

200 Palestinian abductees released in exchange for four Israeli soldiers

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A Palestinian prisoner released by Israel gestures as he is surrounded by people in Ramallah in the occupied West Bank on January 25, 2025. (Photo> AFP)

Ramallah, January 26 (RHC)-- Israel says it has released 200 Palestinian abductees, including senior members of Hamas, in exchange for four captives released by the resistance group as part of the Gaza ceasefire deal on Saturday.

Busses carrying the freed Palestinians, some serving life sentences, have been received by cheering crowds in Ramallah. The freed prisoners, still wearing gray uniforms, were being held aloft on the shoulders of the crowd. "It's an indescribable feeling," said a freed prisoner.

The Palestinian Prisoners Club advocacy group confirmed that among those freed is Mohammed al-Tous, 69, who has spent almost four decades in the regime's detention.

Among those released today was also Raed al-Saadi, the oldest prisoner in Jenin, who had been behind bars for 36 years, according to the Palestinian Prisoners Club.

Roughly 70 prisoners are being sent to exile by Israel. They have now arrived aboard buses in Egypt and will be transferred to Egyptian hospitals for treatment.

They "will choose Algeria, Turkey or Tunisia" to reside, said Amin Shuman, head of the Palestinian prisoners' affairs committee.

The exchange, the second since the truce took effect on January 19, comes after Hamas released four female Israeli detainees earlier on Saturday. The International Committee of the Red Cross confirmed that the second phase of the prisoner exchange was now completed.

"We have completed the second phase of the captive and detainee release operations to reunite more families," it said in a statement. "We have helped release 128 Palestinian detainees and they have been transferred to Gaza and the West Bank."

It also said that the four female Israeli soldiers were safely handed over to the Israeli authorities. In a short statement, Hamas later said the Israeli regime was stalling "in implementing the terms of the ceasefire and prisoner exchange agreement by continuing to close Rashid Street and preventing the return of displaced people on foot from the south to the north."

"We hold the occupation fully responsible for any delays in the implementation of the agreement and the consequences this may have on subsequent stages," it added.

Israel has released a list of more than 700 Palestinian prisoners, who are to be released under the deal. More than 230 prisoners are serving life sentences and will be permanently sent to exile upon their release.

Hamas said in a statement on Saturday that Israel was forced to "open the doors of his cells to our heroic prisoners," after more than 14 months of "unprecedented brutal aggression that targeted every inch of Gaza in its barbarity."

[SOURCE: PRESS TV and AFP NEWS AGENCY]

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