

# *PLO chief urges immediate release of Palestinian inmates in Israeli jails amid COVID-19 outbreak*

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Ramallah, April 1 (RHC)-- Secretary General of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) Saeb Erekat has called on the international community to pressure the Tel Aviv regime to immediately release Palestinian prisoners from its jails amidst rising cases of infection with a new coronavirus in the occupied territories.

Erekat made the comments in letters addressed to UN Secretary-General António Guterres, High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet, foreign ministers of the European Union, Russia, China and Britain, Secretary-General of the Arab League Ahmed Aboul Gheit as well as Secretary-General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation Yousef bin Ahmad al-Othaimeen.

He stated that Palestinian detainees suffer from a lack of basic hygiene, and Israel's policy of deliberate medical neglect amid the COVID-19 crisis.

The senior Palestinian official warned against the arbitrary measures recently taken by Israeli authorities against Palestinian prisoners, stating that the inmates have been deprived of cleaning materials and sanitizers.

Such practices could result in a catastrophe for more than 5,000 Palestinian prisoners, especially those who are the most susceptible. This includes elderly prisoners, those suffering from chronic diseases, inmates with weak immune systems as well as minors, Erekat pointed out.

“International law and regulations, including the Fourth Geneva Convention, demand protection of prisoners' rights in times of epidemics, and the provision of appropriate medical care and special treatment for unwell prisoners. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet, urged world countries to reduce the number of their prisoners, and take all measures to release those particularly vulnerable to the virus, such as the elderly ones and those afflicted with chronic diseases,” he highlighted.

The PLO chief finally emphasized that the Israeli regime bears full legal and political responsibility for the life and health of Palestinian prisoners, calling for immediate international and humanitarian actions to save them before it is too late.

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