

Scores of Palestinian inmates to go on hunger strike in solidarity with two hunger strikers

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Palestinians demonstrate in favor of liberation of 40-year-old prisoner Khalil Awawda in the Gaza Strip. (File photo)

Ramallah, July 24 (RHC)-- As many as 75 Palestinian inmates are to go on hunger strike in support of two of their fellow prisoners, who have been on hunger strike for several weeks in protest at Israel's policy of so-called administrative detention.

The official Palestinian Wafa news agency reported the development on Saturday, saying the prisoners were to go on an open-ended hunger strike in solidarity with the duo, identified as Khalil Awawda and Raed Rayyan.

Awawdeh, 40, and Rayan, 28, have been on hunger strike in protest at their administrative detention. As many as 682 Palestinian prisoners are currently being held under the administrative detention policy, through which the Israeli regime keeps the detainees without charge for up to six months; a period which can be extended indefinitely.

The detention takes place on the orders of a military commander and on the basis of what the Israeli regime describes as “secret” evidence. Some prisoners have been held in administrative detention for up to 11 years.

Hasan Abed Rabbo, the spokesman for the Palestinian Authority’s Prisoners Affairs Commission, told Wafa that Rayyan had been on hunger strike for 108 days.

Awawda initially staged a 111-day hunger strike, which he suspended in light of an Israel promise to release him, Rabbo added, saying he resumed the protest action 22 days ago when Israel's prison officials reneged on their promise to let him go.

According to the Palestinian Prisoner Society (PPS), another group of prisoners from Islamic Jihad and the Popular Front will join the solidarity hunger strike on Sunday, July 24.

The prisoners decided to stage this mass hunger strike after all the attempts to demand the release of Awawdeh and Rayan failed. PPS says the health conditions of Awawdeh and Rayan reached critical stages as a result of their prolonged hunger strike.

Israel has issued more than 54,000 administrative detention orders against Palestinian activists since 1967, when it occupied the Palestinian territory of the West Bank during a heavily Western-backed war, the agency reported.

There are reportedly more than 7,000 Palestinians held in Israeli jails. Human rights organizations say the Israeli regime violates all the rights and freedoms that are granted to incarcerated persons by the Geneva Convention on the treatment of prisoners of war.

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