

Palestinian prisoners freed by Israel say they were threatened and tortured



Palestinians released by the Israeli army arrive at Al-Aqsa Hospital in Deir el-Balah, central Gaza [Ashraf Amra/Anadolu Agency]

Deir el-Balah, July 26 (RHC)-- Eight Palestinian prisoners released by the Israeli military have said they were tortured and threatened in custody. Two women and six men were released from Ofer Prison in the

occupied West Bank on Thursday. Among the prisoners, some of the men appeared to show signs of physical abuse and were grimacing in pain.

Reporting from Deir el-Balah in the central Gaza Strip, Al Jazeera's Hind Khoudary said the freed prisoners were "completely exhausted." "One of the females was unable to walk and was carried inside the emergency department on a stretcher."

The prisoners were not arrested at the same time, she said, adding that one of the men, an aid truck driver, was detained at the Karem Abu Salem (Kerem Shalom) crossing. One woman was arrested after visiting the occupied West Bank with her child.

The Palestinian Red Crescent Society said it provided first aid to the prisoners who were released in front of the Kissufim military checkpoint and transferred them to the Al-Aqsa Hospital in central Gaza.

"They all said they were tortured, they all said they were threatened. They all said they were deprived of medicine and clothes," Khoudary reported. "They were asked about Hamas members and Israeli captives in the Gaza Strip."

Israel released dozens of Palestinians it detained earlier in July, including the the director of al-Shifa Hospital, Muhammad Abu Salmiya, who said Palestinians were facing daily abuse in the prison. "Several inmates died in interrogation centres and were deprived of food and medicine," Salmiya told a news conference after his release. "Cells are broken into and prisoners are beaten."

Abu Salmiya was arrested amid claims by the Israeli military that Hamas was using al-Shifa Hospital as a base. He was freed after more than seven months in custody. The Israeli Public Broadcasting Corporation reported in early July that prisons were "full" as an increasing number of Palestinians were being arrested after the Hamas-led October 7 attack in southern Israel.

The Palestine Prisoners Society and the Detainees and Ex-Detainees Commission also said on Thursday that 9,800 Palestinians have been detained in the occupied West Bank since Israel's war on Gaza started.

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