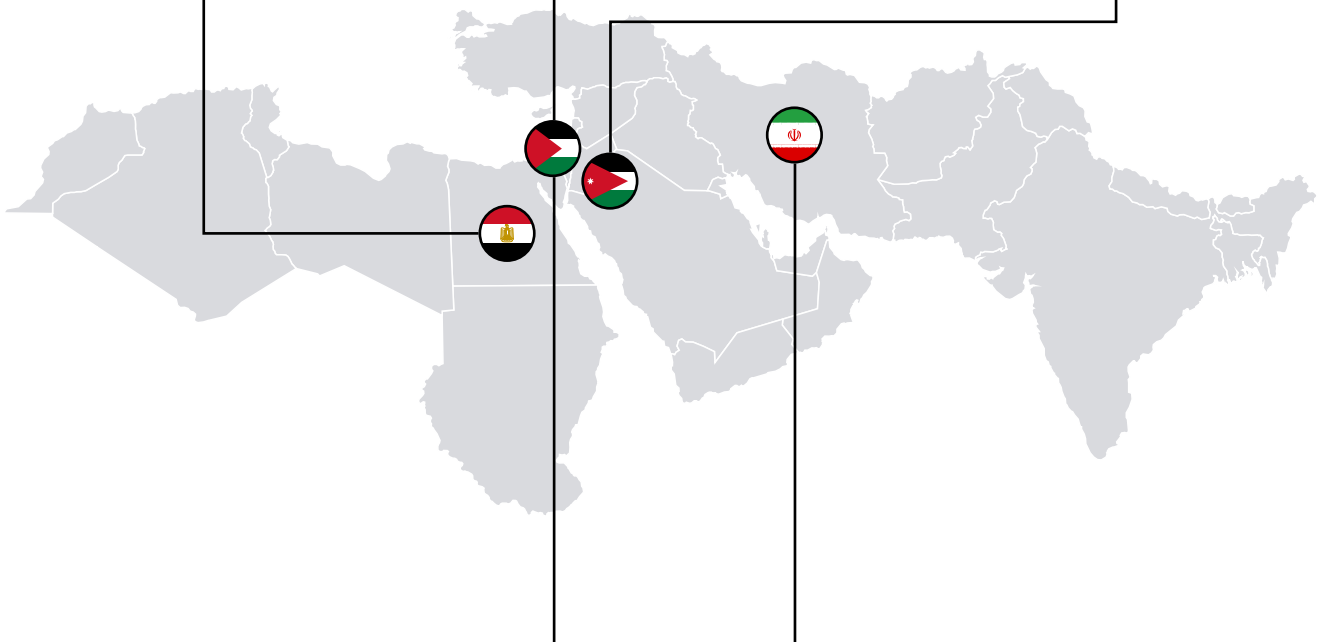
Palestinian Authority (PA)

The PA systematically arrests any Palestinian who voices opposition to their authority, mistreating and torturing them in custody.¹⁸ Many of the Palestinians arrested by the PA are held in Israeli torture camps.¹⁹

In 2020, the PA arrested almost 100 Palestinians in just two months.²⁰

Jordan

Since 7 October 2023, Jordanian authorities have arrested over 1,500 people participating in pro-Palestine protests, including around 500 detained since March 2024 following huge protests outside the Israeli Embassy in Amman.²¹



Occupied Palestine

The Israeli Occupation Forces (IOF) has taken hostage over 10,200 Palestinian political prisoners, who are subject to torture, sexual assault, starvation, and detention without trial in Israeli torture camps.⁷ Palestinians as young as 14 are imprisoned as adults.⁸

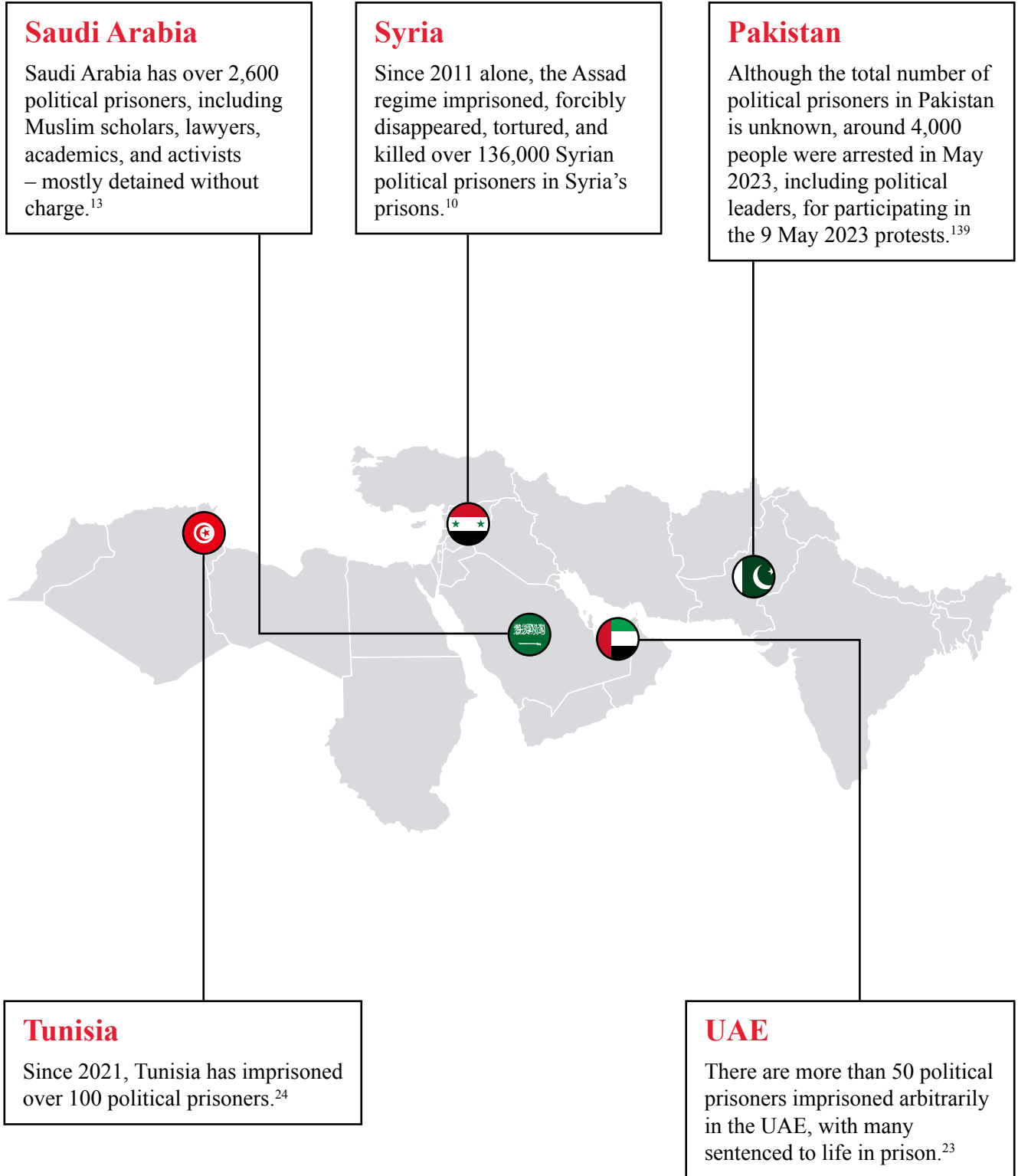
Israel is also holding the 2 million Palestinians in Gaza hostage in the world's largest concentration camp whilst it commits genocide and the mass extermination of all life in Gaza.⁹

Iran

The total number of Iranian political prisoners is unknown, but was estimated at 189,000 in 2020.¹⁴ Like in Syria, the fate of many disappeared remains a mystery, and it is unclear the numbers which have been executed for political dissent.¹⁵

The number of political prisoners in Iran has increased significantly since the Jina Mahsa Amini protests in 2022 to 2023, with an estimated 22,000 people arrested in relation to the protests.¹⁶

Overview of Political Prisoners in the Middle East and South Asia continued...



“Things that can’t be imagined... the human brain can’t imagine it. Many people died under torture. [...] I will not rest until I take them to court and get justice. Justice for me and my friends who they killed. Even if it costs me my life, I will pursue them and bring them to justice no matter what. [...]

They took me and laid me on the ground and broke my ribs. He’d go up and jump on me. I’d feel my ribs breaking. He’d turn you on your stomach and jump on your back. Kicking on your face, punches, with sticks. And he said, ‘It seems you don’t want to confess. You will confess. If you don’t confess, we’ll kill you’. I told him, ‘That’s all I have’.

The second time he brought me... he hung me. A handcuff from here [gestures to his wrist] and a handcuff from here [gestures to his other wrist], by a window like this. 40cm off the ground. The weight is all on your hands, on the joints. So, the handcuffs, when they get tight, you feel like they’re going to cut off your hand. You scream, and he puts a shoe or a slipper [in your mouth]. He tells you, ‘Open your mouth and bite on it. I don’t want to hear your voice’. After he hung me, he took me back to the interrogator. He said, ‘You’ll see how we force you to confess’. [...]

My soul is completely shattered into 1000 pieces. I’m trying to let the deep wounds heal slowly. [...] Once the situation in Syria stabilises, I’ll return home.”

The martyr Mazen al-Hamada

a Syrian liberation activist, killed by the Assad regime in Sednaya Torture Camp. Tens of thousands of Syrians attended Mazen’s funeral in Damascus on 12 December 2024.³



03

[← BACK TO CONTENTS](#)

Flood of the Free

FLOOD OF THE FREE



طوفان
الأحرار

03

Flood of the Free

Following the Palestinian resistance’s victory over the Zionist entity, on 20 January 2025, the Al-Aqsa Flood Operation resulted in the ‘Flood of the Free’ – the release of dozens of Palestinian hostages held in Israeli torture camps.¹⁴²

During the first phase of the ceasefire deal, the Palestinian resistance will release 33 Israelis in exchange for the freeing of hundreds of Palestinians held hostage by Israel.¹⁴³

The Israelis freed will only include women, children, and the elderly, excluding Israeli men who commit the majority of IOF crimes.¹⁴⁴

30

Palestinian women, children or elderly will be freed by Israel for each living civilian hostage freed.

50

Palestinian prisoners, including **30 serving life sentences** will be released by Israel for each female soldier freed

In exchange for bodies handed over by Hamas, Israel will

free all women and children

it has detained from Gaza since the **7 October 2023**.¹⁴⁵

On 20 January 2025, the IOF released 90 Palestinian hostages in exchange for three Israelis, including 69 women, most of whom were detained in Israeli torture camps without charge.¹⁴⁶

The 90 Palestinian hostages released included multiple Palestinians who had been previously released by the Palestinian resistance’s efforts in the first prisoner exchange of Al-Aqsa Flood in November 2023, only to re-abducted by the IOF in the months since.¹⁶⁶

The re-released Palestinian hostages included Wala’a Tanja, Ahmed al-Khashan, Haneen al-Masaed, Rawda Abu Ajamiyeh, and Samah Hijjawi.¹⁶⁷

Flood of the Free continued...

Some of the 90 Palestinians released include:

Khalida Jarrar

Human Rights Activist, Academic and Palestinian Politician for PFLP



Khalida Jarrar, aged 61, had been held captive since December 2023. In the past decade, she has spent six years in prison across five different imprisonments, most of them without charge.¹⁴⁷

Khalida is from Nablus, in the occupied West Bank. As a teenager, she volunteered for a group that cleaned local community and public schools.¹⁴⁸

She went on to become a prominent leader of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), was elected to the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC), and is credited with playing a leading role in Palestine's accession to the International Criminal Court (ICC) in 2015.¹⁴⁹ Khalida's research work on the experience of Palestinian political prisoners has been instrumental in exposing Israel's countless human rights violations.

Khalida had been enduring solitary confinement for the past six months, in a 2.5m x 1.5m cell with a stone bench to sleep on and no windows or light.¹⁵⁰ Prolonged solitary confinement is illegal under international law.¹⁵¹

During her unlawful detentions, Khalida has had to suffer the deaths of her mother, father, daughter and most recently, her nephew.¹⁵² In each instance, she was denied the opportunity to leave custody to bid a final farewell to her loved ones.

Freed in the early hours of 20 January 2025, Khalida was greeted by her family, friends and community.¹⁵³ Visibly bearing the signs of maltreatment, in stark contrast to released Israeli hostages, Khalida remains an emblem of victory and strength.¹⁵⁴

Israa Bari

Israa Bari, aged 54, is a Palestinian writer and teacher from Jenin, who had been held hostage by the IOF in Ofer torture camp for months without trial.¹⁶⁰ Her work includes novels and newspaper articles, and she is a member of the Palestinian Ministry of Culture.¹⁶¹



Flood of the Free continued...

Some of the 90 Palestinians released include:

Rula Hassanein

Rula Hassanein is a Palestinian journalist who was taken hostage by the IOF from her home in Bethlehem on 19 March 2024, and charged in a military court with incitement over her social media posts on X and Facebook, which expressed frustration at the suffering of Palestinians in Gaza.¹⁵⁵



Her arrest came after Israeli settlers began an incitement campaign against her, calling for her arrest.¹⁵⁶

Hassanein's imprisonment severely impacted her infant daughter Elia's health, as she was born prematurely and suffers from a weak immune system and ulcers and was still being breastfed when her mother was taken hostage.¹⁵⁷ The military court rejected her request to be released to look after her baby.¹⁵⁸

Hassanein's health suffered during her imprisonment due to the terrible conditions in Israeli torture chambers.¹⁵⁹

Bushra al-Tawil

Bushra al-Tawil is a Palestinian journalist taken hostage by Israel in March 2024.¹⁶³ She has been taken hostage by the IOF five times in recent years due to her journalism work, which includes founding a news network named 'Aneen AlQeed', which covers Palestinian prisoners and sheds light on their cases and how their families are suffering.¹⁶⁴



Her father is still being held hostage in an Israeli torture camp.¹⁶⁵

“I die every day. The cell looks like a tiny, airtight box... They did not leave me any space to breathe...I spend most of my time sitting next to a tiny opening that allows me to breathe.

I wait for the hours to pass while I suffocate in my cell in hopes of finding oxygen molecules to breathe and survive.”

Khalida Jarrar

Human Rights Activist, Academic
and Palestinian Politician for PFLP.¹⁶²



04

[← BACK TO CONTENTS](#)

Prisoners Released in the First Flood of the Free



04

Prisoners Released in the First Flood of the Free

Name	Age	Gender	Town	Governorate	Date of arrest
Abdelaziz Atawneh	19	Male	Al-Aftlik	Ariha	October 21, 2023
Abdul Rahman Amjad Jamil Khouder	18	Male	Beita	Nablus	May 10, 2023
Aber Mohammed Hamdan Baara	33	Female	Nablus	Nablus	September 29, 2024
Abla Mohammed Othman Abdulrasool	68	Female	Ramallah	Ramallah and el-Bireh	September 17, 2024
Adam Khalil Ibrahim Hadara	18	Male	At-Tur	Jerusalem	November 2, 2022
Ahmed Bashar Jumaa Abu Alia	18	Male	Al-Mughayir	Ramallah and el-Bireh	April 8, 2024
Ahmed Walid Mohammed Khashan	18	Male	Arraba	Jenin	January 25, 2024
Al-Yamamah Ibrahim Hassan Hourinat	21	Female	Hebron	Hebron	September 1, 2024
Ala'a Jad Nanbhan Shahen	37	Female	Bitounia	Ramallah and el-Bireh	July 29, 2024
Alaa Khaled Mohammed Saqr	21	Female	El-Bireh	Ramallah and el-Bireh	November 20, 2024
Alaa Samer Harb Abu Rahima	27	Female	Beit Rima	Ramallah and el-Bireh	August 1, 2024
Amal Zayed Omar Shogayeah	21	Female	Deir Jarer	Ramallah and el-Bireh	June 6, 2024
Aseel Mohammed Adnan Eid Alyasseni	20	Female	Ras al-Amoud	Jerusalem	August 1, 2024
Aseel Osama Omar Shehada	18	Female	Qalandia	Jerusalem	November 7, 2023

Prisoners Released in the First Flood of the Free continued...

Name	Age	Gender	Town	Governorate	Date of arrest
Ashwaq Mohammed Ayad Awad	23	Female	Beit Ummar	Hebron	September 3, 2024
Aya Omar Yousuf Ramadan	23	Female	Tal	Nablus	July 18, 2024
Ayat Youssef Saleh Mahfouz	33	Female	Hebron	Hebron	June 13, 2024
Ayham Aly Essa Garadat	18	Male	Sa'ir	Hebron	November 4, 2023
Bara'a Hatem Hafez Feqha	25	Female	Kafr al-Labad	Tulkarem	August 15, 2024
Belqees Essa Ali Zawahra	33	Female	Te'amare	Bethlehem	February 22, 2024
Bushra Jamal Mohammed al-Tawel	31	Female	El-Bireh	Ramallah and el-Bireh	March 7, 2024
Dalal Muhammad Suleiman Khasib	53	Female	Arura	Ramallah and el-Bireh	January 14, 2024
Daniya Saqr Mohammed Hannatsha	22	Female	Ramallah	Ramallah and el-Bireh	August 19, 2024
Doha Azzam Ahmed Alwahsh	29	Female	Te'amare	Bethlehem	February 25, 2024
Dunia Ashtia'a Maarouf Ashtia'a	20	Female	Salem	Nablus	July 24, 2024
Fadi Bassam Mohammad Hendy	17	Male	Jenin camp	Jenin	October 21, 2023
Fahmy Mohammed Fahmy Faroukh	17	Male	Silwan	Jerusalem	October 8, 2023
Fatima Muhammad Suleiman Saqr	48	Female	El-Bireh	Ramallah and el-Bireh	January 14, 2024
Fatima Nimer Mohammad Al-Ramawi	52	Female	Ariha	Ariha	January 2, 2024
Fatima Youssef Mustafa Salha	36	Female	Deir Jarer	Ramallah and el-Bireh	May 8, 2024
Firas Jihad Ahmed al-Muqdesi	18	Male	Silwan	Jerusalem	October 16, 2023

Prisoners Released in the First Flood of the Free continued...

Name	Age	Gender	Town	Governorate	Date of arrest
Hadeil Mohamed Houssein Hegaz	32	Female	Eastern Farm	Ramallah and el-Bireh	July 1, 2024
Halima Faiq Suleiman Abu Amara	22	Female	Nablus	Nablus	March 3, 2024
Hanan Ammar Bilal Maalawni	23	Female	Nablus	Nablus	September 2, 2024
Hanin Akram Mahmoud Al-Mossed	30	Female	Aida camp	Bethlehem	May 22, 2024
Ibrahim Sultan Ibrahim Zomr	17	Male	Askar camp	Nablus	April 19, 2023
Iman Ibrahim Ahmed Zeed	40	Female	Betunia	Ramallah and el-Bireh	September 5, 2024
Israa Khouder Ahmed Ghonimat	40	Female	Surfa	Hebron	July 17, 2024
Israa Mustafa Mohammed Bari	54	Female	Jenin	Jenin	November 20, 2024
Israr Abdel Fattah Mohammed Al-Laham	42	Female	Bethlehem	Bethlehem	September 23, 2024
Issam Mamoun Mohammed Abu Ziab	18	Male		Jerusalem	October 7, 2023
Jamal Ibrahim Salama Ka'abaneh	18	Male	Yatta	Hebron	September 19, 2022
Jehad Ghazi Ahmed Joudah	36	Female	Ariha	Ariha	May 29, 2024
Jennen Mohammad Taha Amr	22	Female	Dora	Hebron	December 3, 2023
Khalida Jarrar	61	Female	El-Bireh	Ramallah and el-Bireh	December 26, 2023
Khitam Aref Hassan Habaybah	50	Female	Sanur	Jenin	July 31, 2024
Laith Muhammad Nagy kamil	17	Male	Qabatiya	Jenin	November 21, 2023
Lana Farouk Naeem Fawalha	25	Female	Sinjil	Ramallah and el-Bireh	November 27, 2024

Prisoners Released in the First Flood of the Free continued...

Name	Age	Gender	Town	Governorate	Date of arrest
Lateefa Khaled Ramadan Mashasha	34	Female	Jerusalem	Jerusalem	November 19, 2024
Lubbna Mazen Slim Talalwah	46	Female	Arraba	Jenin	June 9, 2024
Mahmoud Muhammad Dawood Aliwat	15	Male	Silwan	Jerusalem	November 20, 2023
Margaret Mohammed Mahmoud al-Raey	53	Female	Qalqilya	Qalqilya	November 5, 2024
Maysr Mohammed Saeed Faqih	60	Female	Nablus	Nablus	September 26, 2024
Mohammed Anan Fawzi Beshkar	18	Male	Askar camp	Nablus	October 2, 2023
Mona Ahmed Qasim Abu Houssain	46	Female	Aboud	Ramallah and el-Bireh	March 5, 2024
Morjana Mohammed Mustafa Haresh	32	Female	Betunia	Ramallah and el-Bireh	March 10, 2024
Mouad Omar Abdallah al-Haj	17	Male	Ein el-Sultan	Ariha	February 27, 2023
Nafisa Rashid Farid Zowara	37	Female	Ariha	Ariha	December 18, 2023
Nawal Mohammed Abdel Fatiha	23	Female	Ras al-Amud	Jerusalem	February 21, 2020
Neda Aly Ahmed Salah	37	Female	Kafr Dan	Jenin	June 5, 2024
Nohayel Kamal Mustafa Masalmah	37	Female	Dora	Hebron	July 30, 2024
Ola Mahmoud Qasim Azaar	22	Female	Qabalan	Nablus	June 11, 2024
Osama Naser Joubran Abdo Attaya	18	Male	Kafr Aqab	Ramallah and el-Bireh	October 22, 2023
Qassem Iyad Mohammed Jaafra	17	Male	Jabal Mukaber	Jerusalem	October 9, 2023
Raeda Ghanem Mohammed Abd al-Majeed	46	Female	Aboud	Ramallah and el-Bireh	March 7, 2024

Prisoners Released in the First Flood of the Free continued...

Name	Age	Gender	Town	Governorate	Date of arrest
Raghad Khouder Deeb Mubarak	23	Female	Hebron	Hebron	September 2, 2024
Raghad Waleed Mahmoud Amr	23	Female	Dora	Hebron	September 1, 2024
Rana Jamal Muhammad Derbas	35	Female	El-Bireh	Ramallah and el-Bireh	January 24, 2024
Rasha Ghassan Mohamed Hajawey	40	Female	Tulkarem	Tulkarem	July 4, 2024
Rauwda Moussa Abdulqader Al-Akhras	47	Female	Dheisheh	Bethlehem	March 18, 2024
Rose Youssef Mohamed Khowes	17	Female	Jerusalem	Jerusalem	May 5, 2024
Rula Hassanein	30	Female	Bethlehem	Bethlehem	March 19, 2024
Saeed Mazed Said Salim	18	Male	Azzun	Qalqilya	September 18, 2023
Saja Emad Saad Daraghmah	19	Female	Tubas	Tubas	August 21, 2024
Saja Zouher Mohammed Al-Maadi	27	Female	Kafr Malik	Ramallah and el-Bireh	April 18, 2024
Salwa Atiya Mahmoud Hamdan	45	Female	Dheisheh	Bethlehem	April 30, 2024
Samah Bilal Abdul Rahman Souf	25	Female	Qalqilya	Qalqilya	October 7, 2024
Shaimaa Mohammed Abd al-Jalel Rawajbah	25	Female	Nablus	Nablus	April 18, 2024
Shaimaa Omar Yousuf Ramadan	19	Female	Tal	Nablus	July 18, 2024
Shaza Nawaf Abd al-Jaber Grabaa	23	Female	Beitin	Ramallah and el-Bireh	August 16, 2024
Tahany Jamal Abd Ashour	49	Female	Hebron	Hebron	July 17, 2024
Tahrer Badran Badr Jaber	44	Female	Betunia	Ramallah and el-Bireh	September 17, 2024

Prisoners Released in the First Flood of the Free continued...

Name	Age	Gender	Town	Governorate	Date of arrest
Tamara Muammar Houssain Abu Laban	24	Female	At-Tur	Jerusalem	November 10, 2023
Thaer Ayoub Rashid Abu Sarah	17	Male		Jerusalem	October 8, 2023
Wafaa Ahmed Abdullah Nemr	21	Female	Kharbeta Bani Harith	Ramallah and el-Bireh	July 1, 2024
Walaa Khaled Fawzi Tanja	28	Female	Tulkarem camp	Tulkarem	March 12, 2024
Yasmin Abdul-Rahman Rashid Abu Srou	26	Female	Aida camp	Bethlehem	December 26, 2023
Youssef Jamal Ayyad al-Haremy	18	Male	Bethlehem	Bethlehem	October 14, 2023
Zahra Weleed Abdul Fattah Khadraj	52	Female	Qalqilya	Qalqilya	January 28, 2024
Zina Majd Mohamed Barerr		Female	Silwan	Jerusalem	July 9, 2024

“The solitary confinement began a week after my arrest. [...] The deputy prison leader threatened me, saying, “You came here to be a leader, to destabilise the prison’s security.” I asked him, “What have I done to destabilise the prison’s security?” [...] I spent about two weeks, 12 days, in solitary confinement. There was no treatment, the food was terrible. The conditions in the cell were extremely difficult, it was just me and the toilet. In a 2 x 2.5m space, with absolutely nothing else. I didn’t even get an hour to go outside for fresh air. [...] They brought me out [of solitary confinement] on 6 October to experience the suppression on 7 October. The suppression was excessively harsh. They sprayed gas inside the room, before taking us out, handcuffing us, blindfolding us, and forcing us to kneel in the yard. [...] they did it to terrorise everyone. It was all just to intimidate us, especially since it was 7 October.”

Abla Sa’adat

Palestinian hostage released in the Flood of the Free, and wife of imprisoned Palestinian activist Ahmad Sa’adat.⁸²



05

[← BACK TO CONTENTS](#)

Prisoners Released in the First Al-Aqsa Flood Prisoner Liberation



© Ammar Awad - Reuters

Prisoners Released in the First Al-Aqsa Flood Prisoner Liberation

In November 2023, the IOF agreed to release 150 Palestinian hostages in exchange for some of the Zionist occupation settlers held in Gaza.⁴⁶ 117 of the Palestinian hostages were children and 33 were women.⁴⁷

Kurdish-Israeli former Security Minister, Itamar Ben Gvir, threatened the Palestinian hostages released with re-arrest if they celebrated their release, spoke to the media, or posted on social media.⁴⁸ The IOF also attacked the friends and families of released Palestinian hostages with tear gas whilst they waited for the hostages to be released.⁴⁹

However, the IOF arrested almost as many Palestinians during the four-day release of Palestinian hostages as it released.⁵⁰ From 24 to 28 November 2023, the IOF arrested 133 Palestinians across occupied Jerusalem and the occupied West Bank.⁵¹ Many Palestinians in Gaza were also abducted by the IOF during this time, but their numbers are unknown.⁵²



Since November 2023, at least 11 of the Palestinians released by the IOF have since been reimprisoned, and another 2 have been killed by IOF forces.⁵³

This is not the first time that the IOF has rearrested Palestinian hostages after hostage release deals.⁵⁴ After a previous deal in 2011, the IOF rearrested dozens of Palestinian hostages in the following months and years.⁵⁵

Prisoners Released in the First Al-Aqsa Flood Prisoner Liberation continued...

Palestinian hostages released in November 2023 include:

Israa Jaabis

Length of imprisonment: 9 years

Israa was released after being arrested when a gas cylinder exploded at a checkpoint in 2015, wounding an IOF officer.⁵⁶ She was left with severe burns on her face and hands that required significant medical treatment, which she was denied.⁵⁷

She stated that Palestinian women prisoners are in a bad condition.⁵⁸



Suheir Barghouti

Length of imprisonment: 1 month

Suheir was imprisoned after 7 October 2023, alongside 20 men from her village, including three of her brothers.⁵⁷ She was held without charge, and her house was ransacked and possessions broken.⁵⁸

An Israeli officer threatened her that she would be rearrested if she gave interviews after her release.⁵⁹ Resisting his threats, she stated: "Israelis only understand the language of force, they only understand the language of blood. [...] We need to convey our message to the world, we need to convey our suffering. [...] since unfortunately our media is weak while theirs is strong, they are marketing to the world they are the victims. But we are the ones who are suffering."⁶⁰



Aseel al-Titi

Length of imprisonment: Over a year

Aseel's uncle and brother were killed whilst she was imprisoned.⁶¹ She did not know about their deaths until she was released.



Prisoners Released in the First Al-Aqsa Flood Prisoner Liberation continued...

Palestinian hostages released in November 2023 include:

Ahmed Numan Abu Naim

One of the 117 teenagers released was 17-year-old Ahmed, arrested for throwing stones and an incendiary device.⁶²



Mohammed Nazal

Length of imprisonment: 3 months

Mohammed was arrested aged 18 and held hostage without charge.¹⁰⁹ Upon his release, he described severe beatings with sticks by IOF prison guards, that intensified after 7 October 2023.¹¹⁰ Both his hands were fractured and several fingers on both hands were broken.¹¹¹



“I hope all prisons are freed of every prisoner, male and female. I dread hearing news of another female prisoner being arrested because I would mentally relive the experience of imprisonment with her, even though I am now free.”

Rula Hassanein

a Palestinian journalist and one of the Palestinian hostages released in the Flood of the Free.⁹⁰



06

[← BACK TO CONTENTS](#)

Torture Chambers from Sde Teiman to Sednaya



© Omar Haj Kadour - AFP - Getty Images

06

Torture Chambers from Sde Teiman to Sednaya

Many prisons across the Middle East, particularly those in Syria and occupied Palestine, can more accurately be described as torture camps or torture chambers due to the prevalence of human rights abuses including torture, sexual assault, starvation, solitary confinement, and killing of prisoners.²⁶ Two of the most notorious prisons are Sednaya Torture Camp in Syria and Sde Teiman Torture Camp in occupied Palestine.

Israeli Torture Camps

Palestinian hostages in Israeli torture chambers are subject to frequent and severe violence, sexual assault, humiliation and degradation, deliberate starvation, forced unhygienic conditions, sleep deprivation, and denial of adequate medical treatment.²⁹

Between 7 October 2023 and August 2024, IOF torturers killed over 60 Palestinians in detention, 48 of whom were from Gaza.³⁰

Sde Teiman Torture Camp



Whilst all Israeli torture camps are known for their systematic abuse and torment of Palestinian hostages, Sde Teiman is one of the most notorious.²⁷

Survivors of Sde Teiman recount how prisoners' suffering is entrenched in prison protocols, through overcrowding of cells, the absence of daylight and fresh air, denial of contact with the outside world, restrictions on religious worship, confiscation of possessions and the keeping of prisoners in darkness.²⁸

After 7 October 2023, the Israeli Knesset passed legislation allowing torture camps like Sde Teiman to operate with unprecedented impunity.¹³²

One Palestinian released from Sde Teiman had suffered from a "ruptured bowel, a severe injury to his anus, lung damage and broken ribs".¹³³ In July 2024, Israelis protested outside Sde Teiman, demanding that the prison guards who committed these crimes were not investigated.¹³⁴

Palestinian hostages at Sde Teiman routinely have limbs amputated due to handcuff and zip tie injuries and are operated on by doctors who are not qualified and without anaesthesia.¹³⁵

Torture Chambers from Sde Teiman to Sednaya continued...

Ofer Torture Camp

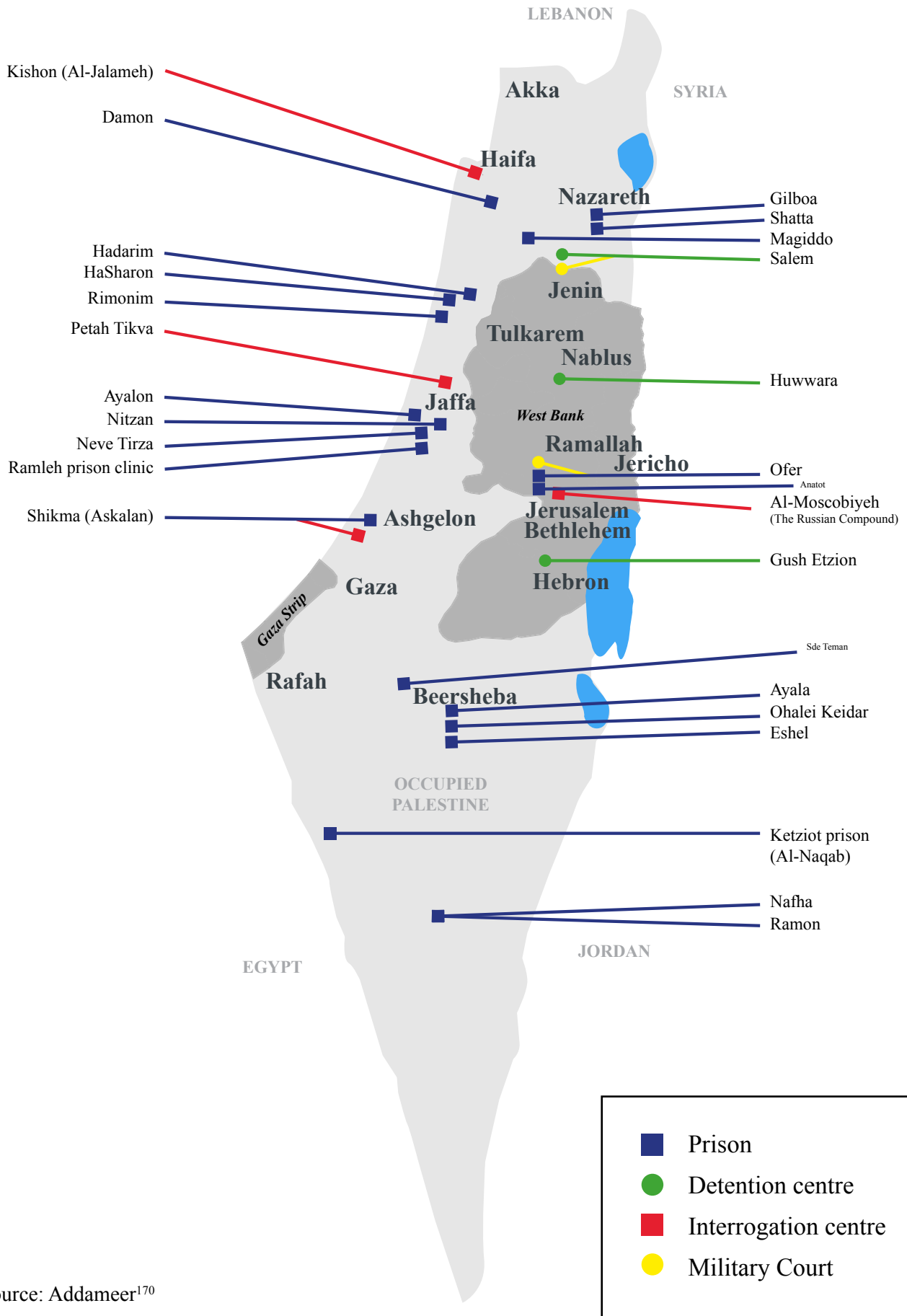


Multiple Palestinian hostages have been killed by the IOF in Ofer Torture Camp, including ‘Arafat Hamdan and Muhammad al-Sabbar.¹⁷¹

On 25 August 2024, the IOF launched a three-day campaign of unrestrained violence against Palestinian detainees in Section 23 of Ofer Prison after discovering they had copies of the Qur’an.¹⁷²

When the detainees refused to surrender the holy books, Israeli special units were deployed to violently assault them with batons, fists, and attack dogs, while subjecting them to degrading verbal abuse.¹⁷³

The brutal assault led to seven Palestinian detainees sustaining head and back injuries, and they were left bleeding without receiving any medical treatment or being transferred to a medical facility.¹⁷⁴



Source: Addameer¹⁷⁰

Torture Chambers from Sde Teiman to Sednaya continued...

Syrian Torture Camps

Syria's torture camps are notoriously black holes where prisoners disappear. Families of prisoners were usually unable to find out any information regarding their location, charges, and length of prison sentence, and were given false death certificates or information about the condition of the prisoner.¹³⁶

Sednaya Torture Camp



Sednaya Torture Camp was established in 1987, and became known as Syria's 'Human Slaughterhouse'.³¹ It consisted of two buildings with underground cells, where political prisoners were held until they were executed.³²

Over 13,000 people were executed in Sednaya between 2011 and 2016.³³ There are no current records of how many more people were executed in total.³⁴

In June 2020, there were over 5,000 prisoners in Sednaya, but the torture camp has capacity for around 20,000 prisoners.³⁵

Torture was extensive. Prison guards raped female prisoners, some of whom gave birth in prison, and any children who survived have only seen the walls of their mothers' cells.³⁶

Syrian experts have now stated that all prisoners who remained inside Sednaya have been freed, and that any remaining people disappeared must be assumed to have been killed by the regime.³⁷

Upon the fall of the regime, the bodies of over 40 prisoners who had been killed in Sednaya were found.³⁸ One of these was the body of Syrian liberation activist Mazen al-Hamada, who had previously spoken out about the regime's torture when he was living in Europe.³⁹

“Since 1967 until today, the circumstances [inside occupation prisons] have never been this harsh, whether through repeated assaults on male and female prisoners, constant spraying of gas, the poor quality and quantity of food, or the isolation policy enforced by the occupation authorities. I spent six months in isolation. And yesterday, as you may have seen, I was released from isolation. This policy reflects the agenda of this government, led by Ben Gvir, who seeks to treat male and female prisoners as though they are not human beings. Even yesterday, the treatment of all male and female prisoners who were released was extremely harsh – beatings, deliberate attempts to humiliate and demean us intentionally. Therefore, we say that the issue of the prisoners is part of our people’s cause, and we must nationally confront all the policies that are being practiced against our prisoners until they are all free.”

Khalida Jarrar

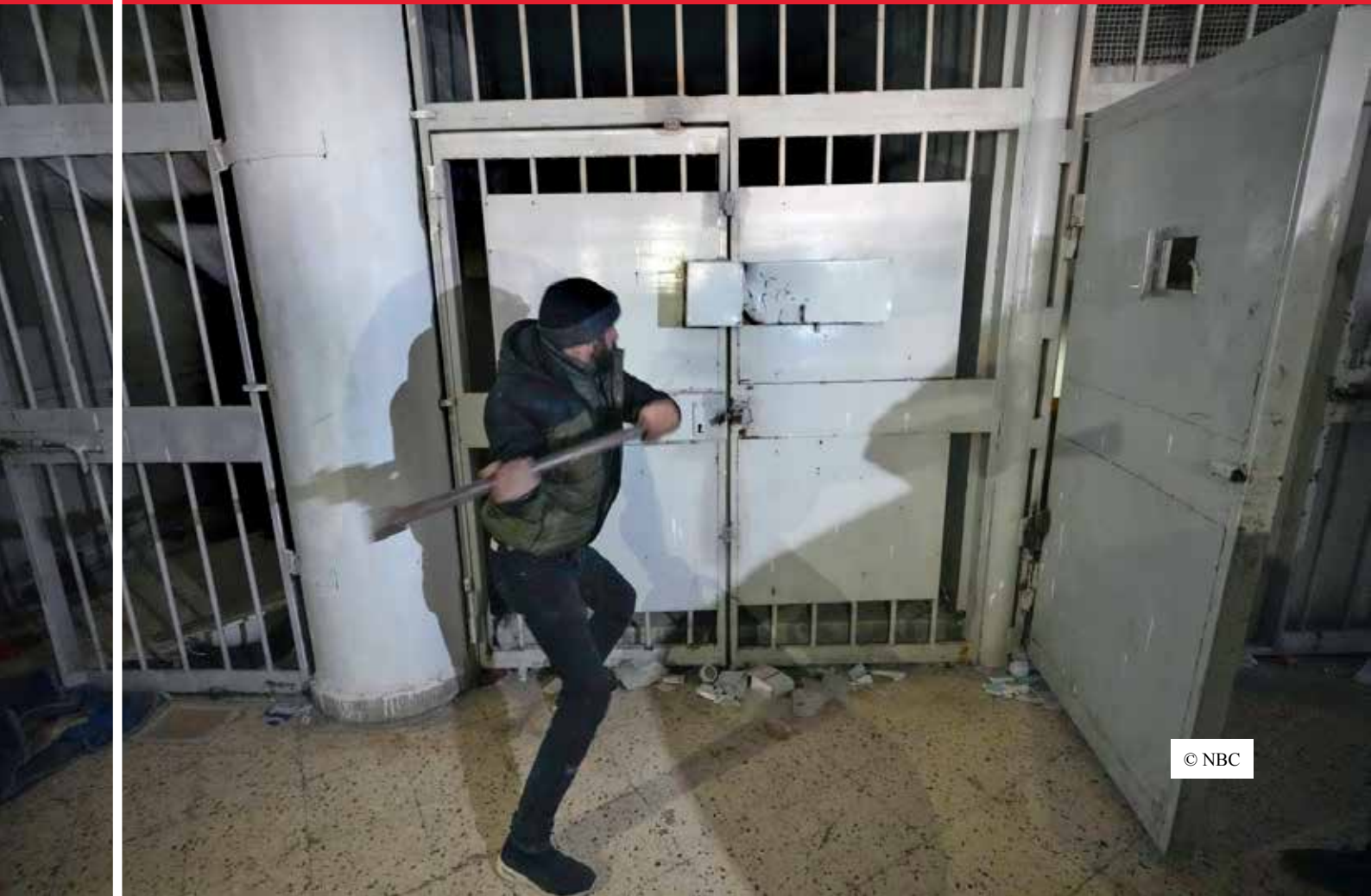
Human Rights Activist, Academic
and Palestinian Politician for PFLP.¹⁰



07

[← BACK TO CONTENTS](#)

Bashar Al-Assad's Hostages Freed in Syria



07

Bashar Al-Assad's Hostages Freed in Syria

The overthrow of Bashar al-Assad marks an end to Syrians' 14-year revolution for freedom, justice, and dignity.

Since 2011:

619k **25k**

Syrians killed, including:

children

157k

Syrians imprisoned

113k

forcibly disappeared

15k

tortured to death in prison

13m

Syrians were displaced

6m

Syrians became refugees

7m

became displaced within Syria

13m

Syrians are malnourished

90%

of Syrians live in poverty.¹

Israel used the media's focus on the overthrow of Assad's regime to expand territorially and further its genocide in Gaza.⁴¹

In the weeks after the victory of the Syrian revolution, Israel:

Expanded its occupation of

Syrian land

until the city of Qatanta, occupying Mount Hermon, Syria's highest mountain

Bombed Syria more than

400 times

Killed over

438

Palestinians in Gaza

Killed over

20

Lebanese

Launched over

10

attacks on Gaza's hospitals²

Bashar Al-Assad’s Hostages Freed in Syria continued...

Syrian Hostages

Syrian prisoners released from Assad’s prisons include:

Ragheed al-Tatari

Length of imprisonment: 43 years

Imprisoned since: 1982

Ragheed was imprisoned in 1982, when he was a pilot in the Syrian Air Force.⁶⁵ He was imprisoned for refusing regime orders to bomb civilians in Hama in 1982 during protests in the city.⁶⁶ He also refused to give up the names of his colleagues who defected and refused to carry out orders at the time.⁶⁷

Due to the length of his detention, Ragheed is known as the ‘dean of detainees’.⁶⁸



Sinan al-Rashi

Length of imprisonment: 13 years

Imprisoned since: August 2011

Sinan was arrested for participating in and organising the 2011 revolutionary protests against the regime.⁶⁹ He was tortured during his arrest and detention.⁷⁰ Sinan’s father died in 2018, still awaiting his son’s release.⁷¹



Mohamed Moaqet

Length of imprisonment: 33 years

Imprisoned since: 1991

Mohamed was arrested in Aleppo and sentenced to life imprisonment based on false allegations that he was affiliated with secret groups aiming to overthrow the Syrian regime.⁷⁴



Bashar Al-Assad's Hostages Freed in Syria continued...

Syrian Hostages

Syrian prisoners released from Assad's prisons include:

Tall al-Malouhi

Length of imprisonment: 15 years

Imprisoned since: 2009

Tall was imprisoned at 18 years old, due to writing articles on her blog that criticised corruption in the Syrian government, and criticising Assad's attempts to normalise relations with Israel.⁷² She was accused of espionage and collaborating with 'foreign entities'.⁷³



Mohammed Kharouf

Length of imprisonment: 8 years

Mohammed was a humanitarian worker for Al-Sham Humanitarian Foundation, established to address the needs of Syrians during the Civil War.⁷⁵ Mohammed was imprisoned when he was being displaced from Aleppo due to violent clashes between the regime and rebels in the city.⁷⁶ The regime sent Mohammed's family his death certificate, despite him still being alive.⁷⁷



Safi Yassine

Length of imprisonment: 13 years

Safi was imprisoned most recently in 2018 due to protesting the regime, and was forced to provide false confessions on Syrian TV that he was a member of an "armed terrorist organisation".⁷⁹



Sharif Kanbar

Imprisoned since: 2011

Sharif's family were told that he was killed in prison in 2012.⁸⁰ His parents both died whilst he was imprisoned, believing him to be dead.⁸¹

Over 3000 Palestinians have been arrested or forcibly disappeared in Syria since 2011.⁸³ The whereabouts of the majority are unknown.⁸⁴



Bashar Al-Assad's Hostages Freed in Syria continued...

Palestinian Hostages

Palestinian hostages released from Assad's prisons include:

Walid Barakat

Length of imprisonment: 42 years

Imprisoned since: 1982

Walid was imprisoned at Damascus airport in 1982, aged 24.⁸⁵ His family had no news about his whereabouts until his release, aged 68.⁸⁶ On his release, he did not know what a mobile phone was.⁸⁷



Sabri Daraghma

Length of imprisonment: 40 years

Imprisoned since: 1982

Sabri's family received his death certificate during Yasser Arafat's rule, and his funeral was held in Lebanon.⁸⁸ Upon hearing of his release, his family approached the ICRC with their numbers so they could reach them.⁸⁹



Bashar Al-Assad's Hostages Freed in Syria continued...

More than 622 Lebanese have been imprisoned in Syria since the 2011 Syrian Revolution began, and thousands more Lebanese were disappeared by Syrian forces during the Syrian occupation of Lebanon from 1976 to 2005, often from inside Lebanon.⁹¹

So far, nine Lebanese nationals have been freed from Syrian prisons since the overthrow of Assad's regime.⁹² The fate of the remaining Lebanese prisoners remains unknown.⁹³

Lebanese Hostages

Lebanese prisoners released from Assad's prisons include:

Suheil Hamwi

Length of imprisonment: 33 years

Imprisoned since: December 1992

When Suhail was kidnapped and taken to Syria, his son was just 10 months old.⁹⁴ Suhail's son now has children of his own.⁹⁵



Khadra Fayad

Length of imprisonment: 12 years

Imprisoned since: 2012

Khadra was arrested whilst visiting Syria.⁹⁶ She was starved and tortured in prison, which included peeling her nails off and dousing her with cold water.⁹⁷

Khadra was freed just five hours before she was scheduled to be executed.⁹⁸



Ali Hassan al-Ali

Length of imprisonment: 39 years

Imprisoned since: 1986

Ali was arrested at a checkpoint in northern Lebanon and abducted to Syria, aged just 18. He was held in Hama Central Prison.⁹⁹



Bashar Al-Assad's Hostages Freed in Syria continued...

Turkish Hostages

Turkish prisoners released from Assad's prisons include:

Mehmet Erturk

Length of imprisonment: 21 years

Imprisoned since: 2003

Erturk was arrested on false allegations of smuggling, the sentence for which ended nine years ago. He was tortured and verbally abused whilst imprisoned.¹⁰¹



Engin Arslan

Length of imprisonment: 13 months

Imprisoned since: 2023

Arslan was arrested and imprisoned whilst trying to cross Syria to reach Gaza.¹⁰²



Bashar Al-Assad's Hostages Freed in Syria continued...

Jordanian Hostages

Over 236 Jordanians have been imprisoned in Syria since 2011.¹⁰⁴ The fate of the majority of those imprisoned remains unknown.¹⁰⁵



“The moment of release is something I wish for every prisoner. Freedom is truly priceless. Honestly, we were living in our graves, and we came out of them. We truly felt like we were living in graves because we were completely cut off from the world.”

Abla Sa’adat

Palestinian hostage released in the Flood of the Free, and wife of imprisoned Palestinian activist Ahmad Sa’adat.¹⁰³



08

[← BACK TO CONTENTS](#)

The Enduring Scars of Imprisonment



08

The Enduring Scars of Imprisonment

The scars of imprisonment endure for both former prisoners and their families.¹⁰⁹

For prisoners released, the impact of their imprisonment continues. Many of those released from Syrian and Israeli torture chambers are suffering from memory loss, disorientation, and an inability to reintegrate into modern society.¹¹⁰ Many are also emaciated, and it will take months for them to regain their strength.¹¹² Starved prisoners must have their diet monitored by doctors, as the consumption of too much rich food after being starved can cause organ failure.¹¹³ Many former prisoners, especially those victim to extensive torture, have or will exhibit signs of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) due to their treatment.¹¹⁴

Occupied Palestine

Palestinians held hostage by the IOF have experienced far greater brutality since 7 October 2023, and the number of Palestinians killed in IOF torture chambers has risen.¹¹⁸ So many Palestinian women have been victims of sexual assault since October 2023 that the stigma in Palestinian society surrounding speaking out about sexual assault has been significantly reduced.¹¹⁹

Badr Dahlan



The IOF took Badr Dahlan hostage in Khan Younis for one month in May 2024, and was released with visible signs of psychological torture and PTSD.¹²⁰ He described his imprisonment as a “nightmare”, and that he was tortured, beaten, stripped, and battered on his head, legs, and arms.¹²¹

Syria

Hundreds of thousands of families and friends still wait for news of loved ones who were forcibly disappeared or imprisoned under the Assad regime.¹¹⁵ Although around 31,000 prisoners were released in December 2024, more than 150,000 people have not been found, despite rescue operatives announcing that there are no remaining prisoners inside Syria’s jails.¹¹⁶ For many, the search for answers about the disappeared continues.¹¹⁷

“Hard feelings. Firstly, the feeling of freedom, and we thank everybody for this freedom. And on the other side, the pain for the loss of such a large number of martyrs. This is the double feeling that we live in. The situation in the prisons is very difficult and we wish for freedom for the male and female prisoners.”

Khalida Jarrar

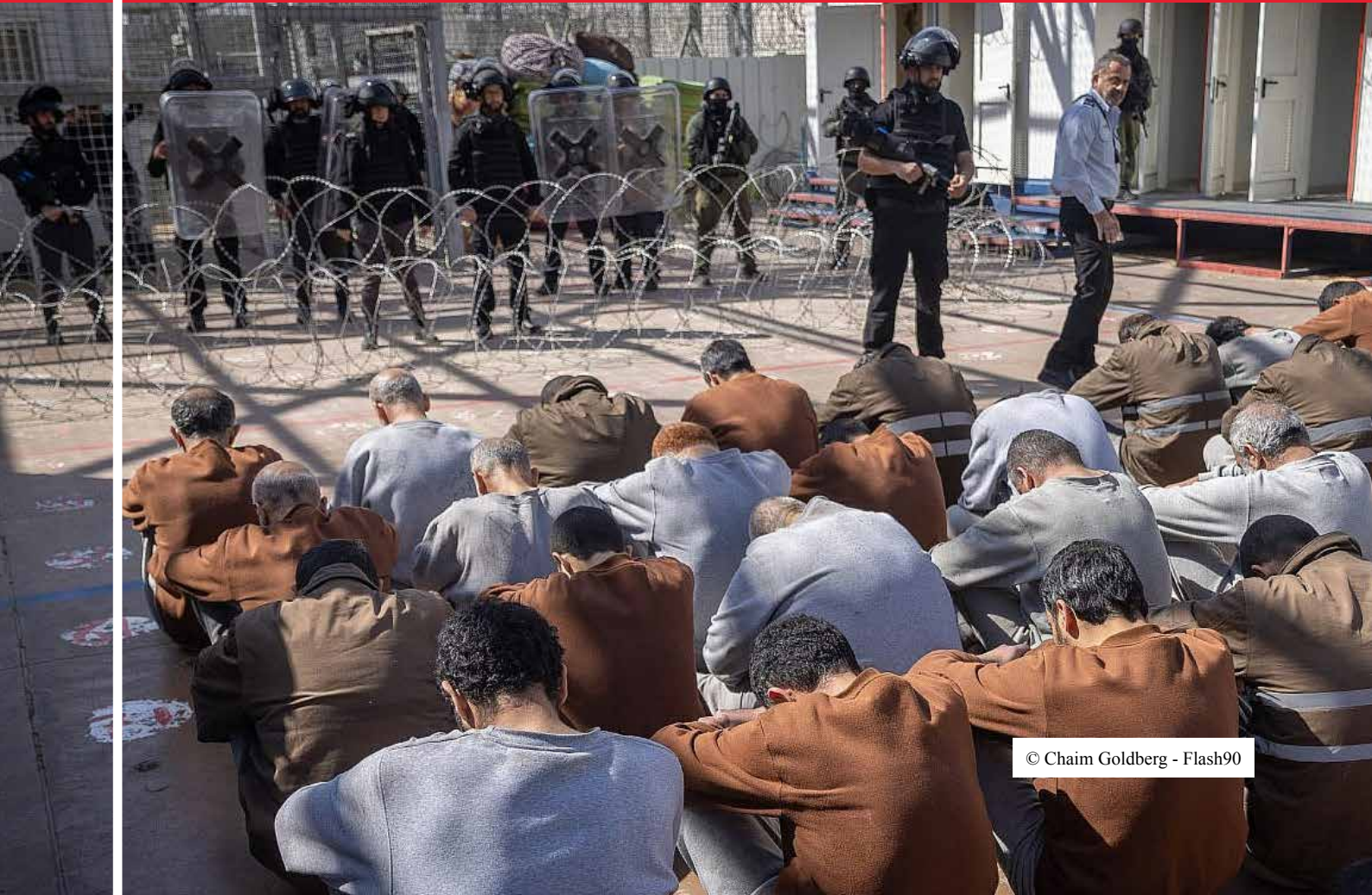
Human Rights Activist, Academic
and Palestinian Politician for PFLP.¹⁰⁸



09

[← BACK TO CONTENTS](#)

On Language: Prisoners or Hostages?



09

On Language: Prisoners or Hostages?

After 7 October 2023, media outlets were unanimous in calling Israelis held in Gaza ‘hostages’, despite the Israelis having served/serving in the IOF, occupying Palestinian land, and receiving humane treatment from their guards during their detention.¹²⁴

In contrast, Palestinians held in Israeli torture chambers are described in the media as ‘prisoners’, despite often being children, held without any charges, tried in sham IOF military courts, or experiencing extensive abuse during their imprisonment.¹²⁵ Palestinians are therefore hostages in IOF torture camps.¹²⁶

Hamas hostages: Stories of the people taken from Israel

Israel: freed captives testify to being treated ‘extremely well’ by Hamas

Eyewitness

Israel-Hamas war: 'We were treated like dogs' - released Palestinian prisoners complain of mistreatment

This contrast in language is designed to elicit more sympathy from Western audiences towards Israeli occupiers instead of Palestinians, and in turn generate more outrage and political will for the release of Israelis instead of the far more numerous Palestinians imprisoned.¹²⁷

Nonetheless, some Palestinian prisoner movements and advocates have emphasised the importance of the term ‘political prisoner’, to distinguish between Palestinians imprisoned in relation to the occupation, as opposed to detainees suspected or convicted of crimes/offenses unrelated to the occupation.¹²⁸ The term ‘political prisoner’, or ‘prisoner of conscience’ also carries greater weight in international law and NGO advocacy.¹²⁹

“The conditions in prison are honestly some of the worst. They are conditions that Palestinian prisoners endure under occupation. Whether it’s young men or women, in all circumstances [of imprisonment], the conditions are entirely inhumane. The food, the healthcare, the treatment, everything is terrible on every level. They try to break the prisoners’ morale. They try to make us feel like we’re beneath them and that they are dominant. They try to crush a person’s spirit and dignity. The humiliation that prisoners endure is unprecedented in all periods of occupation.”

Abla Sa’adat

Palestinian hostage released in the Flood of the Free, and wife of imprisoned Palestinian activist Ahmad Sa’adat.¹²³



← BACK TO CONTENTS

Western Media Bias

© The Guardian

How to build the perfect playlist → E2

'Hypnotic' ★★★★★
Timothée Chalamet as Bob Dylan
 → Page 21

Wednesday
 11 December 2024
 £3.00
 From £2.30 for subscribers

The Guardian

News provider of the year

Israel strikes military targets and seizes territory in Syria offensive

Air attacks hit hundreds of sites including naval fleet and missile stores

Jason Burke

Israeli warplanes have intensified an offensive in Syria, striking hundreds of military targets across the country

missile stores and much of the small Syrian navy.

Israeli troops also tightened their hold on a demilitarised zone in Syria east of the occupied Golan Heights and seized a strip of mountainous territory extending northwards.

Images on social media and broadcast by local TV networks showed the charred wreckage of at least six warships sunk or badly damaged at the Mediterranean port of Latakia.

The Israeli airstrikes began hours

Israel says are suspected chemical weapons and long-range rockets.

"The IDF [Israeli military] has been operating in Syria in recent days to strike and destroy strategic capabilities that threaten the state of Israel," Israel's defence minister, Israel Katz, said at a naval base in Haifa. "The navy operated... to destroy the Syrian fleet with great success."

He also said that Israel's troops had been deployed in Syria to create a "sterile defence zone free of weap-

presence. On Sunday, Benjamin Netanyahu, Israel's prime minister, said Israeli forces were moving to control the 150 sq mile buffer zone in Syrian territory.

Hours later Israeli media reported that troops had established positions along the Syrian side of the strategic peak, Mount Hermon, to the north of the Golan Heights.

An Israeli military official admitted yesterday that troops had advanced beyond the buffer zone and seized

"IDF forces are not advancing towards Damascus. This is not something we are doing or pursuing in any way," Lt Col Nadav Shoshani, the military spokesperson, told a briefing with reporters. The Syrian capital is only 25 miles from Israeli troops' positions. "We are not involved in what's happening in Syria internally, we are not a side in this conflict and do not have any interest other than protecting our borders and security of our citizens," Shoshani said.

10

Western Media Bias

Justification of Israel's Attacks on Syria

During the overthrow of Assad's regime, Western media legitimised Israel's extensive bombing of Syria and takeover of further land in the occupied Syrian Golan heights as crucial for their strategic interests.

Israel, US and Turkey launch strikes in Syria to protect interests

Israel, Seeing an Opportunity, Demolishes Syria's Military Assets

Israel says its air strikes destroyed most of Syria's strategic weapons stockpiles

Western Media Bias

Prioritisation of Israeli Hostages' Stories over Palestinian Hostages

Despite more than 90 Palestinian hostages being released, the BBC only ran one in depth interview with one of the Palestinian prisoners released and prioritised her quote about the Israeli hostages as the title for the article. In comparison, all three of the Israelis released were given in-depth, individual attention in the BBC's article, and Palestinian prisoners were not mentioned in the headline.

The BBC also used emotive language "hugs and tears" to describe a video of the Israelis reuniting with their families, but only descriptive language in their coverage of Palestinian hostages reuniting with their loved ones.

Who are the three Israeli hostages released by Hamas?

Hugs and tears: How Israeli hostage return unfolded

'The hostages meant I got out': Freed Palestinian prisoner welcomes Gaza deal

Moment freed Palestinian prisoners reunite with family and friends

Western Media Bias continued...

Justification of Israel's Attacks on Syria

During the overthrow of Assad's regime, Western media legitimised Israel's extensive bombing of Syria and takeover of further land in the occupied Syrian Golan heights as crucial for their strategic interests.

Israel, US and Turkey launch strikes in Syria to protect interests

Israel says its air strikes destroyed most of Syria's strategic weapons stockpiles

Israel, Seeing an Opportunity, Demolishes Syria's Military Assets

“I was released in the 2023 deal in November and was re-arrested in January and now I have been released again on 19 January [...] this is thanks to our God and then to the resistance. First, we ask Allah to have mercy on all the martyrs in Gaza and heal the wounded in Gaza, and release the prisoners of Gaza, this is the most important thing.”

Ahmed Walid Khashan

one of the Palestinian hostages released in Flood of the Free.¹³⁰



Footnotes

- ¹ ‘Dead, jailed, tortured, displaced.’ *Al Jazeera via Instagram* (11 December 2024) available at https://www.instagram.com/reel/DDdAYBER2XV/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link
- ² ‘#Repost @protectpalestineorg’ *Decolonizemyself via Instagram* (11 December 2024) available at https://www.instagram.com/p/DDc8waxvTET/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link
- ³ ‘Renowned Syrian activist Mazen al-Hamada was found dead in a morgue’ *AJPlus via Instagram* (12 December 2024) available at <https://www.instagram.com/p/DDfNZ81T6m5/?hl=en-gb>
- ⁴⁻⁶ ‘Political Prisoners in the Middle East: The Quiet Crisis’ *Arab Center Washington DC* (6 December 2018) available at <https://arabcenterdc.org/resource/political-prisoners-in-the-middle-east-the-quiet-crisis/>
- ⁷ ‘Over 10,200 Palestinians detained in occupied West Bank since October 7, says prisoners institutions’ *Wafa News Agency* (20 August 2024) available at <https://english.wafa.ps/Pages/Details/148259>
- ⁸ ‘Palestinian 14-year-old becomes Israel’s youngest-ever prisoner’ *Middle East Eye* (2 December 2024) available at <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/palestinian-becomes-israel-youngest-ever-prisoner>
- ⁹ ‘Gaza is ‘a concentration camp where genocide is taking place,’ claims South Africa in landmark case’ *ITVX* (11 January 2024) available at <https://www.itv.com/news/2024-01-11/gaza-is-a-concentration-camp-where-genocide-is-taking-place-un-court-hears>
- ¹⁰⁻¹³ ‘Political Prisoners in the Middle East: The Quiet Crisis’ *Arab Center Washington DC*
- ¹⁴⁻¹⁵ ‘World Prison Brief data: Iran’ *World Prison Brief* (2020) available at <https://www.prisonstudies.org/country/iran>
- ¹⁶ ‘Iran 2023 Human Rights Report’ *US Department of State* (2023) available at https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/528267_IRAN-2023-HUMAN-RIGHTS-REPORT.pdf
- ¹⁷⁻¹⁸ ‘Political Prisoners in the Middle East: The Quiet Crisis’ *Arab Center Washington DC*
- ¹⁹⁻²⁰ ‘Palestinian Authority arrest campaign ‘one of the worst in years’’ *Al Jazeera* (29 July 2022) available at <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/7/29/palestinian-authority-arrest-campaign-one-of-the-worst-in>
- ²¹ ‘Jordan: Authorities must stop forcible deportation of two detained refugees to Syria’ *Amnesty International* (17 July 2024) available at <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2024/05/jordan-authorities-must-stop-forcible-deportation-of-two-detained-refugees-to-syria/>
- ²² ‘2022 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Algeria’ *US Department of State* (2022) available at <https://state.gov/reports/2022-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/algeria/#:~:text=Other%20prominent%20human%20rights%20activists,opposition%20figures%2C%20and%20hirak%20protesters.>
- ²³ ‘The UAE must release all political prisoners before hosting COP28’ *MENA Rights Group* (31 May 2023) available at <http://menarights.org/en/articles/uae-must-release-all-political-prisoners-hosting-cop28>
- ²⁴ ‘Tunisian opposition wants political prisoners freed before taking part in presidential election’ *AP News* (1 May 2024) available at <https://apnews.com/article/tunisia-presidential-election-opposition-5ea033488ab1b8498cc29fd8db852fe6>

Footnotes continued...

- 25 ‘Rula Hassanein, a Palestinian journalist who was released on Sunday after spending 10 months in an Israeli prison’ *Middle East Eye via X* (20 January 2025) available at <https://x.com/MiddleEastEye/status/1881455836720988465>
- 26-30 ‘Welcome to Hell: The Israeli Prison System as a Network of Torture Camps’ B’Tselem (August 2024) available at https://www.btselem.org/sites/default/files/publications/202408_welcome_to_hell_eng.pdf
- 31 ‘“Death camp”: the haunting history of Syria’s Sednaya prison’ *France24* (9 December 2024) available at <https://www.france24.com/en/middle-east/20241209-death-camp-the-haunting-history-of-syria-sednaya-prison-hts-assad>
- 32 ‘Why Syria’s Sednaya prison is called a ‘Human slaughterhouse’’ *Middle East Eye via Instagram* (11 December 2024) available at https://www.instagram.com/reel/DDdHMKpo_H9/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link
- 33 ‘Syria hanged 13,000 in Saydnaya prison: Amnesty’ *Al Jazeera* (7 February 2017) available at <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/2/7/syria-hanged-13000-in-saydnaya-prison-amnesty>
- 34-35 ‘“Death camp”: the haunting history of Syria’s Sednaya prison’ *France24*
- 36 ‘Why Syria’s Sednaya prison is called a ‘Human slaughterhouse’’ *Middle East Eye via Instagram*
- 37 ‘“They used to arrest people randomly.”’ *Middle East Eye via Instagram* (11 December 2024) available at https://www.instagram.com/reel/DDbqolxJaFD/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link
- 38-39 ‘Syrian activist whose suffering became symbol of Assad brutality found dead in Sednaya prison’ *The Guardian* (10 December 2024) available at <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2024/dec/10/syrian-activist-who-symbolised-assad-brutality-found-dead-in-sednaya-prison>
- 40 ‘“A number not a name”: In Syria, freed prisoners recall horrors of the past’ *Al Jazeera* (8 December 2024) available at <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/12/8/in-aleppo-freed-prisoners-recall-the-horrors-of-the-past>
- 41 ‘Welcome to Hell: The Israeli Prison System as a Network of Torture Camps’ B’Tselem
- 42 ‘Palestinian families rejoice over release of minors and women in wartime prisoner swap’ *AP News* (25 November 2023) available at <https://apnews.com/article/palestinians-israel-prisoner-exchange-hostage-92545883b1fef86fb9b34549b7deca58>
- 43-47 ‘Israel arrests almost as many Palestinians as it has released during truce’ *Al Jazeera* (28 November 2023) available at <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/11/28/arrests>
- 48-49 ‘Suheir Barghouti was one of 240 Palestinian prisoners released during the ceasefire | 7.30’ *ABC News via Youtube* (11 December 2023) available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VjLCRBoMd7M>
- 50-52 ‘Israel arrests almost as many Palestinians as it has released during truce’ *Al Jazeera*
- 53 ‘Israel re-arrests 11 Palestinians released in November prisoner swap’ *Middle East Eye* (5 March 2024) available at <https://www.middleeasteye.net/live-blog/live-blog-update/israel-re-arrests-11-palestinians-released-november-prisoner-swap>
- 54-55 ‘West Bank prisoners face Israeli re-arrest’ *Al Jazeera* (26 August 2014) available at <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2014/8/26/west-bank-prisoners-face-israeli-re-arrest>

Footnotes continued...

- 56-58 ‘Israel-Hamas war: Palestinian prisoner Israa Jaabis released as part of hostage-prisoner exchange deal’ *Sky News* (27 November 2023) available at <https://news.sky.com/video/israel-hamas-war-palestinian-prisoner-israa-jaabis-released-as-part-of-hostage-prisoner-exchange-deal-13017037>
- 59-60 ‘Suheir Barghouti was one of 240 Palestinian prisoners released during the ceasefire | 7.30’ *ABC News via Youtube*
- 61 ‘For released Palestinian prisoners, a complicated homecoming’ *The Washington Post* (25 November 2023) available at <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2023/11/25/palestinian-prisoner-release-west-bank/>
- 62 ‘Suheir Barghouti was one of 240 Palestinian prisoners released during the ceasefire | 7.30’ *ABC News via Youtube*
- 63 ‘Freed Palestinians Were Mostly Young and Not Convicted of Crimes’ *The New York Times* (1 December 2023) available at <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/12/01/world/middleeast/palestinian-prisoners-released-gaza.html>
- 64 ‘Khaled Mashal, leader of the Hamas political bureau, congratulated the Syrian people “on the success of their revolution against tyranny and oppression.”’ *Middle East Eye via Instagram* (11 December 2024) available at <https://www.instagram.com/reel/DDafAdnAjrl/?hl=en-gb>
- 65-79 ‘Families of detainees and the forcibly disappeared are still searching for their loved ones’ *Megaphone News via Instagram* (10 December 2024) available at https://www.instagram.com/p/DDYAuzMqEs0/?hl=en-gb&img_index=7
- 80-81 ‘شريف قنبر من أبناء مدينة داعل بريف درعا’ *Syrian Revolution Archive via Instagram* (11 December 2024) available at https://www.instagram.com/reel/DDb9UQSp2QX/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link
- 82 ‘Abla Saadat, the wife of imprisoned activist leader Ahmed Saadat from Ramallah’ *Middle East Eye via Instagram* (21 January 2025) available at <https://www.instagram.com/p/DFEMyFFAXZ2/?hl=en-gb>
- 85 ‘A Palestinian man from Jerusalem was freed after spending 43 years in Syrian prisons.’ *Middle East Eye via Instagram* (13 December 2024) available at <https://www.instagram.com/p/DDfVv6rTioE/?hl=en-gb>
- 86-87 ‘اعتقلوني من مطار دمشق’ *Al Jazeera Munasher via Instagram* (12 December 2024) available at https://www.instagram.com/reel/DDdB-Y4uA18/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link
- 88-89 ‘Palestinian family finds relative imprisoned since 1982’ *Middle East Eye* (13 December 2024) available at <https://www.instagram.com/p/DDfp9-7orn6/?hl=en-gb>
- 90 ‘Rula Hassanein, a Palestinian journalist who was released on Sunday after spending 10 months in an Israeli prison’ *Middle East Eye via X*
- 91 ‘The foreign nationals freed from Syrian regime jails after decades of imprisonment’ *The New Arab* (10 December 2024) available at <https://www.newarab.com/news/foreign-nationals-freed-syrian-regime-jails>
- 92-93 ‘Nine Lebanese prisoners freed from Syrian jails return home’ *Middle East Eye* (10 December 2024) available at <https://www.middleeasteye.net/live-blog/live-blog-update/nine-lebanese-prisoners-freed-syrian-jails-return-home>
- 94-95 ‘The foreign nationals freed from Syrian regime jails after decades of imprisonment’ *The New Arab*
- 96-98 ‘Tens of thousands of people detained or disappeared by the Assad government in Syria have been freed’ *AJ PIs via Instagram* (12 December 2024) available at https://www.instagram.com/p/DDe-B1mpBeC/?hl=en-gb&img_index=1

Footnotes continued...

- 99 ‘He has come out an old man’: joy and grief as loved ones released from Assad prisons’ *The Guardian* (7 December 2024) available at <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2024/dec/07/syria-grief-mingles-with-joy-as-loved-ones-released-from-assad-prisons>
- 100 ‘Leading member of PFLP Khalida Jarrar released from Israeli prison’ *Middle East Eye* via *Instagram* (21 January 2025) available at <https://www.instagram.com/p/DFD9k-TopxJ/?hl=en-gb>
- 101-102 ‘The foreign nationals freed from Syrian regime jails after decades of imprisonment’ *The New Arab*
- 103 ‘Abla Saadat, the wife of imprisoned activist leader Ahmed Saadat from Ramallah’ *Middle East Eye* via *Instagram*
- 104-105 ‘Jordanian Man Returns Home After Spending 38 Years In Syrian Jails’ *NDTV World* (10 December 2024) available at <https://www.ndtv.com/world-news/jordanian-man-returns-home-after-38-years-in-syrias-prisons-7216655>
- 106-107 ‘The foreign nationals freed from Syrian regime jails after decades of imprisonment’ *The New Arab*
- 108 ‘Leading member of PFLP Khalida Jarrar released from Israeli prison’ *Middle East Eye* via *Instagram*
- 109-111 ‘How a Palestinian teen’s release exposed Israeli mistreatment of prisoners’ *Al Jazeera* (3 December 2023) available at <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/12/3/how-a-palestinian-teens-release-exposed-israeli-mistreatment-of-prisoners>
- 112 ‘Prisoners stagger free from Syria’s ‘slaughterhouse’ jail’ *France 24* (9 December 2024) available at <https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20241209-prisoners-stagger-free-from-syria-s-slaughterhouse-jail>
- 113 ‘Doctors rush to Sednaya prison outside Damascus to help freed prisoners’ *Middle East Eye* (9 December 2024) available at <https://www.middleeasteye.net/live-blog/live-blog-update/doctors-rush-sednaya-prison-help-freed-prisoners>
- 114 ‘Prisoners stagger free from Syria’s ‘slaughterhouse’ jail’ *France 24*
- 115-117 ‘A week after Bashar al-Assad’s government was overthrown, one of Syria’s top human rights workers has a sobering message’ *Middle East Eye* via *Instagram* (16 December 2024) available at https://www.instagram.com/p/DDnTipFK6KY/?hl=en-gb&img_index=2
- 118-119 ‘Israeli soldiers have been sexually assaulting Palestinian women for decades. Now they’re speaking out’ *Middle East Eye* (3 December 2024) available at <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/israel-sexual-assault-palestinian-women>
- 120-121 ‘Traumatised Palestinian detainee describes torture in Israeli custody’ *Al Jazeera* (23 June 2024) available at <https://www.aljazeera.com/program/newsfeed/2024/6/23/traumatised-palestinian-detainee-describes-torture-in-israeli-custody>
- 122-123 ‘Abla Saadat, the wife of imprisoned activist leader Ahmed Saadat from Ramallah’ *Middle East Eye* via *Instagram*
- 124 ‘Israel-Gaza war: What we know about the captives taken by Hamas’ *Al Jazeera* (3 November 2023) available at <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/11/3/what-do-we-know-about-the-israeli-captives-held-by-hamas>
- 125-127 ‘Israel-Palestine war: In war, words matter. Palestinian ‘prisoners’ are hostages, too’ *Middle East Eye* (7 December 2023) available at <https://www.middleeasteye.net/opinion/israel-palestine-war-palestinian-prisoners-hostages-too>

Footnotes continued...

- 128-129 ‘General briefing, prepared by Addameer Prisoner Support and Human Rights Association’ Addameer Prisoner Support and Human Rights Association *available at* https://www.addameer.org/advocacy/briefings_papers/general-briefing-palestinian-political-prisoners-israeli-prisons-0
- 130 “‘We came out of hell, beating, suppression, petrol, being tied up, in the winter, in the water, complete humiliation, the prison is hell, hell, hell, hell.’” *Middle East Eye via X* (20 January 2025) *available at* <https://www.instagram.com/p/DFDSUY1AE-E/?hl=en-gb>
- 131 ‘Statistics’ Addameer Prisoner Support and Human Rights Association (7 January 2025) *available at* <https://www.addameer.org/statistics>
- 132-135 ‘Israel’s Crimes Against Humanity at Sde Teiman—and the Complicity of Its Doctors’ *The Nation* (2 August 2024) *available at* <https://www.thenation.com/article/world/sde-teiman-detention-camp/>
- 136 ‘Syrians gathered in Damascus to protest in solidarity with victims of the former Syrian regime’ *The New Arab* (17 December 2024) *available at* <https://www.instagram.com/p/DDsZStYMzYy/?hl=en-gb>
- 137-138 ‘Student leaders reveal prison ‘nightmare’ after Gen Z revolution sets them free’ *CNN* (3 September 2023) *available at* <https://edition.cnn.com/2024/09/03/asia/bangladesh-house-mirrors-detention-center-intl-hnk-dst/index.html>
- 139 ‘Pakistan 2023’ Amnesty International (2023) *available at* <https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/asia-and-the-pacific/south-asia/pakistan/report-pakistan/>
- 140 ‘90 Percent Of Those Detained by Taliban Are Political Prisoners, Says US State Department’ *Afghanistan International* (23 April 2024) *available at* <https://www.afintl.com/en/202404233001>
- 141 ‘Three years of Taliban rule: the violent persecution of 141 journalists detained and arrested in Afghanistan’ *Reporters Without Borders* (14 August 2024) *available at* <https://rsf.org/en/three-years-taliban-rule-violent-persecution-141-journalists-detained-and-arrested-afghanistan>
- 142 ‘90 Palestinian prisoners liberated by the Resistance on the first day of the Flood of the Free’ *Samidoun Palestinian Prisoner Network* (20 January 2025) *available at* <https://samidoun.net/2025/01/90-palestinian-prisoners-liberated-by-the-resistance-on-the-first-day-of-the-flood-of-the-free/#:~:text=In%20the%20early%20morning%20hours,of%20the%20ceasefire%20agreement%20imposed>
- 143-145 ‘A look at the terms — and tensions — in the Israel-Hamas draft ceasefire deal’ *AP News* (15 January 2025) *available at* <https://apnews.com/article/israel-hamas-gaza-ceasefire-draft-terms-hostages-3df21b67620fdc8f62aa1d1e96487880>
- 146 ‘Who are the Palestinian prisoners released by Israel?’ *Al Jazeera* (20 January 2025) *available at* <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/1/20/who-are-the-palestinian-prisoners-released-by-israel>
- 147-149 ‘Gaza ceasefire deal: Palestinian leader Khalida Jarrar expected to be released’ *Middle East Eye* (18 January 2025) *available at* <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/gaza-ceasefire-deal-palestinian-leader-khalida-jarrar-expected-be-released>
- 150-151 West Bank: Palestinian MP Khalida Jarrar faces slow death in Israeli solitary confinement; effective and immediate action needed’ *Euro-Med Human Rights Monitor* (29 August 2024) *available at* <https://euromedmonitor.org/en/article/6446/West-Bank:-Palestinian-MP-Khalida-Jarrar-faces-slow-death-in-Israeli-solitary-confinement%253B-effective-and-immediate-action-needed>

Footnotes continued...

- 152 ‘Gaza ceasefire deal: Palestinian leader Khalida Jarrar expected to be released’ *Middle East Eye*
- 153-154 ‘90 Palestinian prisoners liberated by the Resistance on the first day of the Flood of the Free’ Samidoun Palestinian Prisoner Network
- 155-159 ‘Palestinian journalist Rula Hassanein charged with incitement for social media posts’ *Committee to Protect Journalists* (8 May 2024) available at <https://cpj.org/2024/05/palestinian-journalist-rula-hassanein-charged-with-incitement-for-social-media-posts/>
- 160-161 ‘Relief and rage as Israel-Gaza ceasefire deal frees first Palestinian detainees’ *The National* (20 January 2025) available at <https://www.thenationalnews.com/news/mena/2025/01/20/relief-and-rage-as-israel-gaza-ceasefire-deal-frees-first-palestinian-detainees/>
- 162 ‘West Bank: Palestinian MP Khalida Jarrar faces slow death in Israeli solitary confinement; effective and immediate action needed’ Euro-Med Human Rights Monitor
- 163 ‘Tears, hugs greet 90 Palestinian women, children freed from Israeli prisons’ *Al Jazeera* (20 January 2025) available at <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/1/20/celebrations-as-90-detained-palestinians-freed-from-israeli-prisons>
- 164 ‘Palestine: Journalist Bushra Al-Taweel Jailed For The Fourth Time Over Two Years’ *Women in Journalism* (28 March 2022) available at <https://www.womeninjournalism.org/threats-all/palestine-journalist-bushra-al-taweel-jailed-for-the-fourth-time-over-two-years>
- 165 ‘Tears, hugs greet 90 Palestinian women, children freed from Israeli prisons’ *Al Jazeera*
- 166-167 ‘90 Palestinian prisoners liberated by the Resistance on the first day of the Flood of the Free’ Samidoun Palestinian Prisoner Network
- 168 “‘We came out of hell, beating, suppression, petrol, being tied up, in the winter, in the water, complete humiliation, the prison is hell, hell, hell, hell.’” *Middle East Eye via X*
- 169 ‘Who are the Palestinian prisoners released by Israel?’ *Al Jazeera* (20 January 2025) available at <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/1/20/who-are-the-palestinian-prisoners-released-by-israel>
- 170 ‘Prisons and Detention Centres’ Addameer Prisoner Support and Human Rights Association available at <https://www.addameer.org/prisons-and-detention-centers%201>
- 171 ‘Welcome to Hell: The Israeli Prison System as a Network of Torture Camps’ B’Tselem
- 172-174 ‘Ofer Prison: IPS Conducted a 3-Day Campaign of Unrestrained Violence against Palestinian Detainees’ Al Mezan Center for Human Rights (5 September 2024) available at <https://www.mezan.org/en/post/46517/Ofer-Prison:-IPS-Conducted-a-3-Day-Campaign-of-Unrestrained-Violence-against-Palestinian-Detainees>
- 175-180 ‘Palestinian Prisoner’s Day: How many are still in Israeli detention?’ *Al Jazeera* (17 April 2024) available at <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/4/17/palestinian-prisoners-day-how-many-palestinians-are-in-israeli-jails>