

Israeli forces arrest more relatives after Palestinian jailbreak

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An Israeli force is seen on a guard tower in Gilboa Prison, a high-security facility in northern Israel. (Photo by Jpost.com)

Tel Aviv, September 10 (RHC)-- Israeli forces in the occupied West Bank have arrested more relatives of the six Palestinians that recently managed to escape from the regime's highly-fortified Gilboa prison.

Local sources and Palestine Prisoner's Society were cited by the official Wafa news agency as saying on Friday that two brothers and a sister of suspected mastermind Mahmud Ardah had been detained near the city of Jenin in the northern West Bank.

"While in the town, the Israeli soldiers ransacked many houses belonging to the close relatives of Mahmoud Ardah, one of the six escapees, turning them topsy-turvy, and detained Ardah's sister, Bassema, and brothers, Raed and Muhammad," Wafa said.

"The soldiers also barged their way into Bir al-Basha village, where they re-arrested two cousins of Yaqoub Mahmoud Qadri, 49, one of the six escapees," it added. Other relatives of the six Palestinian escapees, all from the Jenin area, were arrested on Wednesday and are currently in detention, with a massive manhunt by the regime's forces being underway in the occupied territories.

Six Palestinian prisoners have successfully escaped a high-security Israeli prison through digging a tunnel! The very fact that six Palestinian captives have been able to escape a "high-security" Israeli prison using their rusty spoons has put the credibility of the Israeli army under serious questions.

In the early hours of Monday, Zakaria Zubeidi, a former commander of the Palestinian resistance group al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigade in Jenin, and five members of the Islamic Jihad group managed to tunnel their way out through their cell's drainage system to escape from the maximum-security jail Gilboa.

It was the biggest Palestinian escape from an Israeli jail since 1987, when six members of the Islamic Jihad broke out of a heavily-guarded jail in Gaza. After the recent escape of the six inmates, Israel adopted collective punitive measures against the Palestinian prisoners.

The punitive measures include moving tens of detainees to solitary confinements, preventing inmates from going to the prison yard, banning prisoners from meeting their families, and closing the canteens.

Tel Aviv has also decided to relocate inmates in Gilboa following the jailbreak, with Palestinian resistance factions having declared Friday a day of rage to protest the Israeli decision.

Palestinian prisoners have been subjected to systematic torture, harassment, and repression all through the years of Israel's occupation of their territories. The Israeli Prison Service (IPS) keeps Palestinian prisoners in deplorable conditions lacking proper hygienic standards.

More than 7,000 Palestinian prisoners are currently held in some 17 Israeli jails, with dozens of them serving multiple life sentences. Israeli forces have arrested more than 17,000 minors since 2000.

Nabil Abu Rudeineh, spokesman for Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, said on Friday that the Palestinian prisoners in Israeli detention are a red line, and that there will be no peace or stability without their release. Abu Rudeineh also affirmed that all Israeli settlements are illegal and in violation of international resolutions and laws related to the Palestinian issue.

"The Israeli policy of imposing a fait accompli that the occupation government is trying to impose on our Palestinian people is doomed to failure," and that "there will be no legitimacy for any Israeli settlement established on Palestinian land," he said.

"Peace and stability require adherence to the resolutions of international legitimacy and the establishment of an independent Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital," the spokesman added.

"Israel's continued violation of Palestinian rights and defiance of international legitimacy will not lead to any peace, but rather will contribute to the continuation of tension and instability in the region."

More than 600,000 Israelis live in over 230 settlements built since the 1967 Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories of the West Bank and East al-Quds.

All Israeli settlements are illegal under international law as they are built on occupied land. The UN Security Council has condemned Israel's settlement activities in the occupied territories in several resolutions.

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