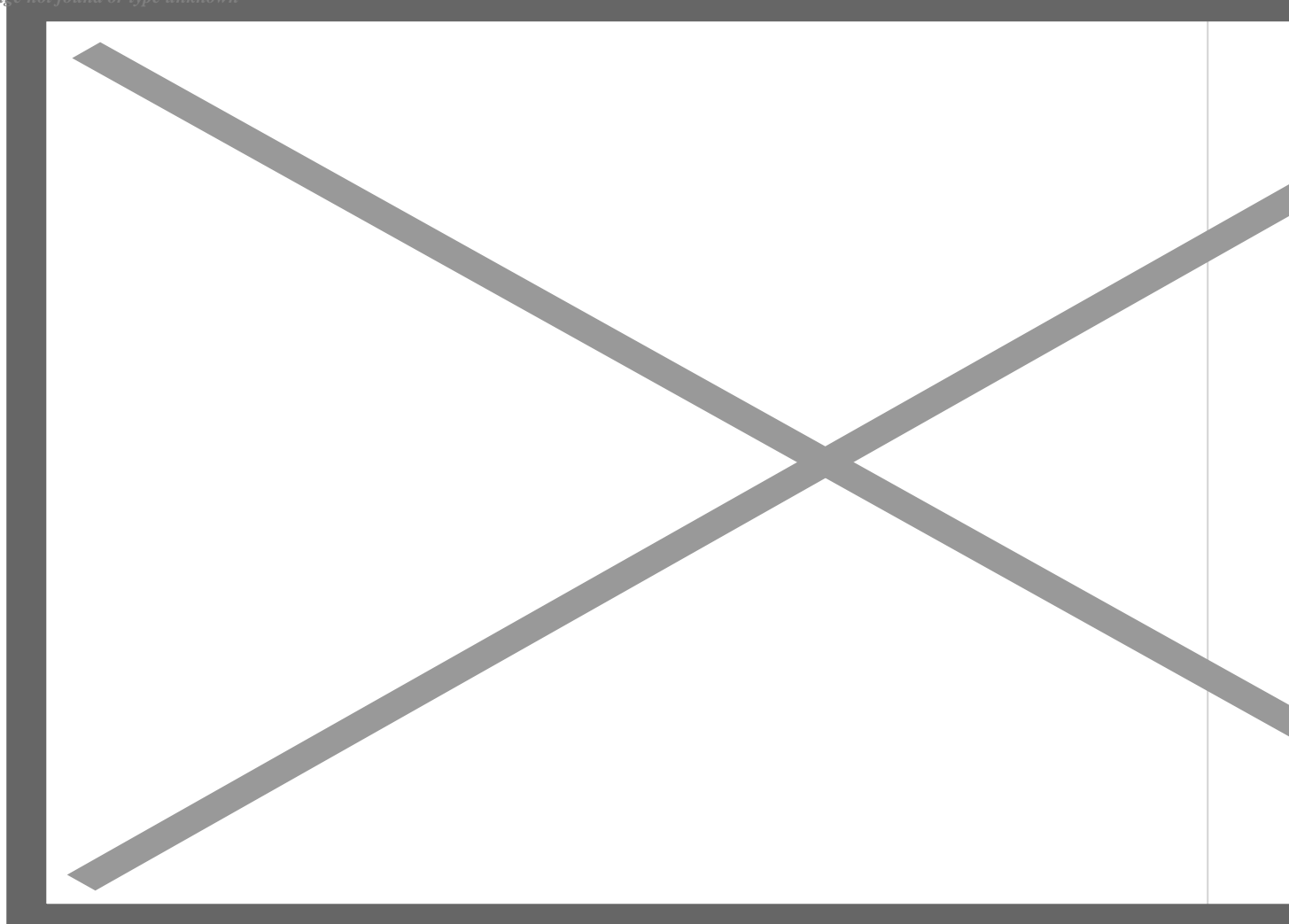


Israel releases longest-serving Palestinian prisoner after 40 years in jail

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Palestine's official Wafa news agency reported.

Ramallah, January 7 (RHC)-- Israel has released one of its longest-serving Palestinian prisoners, who spend almost 40 years in the regime's jails. Karim Younis, an official from the Palestinian Fatah resistance movement, was freed after being detained in 1983 for his resistance against the occupying regime, Palestine's official Wafa news agency reported.

The 66-year-old inmate was initially sentenced to life in prison, but the sentence was later reduced to 40 years. Younis was supposed to have been freed in 2014 as part of a deal negotiated by then-U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry. Under the agreement, Israel was supposed to free four different batches of Palestinian prisoners held in Israeli jails since before the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993.

Israel released Palestinian prisoners from the first three batches, who were mainly from the occupied West Bank and the besieged Gaza Strip, but it refused to free the fourth batch that Younis was in along with 24 other inmates. His cousin Maher Younis, who has also been in Israeli prisons since 1983, is still incarcerated.

Meanwhile, Palestinian Prime Minister Mohammad Shtayyeh congratulated Younis on his release, saying all Palestinian prisoners in the Israeli detention centers will eventually obtain their freedom. He also called on international human rights organizations to intervene to release all Palestinian prisoners, especially female inmates, children and the sick among them.

Dozens of the Palestinian detainees were released in a prisoner swap deal between the Israeli regime and the Palestinian resistance movement Hamas in October 2011. Most of the released prisoners were re-arrested in 2014 and their sentences were reinstated.

There are reportedly more than 7,000 Palestinians held in Israeli jails. Hundreds of the inmates have been incarcerated under the practice of "administrative detention." Some prisoners have been held without a charge for up to 11 years.

Palestinians and human rights groups say the detention policy violates the right to due process since the evidence is withheld from prisoners while they are held for lengthy periods without being charged, tried, or convicted.

The detention takes place on orders from a military commander and on the basis of what the Israeli regime describes as secret evidence. Human rights organizations have condemned the so-called administrative detention as a "cruel, unjust practice" which helps maintain "Israel's system of apartheid" against Palestinians.

Palestinian detainees have continuously resorted to open-ended hunger strikes in an attempt to express outrage at the detentions. Israeli jail authorities keep Palestinian prisoners under deplorable conditions without proper hygienic standards. Palestinian inmates have also been subject to systematic torture, harassment, and repression.

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