



FACTSHEET

SADAKA



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PALESTINIAN WOMEN POLITICAL PRISONERS

- Palestinian women have not escaped the mass arrest campaigns. Palestinian women in detention are subjected to mistreatment on a daily basis and are often held in cells and sections with Israeli criminal prisoners. Regular body searches are performed with brutality by prison guards; sexual harassment occurs frequently; the right to elect a representative for their collective demands is not recognised as in other prisons; solitary confinement is often used as a form of punishment; detainees are prohibited from going outside regularly or of using the canteen; cell searches and confiscation of personal belongings is a common practice; and attacks on women by beating or firing tear gas into cells occur regularly.
- At the end of 2004, there were over 120 Palestinian women being held by Israeli authorities. The number has steadily increased since 2000 making this the largest number of female detainees held by Israel in two-decades. Female prisoners are placed in 2 central prisons, Neve Tresta and Hasharon-Telmond.
- **17 of these women are mothers**, two women, Mervat Taha and Manal Ghanem, gave birth while in detention and Manal continues to live with her child, Nour, inside the prison. Mervat was recently released with her son, Wa'el, now 2 years old has lived his entire life inside the prison. There are currently eight girls (under age 18) inside Israeli jails in addition to a number of women who have turned 18 while they were imprisoned. Israel detains children as young as 12 years old, in blatant contravention of the internationally accepted designation of any individual under the age of 18 as a child. Israeli military regulations stipulate that a child is anyone under the age of 16, whilst Israeli law stipulates this age to be under 18.
- Many Palestinian women prisoners are transferred to Neve Tertza Prison, one of six sections of Ramleh Prison after their interrogation process. Here **Palestinian female detainees remain detained within the same section as Israeli criminal female prisoners** accused of crimes such as murder, theft, drug use, and prostitution. Mixing Palestinian prisoners with Israeli criminal prisoners has created a great deal of tension within the prison, particularly as political prisoners should be separated from other categories of prisoners.
- **The prison administration continues to humiliate Palestinian female prisoners** by forcing them to strip in front of prison guards while their hands are cuffed, and then to dress before these same guards. The administration conducts regular searches of prison cells, confiscating personal property and papers.
- **The prison administration has diligently worked at breaking the unity of the female detainees** by isolating them from the outside world and preventing family visits. Correspondence to and from the prison is also prohibited, and newspapers are allowed in the prison but are delayed by a few days. Visits amongst other prisoners are prevented and daily breaks have been reduced to half an hour. Palestinian women prisoners at Neve Tertza Prison reported that their conditions of detention were extremely difficult, with no glass protecting windows in the cells and insects and vermin found throughout the prison. Because of the prevention of family visits, prisoners do not have adequate winter clothing or extra food to supplement the small food portions they receive in prison.

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- **Some Palestinian female prisoners have been arrested as a means of placing pressure on their husbands.** Asma' Abu el-Hayja, for example, who is 40 years old and is suffering from brain cancer, is being held in an administrative detention in order to pressure her husband who is also under detention. Mrs. Ablaa' Saadat was arrested on 21 January 2003 as she travelled as a Palestinian representative to the World Social Forum in Brazil. Saadat is the wife of the General Secretary of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP). She was given four months administrative detention following her arrest. She was told by an interrogator that her arrest was merely a demonstration that 'they' can do whatever they want. She was also told that if her husband had 'blood on his hands' they would kill her children.

Source: www.addameer.org