

Palestinians released by Israel show signs of torture and starvation



A freed Palestinian prisoner receives medical attention after being released from an Israeli jail

Ramallah, Febuary 27 (RHC)-- Hundreds of Palestinians held in Israeli jails released in Gaza as part of the ceasefire agreement once again showed signs of emaciation and abuse.

More than 600 Palestinians were released on Thursday, shortly after Israel said Hamas handed over coffins containing the bodies of four captives. Israel has delayed the release of two Palestinian women and 44 children.

It was the final scheduled swap as part of the first phase of the ceasefire deal between Hamas and Israel.

Several Palestinians were transported in ambulances to the European Hospital in Khan Younis in southern Gaza due to the severity of their injuries. Many Palestinians were also sent to Egypt and the occupied West Bank.

Alaa al-Bayari, a Palestinian released to Gaza City, told Al Jazeera that he witnessed “torture, beating, humiliation and everything you can imagine” while in Israeli prison. He met his one-year-old daughter for the first time.

“We were kept naked, water was thrown on us and then they used electricity” to torture, he said.

Yahya Shrida, a Palestinian prisoner who was released to Ramallah, described Israeli prisons as graveyards. “We have been taken out of suffering. It was as if we have been dug out of our own graves. No prisoner has had the experience of having their own release delayed twice,” he told Reuters news agency.

“What we have been through is a situation that the mountains can’t carry. It is very hard to explain; it is very hard to talk about what we have been through.”

Al Jazeera’s Tareq Abu Azzoum, reporting from Gaza, said some Palestinians returned had their limbs cut off and others were suffering from severe injuries due to Israeli torture in detention.

“Many family members have broken down in tears after seeing their loved ones,” Abu Azzoum said, adding that those released “confirmed they have witnessed some of the worst methods of torture at the hands of the Israeli occupation forces”.

Footage shared online by Quds News Network showed family members and released Palestinians weeping after their arrival in Gaza.

One clip shows a family member mourning the emaciated condition of his released relative, saying: “Look at the difference, oh my God!”

At one reunion in the West Bank city of Jenin, footage showed freed prisoner Louay Saabneh meeting his son Jabal for the first time after several years of incarceration. Earlier, Hamas handed over the bodies of four captives to Israel via the Red Cross.

In a statement, the Palestinian group renewed its “full commitment” to the ceasefire agreement and its readiness to enter negotiations on the second phase.

It also said attempts by the Israeli authorities to obstruct the release of prisoners have “failed,” adding that this means they have “no choice” but to begin negotiations for the second phase of the ceasefire deal.

The group also called on other countries to “stop their double standards” in their discourse regarding Israeli captives while not mentioning the abuse that Palestinian prisoners are subjected to.

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