

Killing, torture, and injections of unknown substances: Intl. community must act on Israeli violations of Gaza detainees



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Israel-Palestinian Territory

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Palestinian Territory - New testimonies from Palestinian detainees released from Israeli prisons and detention centres received by Euro-Med Human Rights Monitor confirm that thousands of civilians have been subjected to inhumane and degrading treatment and severe torture as part of Israel's genocide in the Gaza Strip, ongoing since 7 October 2023.

The international community and international justice institutions must break the cycle of silence, declare firm positions, and take concrete action against the horrific torture that Palestinian civilians, both male and female, are being subjected to. This abuse has escalated to such an extent that, for the victims fortunate enough to survive, it now includes sexual violence, forced injections with unknown substances, and deliberate scarring and unique marking of their bodies. The degree of the violence should compel the international community to force Israel to stop all of its crimes against Palestinian prisoners and detainees, including the crimes of torture, inhumane treatment, and enforced disappearance, which have been committed against thousands of individuals from the Gaza Strip over the past eight months.

The Israeli army released dozens of prisoners from the Zikim area, in the northern Gaza Strip, on Tuesday 11 June. Once they were all released, the Israeli army opened fire on them and made them run walk hundreds of metres to return to their residential areas. Due to exhaustion, they arrived in deplorable condition,

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Samir Abdullah Jamal Marjan, 23, recently freed detainee,

exacerbating existing health issues that many had developed while being tortured and abused during their detention. Thirty-three of them came to be treated at the Kamal Adwan Hospital in Beit Lahia, in the north of the Gaza Strip.

A 23-year-old recently freed detainee, Samir Abdullah Jamal Marjan, testified before the Euro-Med Monitor team that he had been verbally harassed, beaten severely, and given electric shocks, as well as had rebuffed an attempt to have an unknown substance injected into his body:

“On 11 March 2024, while attempting to flee to the south, I was detained by the Israeli army at the Nabuls checkpoint, in the southwest of Gaza [City]. I was detained for two months in a detention centre across from Rafah, after which I was moved to Ashkelon Prison, where I spent another two months. In the corridors [of the prison], the other prisoners and I experienced very difficult days. We endured severe physical and psychological abuse every day, including beatings and taunts, as well as attacks by dogs, threats, and electric shocks. It was even worse in Ashkelon Prison. I was kept in solitary confinement and went without food for 12 days.

Throughout the interrogation, they used electric shocks to extract 'confessions' about Hamas and the tunnels. I was beaten when I replied that I did not know because I was a civilian, and did not know about other issues[either]. We had to endure terrible beatings and torture in addition to being questioned every 10 days. I saw people suffer from serious health declines; some even got sick there and were not given medical care, and some inmates were also given unknown injections by the army. I was beaten and subjected to electric shocks since I refused to be injected with [the unknown substance]. Torture continued throughout my detention period.

I was given electric shocks by one of the officers yesterday, for exceeding the allotted time in the toilet. The effects of that are still [visible] on my body. You would be exposed to electricity if you spent more than four minutes in the toilet, because even using the restroom has a set time. I was astonished to learn last night that I would be released, and I was unable to sleep. Then they drove us to Zikim, where they let us go and started shooting at us.”

In a separate testimony to the Euro-Med Monitor field team, Amr Abdel Fattah Al-Aklouk stated that he was a Gaza Strip resident undergoing medical treatment in Jerusalem. Since the start of the attack on the Strip, the Israeli army has arrested him three times, the most recent arrest being on 5 June. Al-Aklouk verified the death of another detainee who was tortured to death that day by the Israeli army, stating: “I met a detainee named Muhammad Al-Kahlot, who lives in Al-Faluja, [in the] north of the Gaza Strip, about five days ago. He asked me to get in touch with his family and let them know he was okay if I got out. I did not know that I would be released when I was speaking with him in the room across from us. After our conversation, he died the following day due to torture, and the army put his body in a body bag and transported it to an unknown location. There was a group of Gaza Strip prisoners in custody who were designated as 'security prisoners'. All day long, they endure oppression and random, violent beatings that cause their bodies to bleed. Muhammad was killed [through] the torture he endured at various points throughout the day.”

In a third testimony, S.A., a 65-year-old man who requested anonymity for safety reasons, described to the Euro-Med Monitor team how he was arrested from his home in the Jabalia refugee camp, subjected to torture and enforced disappearance, imprisoned in appalling conditions, and witnessed the torture of a deaf young man. He stated: “The Israeli army stormed Jabalia Camp last [month]. We chose to remain in our house in Al-Qasaib neighbourhood, behind the Jabalia Camp UNRWA clinic. The army stormed our house as their military vehicles barged into the area. They forced us all out, and took me and two of my nephews, while the rest were evacuated to the western areas. They took us somewhere we could

not quite figure out on 21 May 2024. We were blindfolded from the start and had no idea where to go or what was going on around us.

We were detained for about 20 days, but it seemed like 20 years at the time. There were abuse, beatings, and humiliation on a daily basis. As bedtime drew near, doors would start to rattle and ominous music would blast from speakers. Food is so scarce [there] that one can barely get a loaf of bread and some cheese. Using the restroom is a difficult and humiliating experience. They did not take into consideration that I was 65 years old, and I was not the oldest person there. There was someone else aged over 70 years old. We were in what appeared to be a 'barracks'. We had no idea where we were. The occupation army was busy trying to deport a large number of the people who were arriving at this site, which appeared to be a detention centre, to unknown locations.

In detention, there was a mute person. For many days, they would not stop beating and torturing him, demanding that he respond to [verbal] questions even though he was mute. From the moment of our arrest, we were handcuffed; we had to wear them even when we ate or used the restroom. On Monday night, 10 June 2024, they told us we would be released. However, before they [released us], one of the guards threatened me, saying, 'Do not complain about anything to the press, or we will come to you again.' In the Zikim area near Beit Lahia on the northwest border, one of the soldiers informed us, during our release on Tuesday afternoon, 11 June, that we had only four minutes to reach the residential areas. After that, he threatened to shoot anyone he saw. Although the terrain was difficult and there were no houses in sight, we began running in the sweltering heat."

Palestinian detainees who have been freed from Israeli custody attest to the fact that, despite knowing that the detainees are civilians, the Israeli forces are still abusing their power by torturing and treating them inhumanely. The international community's continued silence—most notably; that of the pertinent United Nations bodies—will lead to the inevitable perpetuation of this torture.

A June 12 report by the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem and in Israel, states that Palestinians from the Gaza Strip in general, and Palestinian detainees in particular, have been subjected to torture and inhumane treatment, including sexual violence; stripped in public while blindfolded; tied to chairs while kneeling or with their hands tied behind their backs; subjected to physical and

psychological abuse while being interrogated; and made to perform humiliating acts while in their underwear, like dancing barefoot while being filmed.

Karim Khan, the prosecutor for the International Criminal Court, has disregarded the grave offenses committed by Israeli security and military forces against Palestinian prisoners and detainees in the Occupied Palestinian Territory as a whole. These offenses include rape, torture, unlawful confinement, forced disappearance, inhumane treatment, and willful infliction of severe suffering by depriving prisoners and detainees of essential medical care and a fair trial. This is especially egregious in light of the numerous credible international reports and evidence released by human rights and media organisations which attest to the widespread and systematic use of torture and violence against Palestinians by Israel. Dozens of complaints have also been received regarding sexual violence—including forced nudity, in addition to verbal and physical sexual harassment—while international press reports document at least 7 cases of rape against Palestinian female and male prisoners in Israeli prisons and detention centres.

It is recommended that the International Criminal Court Prosecutor pursue an investigation into all crimes perpetrated by Israel against Palestinian prisoners and detainees, broaden its purview to encompass all individuals accountable for these offenses, and expedite the issuance of arrest warrants against each of them.

The United Nations Special Rapporteur on the issue of torture and other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment must also fulfill the role that has been assigned to her in accordance with her mandate and follow the rules of integrity and remain independent in her work. This includes conducting timely investigations and making country visits to learn the truth about the treatment of male and female detainees who are subject to grave violations and serious crimes, and submitting reports about them, rather than letting the Israeli authorities handle such matters. This will clear the path for the work of fact-finding committees and international courts in examining, probing, and holding trials regarding crimes committed by the Israeli army against Palestinians in the Gaza Strip.

The international community should exert pressure on the Israeli authorities to return the bodies of Palestinian prisoners and detainees who were killed in Israeli jails and detention facilities, as well as to release all Palestinian detainees who were arbitrarily arrested and, if they are put on trial, to ensure all fair trial procedures.

Israel must immediately cease its practice of forcibly disappearing Palestinian prisoners and detainees from the Gaza Strip; reveal all covert detention facilities; reveal the identities of all Palestinians it holds from the Gaza Strip, their whereabouts, and their fate; and assume full responsibility for their safety.

Additionally, it is recommended that an independent international inquiry committee be established with a focus on the crimes committed during Israel's current military assault on the Gaza Strip, in addition to facilitating the work of the committee already established in 2021 regarding the Occupied Palestinian Territory. This includes guaranteeing both committees' access to the Strip and initiating investigations into all crimes and violations against Palestinians there, including the circumstances surrounding the deaths of all Palestinian prisoners and detainees killed in Israeli prisons, as well as any sort of sexual violence against people of any gender.