

Palestinian officials warn of health issues in Israeli prisons amid COVID pandemic

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The file photo shows Palestinian prisoners at the yard of an Israeli prison. (Photo by AFP)

Ramallah, January 25 (RHC)-- Palestinian officials have expressed serious concern over the deteriorating health conditions of prisoners infected with COVID-19 in Israeli prisons. The Prisoners' Press Office said in a statement that the conditions of inmates in Section 8 of the Ramon prison are extremely worrying due to deliberate medical negligence of Israeli prison officials, the Palestinian Information Center reported.

The office said the Israeli Prison Service (IPS) prevents the provision of vitamins and medical supplies necessary for infected prisoners, adding that it deprives them of protection methods such as sterilizers, cleaning materials and masks.

The rights group further appealed to international institutions to immediately intervene to ensure the infected prisoners' access to appropriate medical treatment, adding they are isolated in tragic conditions in departments that lack the minimum health services.

The office also stated that a member of the High Command Authority for Hamas Prisoners, Muammar al-Shahrouri, has been transferred to Section 8 of Ramon prison after he was infected with the coronavirus.

The development comes as continued negligence by Israeli authorities has resulted in surge of the COVID-19 infections among Palestinians in detention centers across the occupied Palestinian territories.

On January 14, the Prisoners Information Office reported that the number of the coronavirus infections among prisoners at the Ktzi'ot Prison has reached 59. The figure brought the total number of prisoners infected with the coronavirus since the outbreak of the pandemic to 246, including sick and elderly detainees. It also warned that Section 8 of Ramon prison, which is designed to quarantine prisoners infected by the coronavirus, is no longer able to accommodate new patients. Earlier this month, Palestinian Health Minister Mai al-Kaila also warned about an imminent outbreak of the virus in Israel's densely crowded detention centers.

The number of inmates held in the Israeli Ramon prison is more than 650. Thousands of Palestinian prisoners are currently incarcerated in some 17 Israeli jails, with dozens of them serving multiple life sentences.

The regime in Tel Aviv also has an infamous "administrative detention" system, under which it imprisons Palestinians without trial or charge, with some prisoners being held in administrative detention for up to 11 years. Israel is also notorious for detaining Palestinian minors for long periods of time.

In 2020, the Israeli regime arrested 4,634 Palestinians, including 543 minors and 128 women, the Middle East Monitor, the MEM, reported on January 1st.

Citing a statement issued by institutions dealing with prisoners' rights, the MEM reported that the total number of detainees in Israeli prisons at the end of the year reached 4,400 detainees, including 40 women and 170 children, while the number of administrative detainees is estimated at 380. The number of ill prisoners reached 700, including ten cancer patients and 300 with chronic diseases, it added.

The Palestinian Prisoners' Society (PPS) has time and again expressed grave concern over the health condition of Palestinian prisoners

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