

Human rights organizations urge UN member states to act urgently to protect Palestinian detainees



Israeli army soldiers arrest a blindfolded man in Tubas in the north of the occupied West Bank on September 11, 2024. (Photo by AFP)

United Nations, September 13 (RHC)-- Human rights organizations have called on UN member states to take urgent steps to “protect people deprived of their liberty” across the occupied Palestinian territories.

In an interagency statement, 31 human rights organizations including Save the Children, Human Rights Watch and Oxfam, have urged states to implement measures that would establish a crucial protective presence, and ensure that both children and adults detained are treated with dignity as outlined by international humanitarian and human rights law.

“This includes demanding that the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is granted immediate and unfettered access to all detainees and hostages, to the full extent required by international humanitarian law,” said the statement.

The organizations also said that Palestinian children arbitrarily arrested and detained by the Israeli military should be released “immediately and unconditionally.”

The statement highlighted that Palestinian children held by the Israeli military endure systematic abuse and mistreatment, with reports of degrading practices, including strip searches and forced imitation of animals.

In related news, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) based in Geneva has documented extensive reports of torture and ill-treatment of Palestinian detainees, including children.

“No child should ever come into contact with a military court, or any court that lacks comprehensive fair trial rights and basic safeguards. No child should ever be abducted,” the groups said.

Save the Children reports that Palestinian children held in Israeli-operated prisons are facing escalating hunger, physical mistreatment, and outbreaks of infectious diseases, with some detainees revealing experiences of sexual assault and severe beatings.

The statement also indicates that Israeli prisons have imposed severe limitations on access for human rights monitors, lawyers, and family members of detainees from the West Bank, while access for those from Gaza is nearly nonexistent.

Independently-verified reports show that nearly 70 Palestinians, many of them elderly, have been tortured to death by the Israeli regime in its prisons since October 2023 amid the genocidal war on Gaza.

On Monday, the UN Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Pramila Patten, expressed deep concern over reports of rape and other forms of sexual violence against Palestinian abductees in Israeli custody, denouncing the normalization of the acts as “unacceptable.”

“Sexual violence and sexualized torture in any form and in any context, and particularly in detention settings, is unacceptable. Such abhorrent acts not only constitute a grave violation of human rights and human dignity but they also undermine efforts towards peace and stability in the region,” the statement said.

Torture in Israel's prisons and detention centers has been widespread and systematic, including rape, sexual assault, beatings, sleep deprivation, and starvation, according to various reports.

Since October 7, 2023, Israeli forces have detained thousands of Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank, with many individuals, including an undetermined number of children, reported missing.

According to the Israeli human rights group B'Tselem, nearly 10,000 Palestinians are currently held in detention or imprisoned on what Israel categorizes as “security” grounds, with 1,761 of them from the Gaza Strip.

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