Over 120 Palestinian inmates infected with coronavirus inside Israeli jails

Palestinian prisoners at an Israeli detention facility in the occupied territories. (Photo: AFP)

Ramallah, November 12 (RHC)-- A Palestinian human rights group says more than a hundred Palestinian prisoners have contracted coronavirus inside Israeli-run detention centers across the occupied territories, expressing grave concern over the health condition of the inmates.

The Palestinian Prisoners' Society (PPS) said in a report that eleven Palestinian detainees had tested positive for coronavirus in the Gilboa prison in northern Israel. It added that the new infections brought to 123 the number of Palestinian inmates diagnosed with COVID-19, the disease caused by the virus.

The news came on the same day that a Palestinian prisoner suffering from laryngeal cancer passed away following a sharp deterioration in his health due to medical negligence. Qadri Abu Bakr, head of the Palestinian Commission of Detainees and Ex-Detainees Affairs, said 46-year-old Kamal Abu Wa'er died on Tuesday, condemning his death as a premeditated crime committed by the Israel Prison Service (IPS)

and holding Israeli authorities fully responsible for his loss.

Abu Bakr noted that the IPS was fully aware of the seriousness of Abu Wa'er's health condition, but it ignored numerous calls for his release. He said such a crime demonstrates the failure of the international community and relevant institutions to hold Israel accountable for its violations, warning that the world's continued silence on these practices will embolden the Tel Aviv regime to continue perpetrating crimes against Palestinians.

Meanwhile, the Gaza-based Hamas resistance movement denounced Israeli authorities over the death of the cancer-stricken prisoner. Hamas spokesman Hazem Qasem said in a statement that the death shed light on the exercise of deliberate medical negligence by the Israel Prison Service.

Qasem noted that the death of Abu Wa'er brings the number of Palestinian prisoners who had died in Israeli jails since 1967 to 226. "This means the Israeli Occupation perpetrates a calculated war crime against the (Palestinian) detainees in Israeli jails," the Hamas official said.

Qasem went on to say that the IPS deliberately violates international laws in dealing with the Palestinian prisoners and is exercising a "bullying policy" towards them. He underlined that the Palestinian nation and resistance movements will continue their unflinching support for prisoners until they obtain freedom.

Separately, a senior member of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) stated that the death of Abu Wa'er as a result of deliberate medical negligence pointed to the brutal and cruel treatment that Palestinian inmates endure in Israeli prison facilities. "The martyrdom of Abu Wa'er adds to Israel's long list of crimes and deliberate violations of international law and human rights. The absence of a system of protection and accountability and the international community's inaction vis-à-vis the practices of the Israeli apartheid regime have given the Israeli Occupation the green light to continue its crimes against our defenseless people," PLO executive committee member Hanan Ashrawi said.

Ashrawi then called on the United Nations, the UN Human Rights Council, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the World Health Organization and all international bodies to assume their moral, humanitarian, legal and political responsibilities regarding Palestinian prisoners.

More than 7,000 Palestinian prisoners are currently held in some 17 Israeli jails, with dozens of them serving multiple life sentences. Over 350 detainees, including women and minors, are under Israel's administrative detention.

The administrative detention, which is a form of imprisonment without trial or charge, allows authorities to incarcerate Palestinians for up to six months. The duration could be extended for an infinite number of times. Some prisoners have been held in administrative detention for up to 11 years.

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