

On International Workers' Day,

Prisoner Institutions: The occupation has arrested thousands of Palestinian workers after the seventh of October.

Among them, three have been martyred in the occupation's prisons.

1/5/2024

The Israeli occupation system has targeted Palestinian workers, as well as all segments of the Palestinian people, over many decades. Arrests and persecution have been among the occupation's prominent policies. Moreover, a significant portion of Palestinian prisoners who have struggled for the freedom of their land and people come from the working class. Over the years, the occupation has worked on developing its tools and policies to target them, depriving them of their rights, and imposing further control and surveillance on their right to work and life.

In a statement issued by the Prisoner Institutions (Prisoner Institutions :The Commission of Detainees Affairs, The Palestinian Society Prisoners' Club, Addameer Institution for Prisoner Support and Human Rights) on the occasion of International Workers' Day, which falls on the first of May every year, they affirmed that amidst the escalating aggression of the occupation and the beginning of the genocidal war against our people in Gaza over the course of about 7 months, the issue of Palestinian workers has become prominent. This is seen in light of the escalating crimes and systematic violations against them, including arrests, persecution, and torture.

Thousands of Palestinian workers from all Palestinian geographies have been subjected to mass arrests and systematic crimes, specifically after the seventh of October. This falls within the framework of the collective punishment policy that the occupation has escalated in an unprecedented manner compared to periods in Palestine marked by uprisings and broad popular waves against the Israeli occupation system.

The institutions continue in their statement, "The majority of the arrests targeting workers after the seventh of October were aimed at workers from our people in Gaza, who were present to work in the occupied territories of 1948. According to data from the Palestinian Ministry of Labor, the number of workers from Gaza who were present in the occupied territories in 1948 before the seventh of October was approximately 10,300 Palestinian workers, 3,200 of whom were released at the Karm Abu Salem crossing at the beginning of November 2023. Some of them still bore plastic tags on their wrists bearing numbers, and they were released from the detention centers where they were held. Approximately 6,441 workers were deported to the West Bank governorates, while around 1,000 workers remain missing due to the ongoing crime of enforced disappearance against Gaza detainees. The occupation refused to disclose any information about them and only announced the existence of two camps belonging to the army to detain Gaza detainees, including the "Sdeh Teiman" camp near Beersheba and the "Anatot" camp near Jerusalem. However, detention locations were not limited to these camps as some workers were detained in Ofer Prison."

The occupation has intensified its pursuit and arrest operations against workers for entering without permits into the occupied territories of 1948 to work during the past few months. This comes amidst escalating policies of systematic oppression against our people, expansion of settlements, and the confiscation of Palestinian funds. These arrest operations have been

accompanied by various forms of assault and detention under oppressive and difficult conditions.

The institutions emphasize that the occupation practices acts of abuse, torture, and deprivation against the detained workers, in addition to all retaliatory measures imposed on prisoners and detainees inside its prisons and camps. These measures include policies of starvation and continuous humiliation. Furthermore, the assaults accompanying their arrest operations have led to the martyrdom of three workers in the occupation's prisons and camps after the seventh of October. They are among 16 martyrs among the prisoners who passed away after the seventh of October: (the martyr Majid Zaqqoul from Gaza, the second martyr whose identity could not be confirmed by the institutions, also from Gaza, in addition to the martyr Abdul Rahim Amer from Qalqilya).

In light of the releases of detainees from Gaza, some of them have begun speaking to the Palestinian media about the conditions of these camps and the inhumane circumstances they have endured, reaching the level of torture. The prisoners have affirmed being held in the open air, with their hands shackled throughout their detention period, in addition to blindfolding. They have also reported the practice of starvation, thirst, and denial of medical treatment, as well as being held in unclean places that do not meet the minimum standards of human life.

One of them reported in his testimony: "While he was with 70 other workers in accommodation in the area of Rahat on 10/10/2023, the landlord evicted them. Afterwards, they were transferred to the Rahat police station and detained in an uncovered outdoor yard within the facility. They were bound hand and foot with plastic restraints, blindfolded, and kept in this state for 12 hours. During this period, the police officers continued to beat them, and police dogs were set upon them, biting their bodies. They were kept under the sun without food or drink."

Afterward, they were transferred to Ofer Prison, where they were held in a barracks measuring approximately 700 square meters, divided into two sections, with each section holding around 150 workers. The conditions in the cells were very poor, as each section contained only three portable toilets and lacked shower facilities. Both the cells and the toilets were devoid of any personal hygiene essentials such as soap or toilet paper.

The institutions present an example of visits conducted to the (Ofer) detention center, where the occupation has detained dozens of detained workers, including those arrested for entering without permits. Some of them, despite obtaining permits, were subjected to arrest, interrogation, and investigation. Additionally, some of them were transferred to administrative detention.

The visits conducted to the detention center included dozens of testimonies, some of which were from workers about torture, abuse, and severe beatings they endured during their arrest. This continued even after their transfer to the detention center, where detainees, including workers, were subjected to harsh interrogations, assaults, theft, and deprivation.

On February 11, 2024, a visit was made to the (Ofer) detention center, operated by the Israeli military administration, where the occupation was holding more than 80 detainees at the time, the majority of whom were workers. These are excerpts from testimonies conveyed to the lawyer who visited them:

The prisoners in the (Ofer) detention center, numbering 85 detainees, mostly workers arrested for working without permits, reported that the prison administration provided them with rotten and

inedible meals. At the time, the detainees returned the meals several times due to their unsuitability for consumption. Some prisoners, due to their deteriorating health and lack of food, fainted. In response, the prison administration stormed the cells, beat them, threw their blankets outside the rooms, forced them to strip completely, and left them naked in the cold. Most of them were workers at the time. These are excerpts from numerous testimonies provided by detained workers in this detention center, reflecting a high level of brutality and unprecedented violations.

The Prisoner Institutions renew their call to all international human rights organizations at various levels to open an independent international investigation in light of the continuing escalation of crimes and genocidal war against our people in Gaza. They call for action to put an end to the escalating and unprecedented crimes against prisoners in Israeli occupation prisons and to restore their rightful and necessary role in the face of the brutality of the occupation system, with the support of international forces. These forces are ignoring the entire humanitarian and human community. Every voice of the free world that rises in support of the Palestinian people's right to determine their own destiny is heard.

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