

Israel deliberately neglecting Palestinian prisoners amid coronavirus pandemic



Ramallah, March 31 (RHC)-- Israel is intentionally neglecting Palestinian prisoners and denying them minimum health rights amid the coronavirus pandemic, a Palestinian prisoner rights advocacy group says.

Tel Aviv has never cared about the health and lives of Palestinian prisoners before or after the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic, said spokesman for Asra Media Office, Ali al-Maghrabi, in an interview with the Palestine information Center on Sunday. He warned that arbitrary policies used in Israeli jails "are jeopardizing the lives of prisoners."

"To date, the occupation authority has not taken the necessary precautions to protect more than 5,500 Palestinian prisoners in its jails, including women, the elderly, children and sick prisoners," Maghrabi added. He also called on local, Arab and international human rights groups and institutions to press the regime to put an end to its "indifference and irresponsible attitude" toward Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails.

The COVID-19 disease, caused by a new coronavirus, jumped from wildlife to people in the Chinese city of Wuhan late last year and is currently affecting 199 countries and territories across the globe. It has so

far affected more than 700,000 people and killed over 33,000.

Last week, the Palestinian foreign ministry called on the Israeli regime to immediately release more than 5,000 Palestinian prisoners from its jails amidst rising cases of coronavirus infection. The ministry said the Israeli Prisons Service (IPS) is not providing proper health protection to Palestinian prisoners, indicating that Israeli authorities have no intention to ease the apartheid and make sure that Palestinians are able to face the epidemic under better conditions.

The Arab League has demanded the immediate release of Palestinian prisoners from Israeli jails amid the outbreak of the novel coronavirus virus in the occupied territories. The Arab League has appealed to international human rights organizations and other relevant bodies to secure the release of several thousand Palestinian prisoners, including hundreds of elderly inmates with health issues, 180 juveniles and 43 women, from Israeli detention centers amid the coronavirus outbreak.

As of Sunday, the infectious disease has affected 106 Palestinians and killed one, according to figures by Palestine's health ministry. Nine of the infected people are in Gaza Strip and the rest in the occupied West Bank.

The Israeli regime's figures also show that as of Sunday, 3,865 Israelis have tested positive for the disease, which has killed 14 others so far.

Palestinian and Arab activists have launched a media campaign to save the Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails from the danger of COVID-19, the Palestine Information Center reported on Sunday. The campaigners will use local radio stations and Twitter hashtags to support the Palestinian inmates and demand their release to protect them against the further spread of the new coronavirus.

They said their campaign was aimed at drawing the attention of the world community to Israel's intentional neglect of prisoners' health condition. The campaigners also plan to send letters to human rights institutions, governments, parliaments and political parties across the world to urge them to pressure Tel Aviv to release the Palestinian prisoners, particularly those with health issues, the elderly, children and women.

They will appeal to those entities to work on sending medical commissions periodically to Israeli jails and help improve the incarceration conditions. The report added that 62 official and private institutions from around the world, including societies, unions and media outlets have participated in the campaign so far.

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