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Solidarity in Isolation - Prisoners' Day (17th April).

Public · Hosted by [Cadfa \(Camden Abu Dis Friendship Association\)](#)

Notes from the CADFA public event.

Palestinian prisoners

Notes on talk by [Abdulwahab Sabbah](#)

The first Palestinian prisoners' day was in 1974. This was started by the PLO in solidarity with Palestinian prisoners, because the Israelis have a policy of mass imprisonment of Palestinians and so many people are affected. A million Palestinians have been in jail since 1967 – over 20% of Palestinians since occupation – this is a form of collective punishment. The number comes from the Red Cross, counting once for each person who has been arrested at least one time. Now there are around 5000 Palestinians in Israeli jails – this includes many different Israeli jails and detention

centres both in '1948' and in the Occupied Territories. This affects 5000 families and the whole community.

During this time 222 prisoners have been killed or died in jail. This includes people who have died during interrogation or of untreated illness and also people who had been arrested but wounded and not treated.

In April now there are 5000 prisoners including 130 children, 700 who are sick including ten with cancer (they don't get proper treatment, sometimes just painkillers). There are people of all ages in jail, women as well as men, and there are some of our members of parliament. There are 26 people who were imprisoned before the Oslo agreements and who have often been discussed in negotiations but have not been released – Karim Younis and Maher Younis (brothers) have spent 38 years in jail, Na'il Barghouthi has spent 40 years in jail – he was released with the Shalit deal but rearrested after six months. There are 51

prisoners who have spent more than 20 years in jail.

From the beginning of 2019 to now, 5 prisoners have died inside jail: one dead body was given to his family to bury, but the others have not been released; the Israeli procedure is to keep them till their sentences have been completed. In this way, their bodies may become numbers of 'released' prisoners at the time of a prisoner exchange.

To date, prisoner exchanges are the only way of getting large numbers of prisoners released. The last big one was the Shalit deal in 2011 when over 1150 Palestinians were released in exchange for Shalit – though many were rearrested soon after the deal.

There are many worries about Corona for prisoners – Palestinian prisoners are not being looked after or protected. Israeli prison management stopped 140 items in the 'canteens' for prisoners, and among these were cleaning materials. Ayman al-Sharbati ('al Mowaten') set fire in a prison yard to draw attention to this danger. As a result, on 26th March, he was taken from his jail but no-one knows where they have taken him. His family are very worried about him, having checked as they could the lists of prisoners in 26 jails, and it isn't clear where he is.

Families who have no links or communication with their prisoners are very worried as they heard that three intelligence officers in Al Muskobiya prison had the virus;



there are rumours that Orfa prison has the

Please sign our petition at

<https://www.change.org/p/dominic-raab-mp-parliament-uk-free-mohammed-no-prison-without-trial>

We are calling for an end of Israel's policy of mass imprisonment of Palestinians and in particular the policy of administrative detention - there should be no imprisonment without trial. We believe that Palestinian prisoners should be released in a hurry because of the Corona virus which is rumoured to be spreading in Israeli prisons.

Here we are calling in particular for the release of Mohammed Salah from Abu Dis. He was imprisoned on 7th April and has been given a "sentence" of six months in prison without any trial. Mohammed was ill when he was taken and so his family are doubly worried about his health - They want to know that he is getting the treatment he needed - but they also are concerned that he does not compound his existing medical problem by catching the virus in jail.

CADFA know Mohammed's mother as she came to the UK in March on our 2020 Palestinian women's visit. She spoke movingly of the problems of mothers and families of prisoners as well as of the prisoners themselves - then returned to Palestine to find her son was taken away!

If there is a reason Mohammed should have a trial, let him have a fair trial now.

If he will not have a trial, release him NOW!

virus; a prisoner from Orfa released in Nablus was tested positive for the virus.

Although Corona is an international crisis, the Israelis are keeping going with their campaign of imprisonment. During March 2020, 250 Palestinians were arrested and imprisoned. At the same time, Israel is releasing their own prisoners from jails, and neighbouring countries are doing the same.

We are calling on the international community to call for an end to the mass imprisonment of Palestinians, and to release people NOW at the time of this Corona crisis.

Prisoners' affairs, Abu Dis

Notes on talk by Salah al Bow

Current number of prisoners from Abu Dis in Israeli jails: 26, including two in administrative detention and three children (all under 16),

CHILDREN used to be in Ofer jail and have Palestinian adult prisoners to protect and support them in relation to welfare and needs, stop them smoking etc. Recently all the children (130 across Palestine) to Damoun jail with no adult prisoners within '1948' so hard for any of them to have visits – though no visitors allowed to jail since Corona crisis. No means of communicating to kids now, no telephones etc so completely isolated.

ADMIN DETAINEES – very hard. If you have a sentence at least you know when you can go home, but admin detainees never know if their time in prison will be renewed. And don't know what they are accused of. The Israeli intelligence often wait till they are at the end of their sentence and looking forward to going home and then renew their period of detention – part of killing their spirit. Both of them are fathers and don't know when they will see their families.

SENTENCED PRISONERS – and those waiting for a sentence. Since Corona, military courts are still working but it isn't possible for prisoners to go to the court or to meet their lawyers before they go to court on their behalf. Note that lawyers' main job in the system that exists is plea bargaining, not to argue innocence/ guilt, but in any case prisoners want the opportunity to go to court – where they often can glimpse their family – and they can have the right to speak, even if no one is listening.

FINANCIAL DIFFICULTIES of prisoners' families. The Israelis attach high bills to sentences ('six months and 500 shekels' say) which has to be met by families. Families also have to send money in for prisoners' food, clothes, medication etc. This is a real problem for them.

LONG SENTENCES Samir Abu Ne'meh arrested 1986 so has spent 34 years inside jail. During this time he has lost most of his family members and the only remaining possible visitor lives in the US so for years he has not had any visitors. Ibrahim Ayyad has been in jail since 1997 with a very long sentence. He lost his mother and father while he is inside. He has no wife or family and although he has a brother, he is an ex-prisoner and Israel will not let him visit – so Ibrahim also has no visitors.



DAILY LIFE OF PRISONERS Nothing is normal. Even sleep is disturbed every 3 hours as army knock at the door. During the day repeated disturbance by soldiers who come in to count every 4 hours. Poor quality of food and often not enough. Communication with families extremely difficult. One of the rights won in the last prisoners' hunger strike was the right to have telephones but in many jails this has not yet happened.

MOVING AROUND – Abu Dis prisoners are in many prisons including the Negev, Ofer, Askalan, Megiddo, Ramleh. Very often people are moved from one place to another – Sometimes they are taken to court (before Corona) and they are at a new prison for three days. They are taken blindfolded and taken in a very uncomfortable metal vehicle called a 'boster.'

VISITS are rare and very difficult for their families – The people allowed to go from Abu Dis have to go to Bethlehem very early in the morning and from there to Tarkoumia checkpoint near Hebron so they can enter '1948' where they will be moved to a military bus before going on to the jail. Meanwhile a prisoner expecting a visit is woken at 5am

and has his hands and feet tied and is put in a special cell, where he will spend the whole long day till all visits are over – in the middle he will see his visitors.

We need to work and hope that all the prisoners will be released soon.

My son Mohammed

Notes on talk by Eman Salah

My son was first arrested when he was 17 in 2003. He was in prison for 14 months. He was released in 2005 and re-arrested in 2007 and spent two and a half years in Israeli jail.

He was arrested in 2014 and released in 2016. He had a hard period of interrogation and was beaten on his stomach and the sides of his body. By the time he left jail, he was not feeling well. He had a problem with his stomach, his kidneys and his pancreas.

In 2017, Mohammed got married. He now has a two-year-old child.

In early April, they came to arrest him again. He was not feeling well at that time. Three days before that, he had tests in hospital because of his health problems, but the results of his tests came out after he was arrested.

They came in the night and searched the whole house. They beat him inside the house before they arrested took him away.

Then we got no news, until a lawyer called us and said that he had been taken to hospital and then they took him back to the jail. But we got no details.

JAIL VISITS. All of my sons, Haitham, Majdi, Mohammed have been arrested on different occasions. With Mohammed in particular, I have had long periods of not being allowed to visit 'for security reasons.' It is a very long and difficult process, trying to visit your child, and the same for the prisoner.

I hope Mohammed will be released soon and the same for all of our prisoners.



**Link to a
film about imprisonment**

**made by young people at the
Dar Assadaqa media camp
summer 2019**

https://l.facebook.com/l.php?u=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.youtube.com%2Fwatch%3Fv%3DyRc_KyiSGBI%26feature%3Dyoutu.be%26fbclid%3DIwAR3ZIA3IsCSdbOMWyQvHGFJ511Jx6Rckx3eCrz_jl2Rp3FyxUMEbO4sKel4&h=AT3tAH8u-j7GxTtIA8Go5hGaQ-adeiYsIDSoybaOYOLBIWZp-u9LLGjaq7Gxq8Bs4DSnoAXinrKXZeQ4JThE9oLE2oXF31tstSj3aBfljmiJg4yantvPR3167iPew3dPLYiaNgo-qLWtyQ25N48

**With thanks to all speakers, singers
and attendees on 17th April.**



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