

Palestinian advocacy group says Israel fully responsible for lives of captured prisoners

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An Israeli prison guard keeps watch from a tower at Ayalon prison. (Photo by Reuters)

Ramallah, September 13 (RHC)-- A Palestinian prisoners advocacy group says Israeli authorities will be held fully accountable for inflicting any harm or endangering the lives of a number of inmates detained after they escaped from a maximum-security prison earlier this week.

In a statement released on Sunday, the Palestinian Prisoner's Society (PPS) said "concerns were mounting over the fate of the four prisoners after they were re-arrested and subjected to severe beatings."

The PPS called on to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to pay an immediate visit to the prisoners to ensure their health and safety and shield them from punitive measures taken by the occupying regime.

Israeli authorities announced they have arrested Zakaria Zubeidi, 46, Mohammad Arda, 39, Mahmoud Arda, 46, and 49-year-old Yacoub Qadri across the occupied West Bank in recent days. The PPS pointed out that "the transfer of Zubeidi to hospital was an indication of what they had been subjected to," stressing that the Israeli authorities do not rush to transfer prisoners to civilian hospitals unless they were subjected to significant harm.

Hasan Abed Rabbo, the spokesman for the Palestinian Detainees Affairs Commission, earlier in the day confirmed that Zubeidi was rushed to a medical center in Haifa for medical treatment after he sustained extreme beating by Israeli police, especially in his face. Rabbo said the only information available so far only came through Israel's internal spy agency Shin Bet.

In the predawn hours of September 6, at least six Palestinian prisoners escaped from a high-security Israeli prison. Five of them belong to the Palestinian resistance movement Islamic Jihad, coming from towns near the northern West Bank city of Jenin.

A number of human rights groups have called on the international community to prevent Israel from violating the basic rights of Palestinian prisoners. Prison authorities keep Palestinian inmates under deplorable conditions lacking proper hygienic standards. The prisoners have also been subjected to systematic torture, harassment and repression.

Human rights organizations say Israel violates all the rights and freedoms granted to prisoners by the Fourth Geneva Convention. There are reportedly more than 7,000 Palestinians held at Israeli jails. Hundreds of the inmates have been apparently incarcerated under the practice of administrative detention.

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