

*Four released Palestinians in
critical condition, hospitalized in
Ramallah*



This is Palestinian engineer Iyad Abed from Gaza, kidnapped during the Israeli genocide, shown before and after being freed as part of the fifth batch of the prisoner exchange deal between the resistance and Israel.

Released Palestinians report severe malnutrition and physical abuse in Israeli prisons.

Ramallah, February 16 (RHC)-- Four Palestinians released as part of a ceasefire deal are in critical condition and have been hospitalized in the occupied West Bank city of Ramallah, according to the Palestinian Red Crescent. Israel released 369 Palestinians on Saturday in exchange for three captives in Gaza.

While the Israeli captives have generally appeared in good condition throughout the ceasefire exchange since last month, many Palestinians appeared to have lost an enormous amount of weight while in custody and some were seen struggling to walk due to their poor physical condition and physical torture.

Some have described the horrors they faced while in Israeli jails, where most of them were imprisoned without any charges.

The Palestinian Prisoners' Media Office said that the condition in which the prisoners were released shows the "extent of the crimes and violations inside the prisons".

One released Palestinian, Amir Abu Radah, told Al Jazeera that he spent 18 months in Israel's Nafha desert prison, where authorities cut water and electricity. "Our condition in prison was extremely difficult, and no one could bear it. For a year and a half, we have not had any means of communication, and we were isolated from the world," he said.

Hazem Rajab, another Palestinian freed in the latest exchange, told Al Jazeera of the inhumane treatment he suffered since his arrest by Israeli forces in December 2023, two months after the war began. "The Israelis told us 'Welcome to hell'. It really was hell," Rajab recalled. "From the first day, we were beaten up badly. The beatings were brutal, tough and unbearable."

According to Al Jazeera's Nour Odeh, Palestinians spoke of beatings and mistreatment, even in the last hours before their release. "Palestinians released from Israeli captivity are in very bad shape. They speak of malnutrition, of going hungry for the past 15 months, of being deprived of even hygiene products, only being allowed to shower every 10 days," Odeh said. "Their health is clearly ailing because of those months of mistreatment."

While Abu Radah and Rajab were arrested more recently, Mohammed el-Halabi, the former head of World Vision in Gaza, was imprisoned for almost nine years before being released on Saturday. "My case was a high-profile case, and I was convicted with no evidence. They wanted to use me to undermine international assistance to Gaza," el-Halabi, who was accused by Israel of supporting Hamas, told Al Jazeera.

El-Halabi, physically weakened and losing much weight while incarcerated, said he was subjected to physical and psychological torture, which worsened after the start of the war on Gaza. "Starvation happened every day, and we only had a low-quality meal once a day. I was 95kg [209 pounds] when I went to prison. Now I weigh 45kg [100 pounds]."

Since the start of the ceasefire last month, 24 captives from Gaza and 985 Palestinian detainees have been released, according to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), which has helped facilitate the exchange.

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