

# Colonial carcerality and systematic torture: An analysis of Israeli detention practices post-October 7th, 2023

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## Abstract

**Introduction:** This paper examines Israeli detention practices since 7 October 2023 as a system of colonial carcerality that normalises torture and ill-treatment, benchmarking findings against the Nelson Mandela Rules, the Geneva Conventions, CAT, and the ICCPR. **Materials and methods:** We analysed 917 testimonies gathered by Addameer (Prisoner Support and Human Rights Association) through lawyers' prison visits and post-release interviews (7 Oct 2023–30 Jun 2025) from Sde Teiman, Ofer, Damon, Naqab, Megiddo, and other sites. Testimonies were thematically coded (techniques, frequency/severity, setting, health sequelae) and mapped to applicable international and Israeli law; descriptive counts tracked change over time. **Results:** We present the results according to types of abuse: starvation and deliberate food deprivation, extreme overcrowding, prolonged solitary confinement, sexual violence/forced stripping, systematic medical neglect, pervasive shackling/blindfolding and denial of hygiene. Intensification coincided with the expansion of camp-like facilities and emergency amendments to the Law on the Incarceration of Unlawful Combatants (prolonged incommunicado detention and delayed judicial review). Reported torture/ill-treatment rose across periods: late-2023 73/91 testimonies; 2024: 500/628 (including 343 from Gaza); Jan–Jun 2025: 184/198. Health impacts included acute injuries, infections, malnutrition, and sustained psychological harm. **Discussion:** Convergent qualitative and legal evidence indicates an integrated policy rather than isolated violations, which contravenes binding norms on humane treatment, medical care, food, water, and protection from torture. We recommend: (1) independent monitoring with unimpeded access; (2) suspension of measures enabling incommunicado detention; (3) immediate compliance with minimum standards of care and nutrition; and (4) criminal accountability for torture and ill-treatment.

**Keywords:** Palestine, Torture, Detention

<sup>a</sup> To protect the authors from potential retaliation, this article is published under fictitious names. Their legal identities and affiliations are securely held by the editorial office, which has verified authorship and disclosures. The use of pseudonyms does not affect the integrity, provenance, or accountability of the research and the peer-review process.

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## Introduction

Since the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 on occupied Palestinian territory, Israeli authorities have systematically used detention camps as instruments of political repression, social control, and collective punishment against thousands of Palestinians, including men, women, and children, in tandem with large-scale displacement operations and the coercive exploitation of Palestinian labour. Between 1948 and 1950, approximately 8,300 Palestinians were confined in purpose-built facilities such as Camp 101 in Jerusalem<sup>1</sup>, Ijlil Camp no. 791 in the depopulated village of Ijlil, Atlit Camp no. 792, and Sarafand Camp no. 793<sup>2</sup>, also known as a “forced labour camp”, where detainees endured harsh working conditions, deprivation of fundamental rights, and systematic abuse that combined physical, psychological, and social coercion. In the decades that followed, the model of detention camps evolved into a multi-tiered network of incarceration facilities encompassing central prisons under the management of the Israeli Prison Service (IPS)<sup>3</sup>, army-run camps, and specialised interrogation and detention centres, generally controlled by the Israeli military intelligence and security services (including Shin Bet<sup>4</sup>), depending on the detainee profile and operational purpose. The IPS, as the principal administrative authority over prisons, has a documented history of routine torture, ill-treatment, and other forms of cruel and inhumane practices, reflecting a structural and normalised approach to prisoner abuse that has persisted over decades.

While these practices were long-standing, October 7, 2023, marked a pronounced escalation<sup>5</sup>: Israeli authorities rapidly expanded the detention infrastructure, converting more than a dozen prison facilities, both military and civilian, into a network of camps—including Sde Teiman<sup>6</sup>, Ofer<sup>7</sup>, Naftali, and Anatot camps<sup>8</sup>—, targeted specifically at Palestinians from Gaza as well as individuals from the 1948 occupied territories, including workers who had entered Israel legally prior to October 7th<sup>9</sup>. Arrests extended beyond initial categories, encompassing civilians of all ages, including children, elderly individuals, and those with health vulnerabilities, apprehended during ongoing military operations that persisted throughout 2024 and into 2025<sup>10</sup>.

The aftermath of October 7<sup>th</sup> in Israeli prisons has witnessed a serious worsening of detention’s conditions, with prisoners facing – just to mention a few - starvation, ill-treatment, constant humiliation, lack of personal hygiene supplies, denial of medical care, sexual harassment, rape. The prisoners in these detention centres face continuous violations of their rights without any accountability or oversight of the conditions of these detention centres or those in charge of them.

The arbitrary transfer policy implemented by the Israeli government had worsened with the unfolding of the genocide in Gaza, aiming at destroying any state of stability and cohesion that the detainees may reach in prisons, as well as aborting any efforts made by the prisoners’ movement to protest their extremely harsh living conditions. Prisoners are frequently moved from a detention centre to another, without being informed of the reasons behind the transfer or of the final location of detention, at the same time facing offensive and abusive procedures while being transferred<sup>11</sup>.

Moreover, since October 7<sup>th</sup>, Israeli authorities have extensively and intensively invoked the Incarceration of Unlawful Combatant Law of 2002 to detain residents from Gaza and, have amended the law through emergency orders, to further extend their power of detention and limit detainees’ rights, including an extension of the maximum length of administrative detention and a ban on the right to legal consultation leading to the abuse of emergency regulations, a legislation of *incommunicado* detention, the enabling of enforced disappearance and arbitrary detention which itself turns into the enabling of torture and abusive or ill treatment by Israeli forces against detainees from Gaza<sup>12</sup>. The law does not stipulate a maximum time for detention and allows indefinite detention under indefinite orders. Up until its withdrawal from the Gaza Strip in 2005, Israeli authorities have used this law to unlawfully detain “until further notice” people from the Gaza Strip, whom it deems a national security threat. The regulation was invoked after October 7<sup>th</sup> to hold alleged participants in the October 7<sup>th</sup> attack. Still, it was quickly amended to expand its scope and allow the unlawful detention of Gaza residents, en masse and without trial. On December 18<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Israeli authorities issued an amendment to the Unlawful Combatant Law, expanding the scope of the people authorised to issue arrest warrants, and increasing the delay to issue a detention order to 45 days, the period for legal review of the decision from 14 days to 75 days, and the prohibition for detainees to see a lawyer for up to 180 days. As the latest amendment to the Unlawful Combatant Law states, the current delays are 30 days for issuing a detention order, 45 days for legal review, and a prohibition on seeing a lawyer for up to 75 days.

Addameer (Prisoner Support and Human Rights Association) has published multiple reports on the worsening of the conditions of Palestinian detainees confined in Israeli jails after October 7<sup>th</sup><sup>13</sup>. The object of this review is to synthesise the work that Addameer conducted through its lawyers in Israeli prisons since the start of the Israeli military operations in Gaza, in order to expose the continuous and sustained violations Palestinian prisoners face, without those responsible ever be-

ing held accountable despite the overwhelming evidences and probes.

### Materials and methods

Due to the obstruction of preventive monitoring mechanisms by the Israeli military authorities administering detention centres, independent oversight remains severely limited. Unannounced visits by competent international or local monitoring bodies are systematically denied<sup>14</sup>. These visits are vital to documenting detention conditions and preventing torture, ill-treatment and other inhumane or degrading behaviours towards prisoners. In the absence of such access, this study relies on secondary sources and primary data collected through legal visits and post-release interviews. The data presented in this paper were collected by Addameer between October 7, 2023 and June 30, 2025. The information is based on a total of 917 testimonies from current and former detainees across various Israeli detention facilities, including Sde Teiman detention camp, Ofer camp, Damon prison, Naqab (Kzi'ot) prison, and Megiddo prison. From October to December 2023, 91 testimonies were collected: 73 individuals reported torture or ill-treatment. In 2024, 628 testimonies were collected, including those from 343 detainees from the Gaza Strip: 500 of these individuals reported torture or ill-treatment. From January to June 2025, 198 testimonies were gathered, including the ones from 130 detainees from Gaza: 184 individuals reported torture or ill-treatment.

Testimonies were collected both through interviews conducted by Addameer-affiliated lawyers during prison visits, in accordance with Israeli legal procedures, and through in-depth interviews with released detainees, conducted post-detention in secure environments. Interviews were semi-structured and conducted in Arabic. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and identities were anonymised to protect the safety of those involved.

Although the sample is not statistically representative of the entire population of detainees held during this period, it reflects a wide geographic and demographic spread, including detainees from different Palestinian regions, particularly the Gaza Strip, which has faced mass detentions since October 2023. The consistency of reported patterns across different facilities and over time, as well as the high proportion of detainees reporting similar abuses, suggests that these accounts are indicative of broader systemic practices.

All testimonies were transcribed and analysed thematically using qualitative data analysis. Themes included: methods of torture, duration of detention, access to legal counsel, medical care, hygiene, food, and sexual violence. Cases were cross-

checked, when possible, especially when multiple detainees reported the same incidents or were held in the same facility. Testimonies from inside detention and post-release interviews, combined with a thematic analysis of abuses, provide a credible basis for concluding that the practices documented amount to systematic violations, including acts of torture, under international law.

### Results

#### Starvation

Since October 7<sup>th</sup>, Israeli Prison Service forces have conducted repeated raids across all prisons, implementing a policy of starvation and food deprivation<sup>15</sup>. This policy includes providing meals with caloric values below the minimum required for sustenance and, in many cases, entirely or partially restricting access to food. Reports indicate the confiscation of all personal food items from prison sections and the closure of canteens, leaving prisoners entirely dependent on the inadequate provisions supplied by the prison Service.

Testimonies collected by human rights organisations from various Israeli prisons since October 7<sup>th</sup> consistently describe the food as extremely poor in both quality and quantity. Prisoner Walid Hanatsha recounted: *"Each prisoner had half a cup of boiled rice, and the food was brought in one plate with plastic spoons. The prisoners have apparently lost 25-30% of their weight since the beginning of the events"*. A minor, identified as M. H., confirmed that the same policy applies in juvenile sections, stating: *"We do not know the meaning of having a full stomach"*.

Although prison nutrition standards are regulated by both domestic policies and international law<sup>16</sup>, few comprehensive legal frameworks ensure adequate food provision in practice. According to Israeli Prison Service regulations, prisoners are entitled to receive three meals per day. However, food has long been weaponised as a punitive method. The current deprivation reflects a longstanding, systemic policy of mistreatment that predates October 7<sup>th</sup>, despite the Prison Service's capacity to provide sufficient nutrition<sup>17</sup>.

The manipulation of food and water quantities as tools of punishment or retaliation is a clear violation of human rights. These actions stand in direct contravention of international law and constitute cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment. The United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (also known as the Nelson Mandela Rules) explic-

b Lawyer interview with prisoner W. H. in Megiddo Prison on 12 December 2023.

c Lawyer interview with prisoner M. H. in Ofer Prison on 11 December 2023.

itly prohibit such practices<sup>18</sup>. Rule 22 stipulates: *“Every prisoner shall be provided by the prison administration at the usual hours with food of nutritional value adequate for health and strength, of wholesome quality and well prepared and served”*. Rule 43 further forbids the use of food or water deprivation as a disciplinary measure.

These violations extend beyond prisons into Israeli military detention camps. Interviews conducted by lawyers reveal that detainees are routinely provided with grossly insufficient food, often spoiled or undercooked. In Ofer Camp, cooked meals were introduced only months into the detention. Prior to that, prisoners survived primarily on two to four slices of bread per day, with sparse additions such as cheese, chocolate, or jam. Basic eating utensils are routinely denied, forcing detainees to eat with their bare hands<sup>19</sup>.

The available diet is dangerously high in sugar and severely deficient in protein, healthy fats, and essential nutrients. This imbalance compromises the immune system<sup>20</sup> and leads to the deterioration of muscles, bones, and blood health<sup>21</sup>. In the absence of adequate protein, the body begins consuming its own muscle tissue for energy, resulting in dramatic weight loss<sup>22</sup>, as reported by multiple prisoners. Furthermore, the complete lack of dental hygiene supplies—such as toothbrushes and toothpaste—combined with a sugar-heavy diet has resulted in a widespread outbreak of dental diseases within the camps<sup>23</sup>.

#### *Overcrowding policy*

In 2017, the Israeli Supreme Court ruled that each prisoner must be provided with at least 4.5 square meters of personal space. However, the Israeli Prison Service has only partially implemented this ruling<sup>24</sup>.

In 2023, the Israeli Prison Service began violating the court’s judgment, particularly in Gilboa Prison, by adding another prisoner to each cell, thereby reducing the personal space allocated to prisoners, contrary to both the Israeli court decision and international conventions. This was confirmed by prisoner Nidal Mishal, who, in an interview conducted on August 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2023, stated: *“The prison administration informed us yesterday that there would be an additional prisoner in each room, even though there are already five prisoners in each room and should be only four. They told us that they would increase the number of beds in each room to reach six”*.

The issue of overcrowding is not confined to Gilboa Prison. It spread throughout all Israeli prisons after October 7<sup>th</sup>, following mass arrests carried out by Israeli occupation forces, which escalated in an unprecedented manner after October 7<sup>th</sup><sup>25</sup>. Despite this surge of detainees, Israeli prisons are unable to accommodate the influx due to deteriorating infrastructure.

The Prison Service holds approximately 12 to 14 prisoners in rooms that are designed for a maximum of four or six. Prisoner Adnan Habiye reported in this regard: *“Our room is located in section 24 in Ofer Prison. Currently, there are eight prisoners in the room, but previously our number reached 13, even though there are only six beds, which means the rest of us sleeps on the floor, and there is a shortage of mattresses and blankets. Most of us sleep on the floor and without a blanket”*.

The overcrowding policies enforced since October 7<sup>th</sup>, have led to severe conditions, with prisoners often forced to sleep on thin mattresses on the floor. Addameer’s monitoring reveals that these mattresses are alarmingly thin, usually only a couple of centimetres deep. In Ofer Camp, 34 prisoners reported that their mattresses were removed daily from dawn until nightfall, leaving them with no other option but to sit all day on the floor or on metal bunk beds. This practice has resulted in serious health problems, such as chronic rheumatism. The confiscation of prisoners’ mattresses is a method of collective punishment, intended to control prisoners and undermine their physical and moral strength. A visit by a lawyer to prisoner B.N. in Ofer Camp on October 14<sup>th</sup>, 2023, revealed: *“The mattresses in the camp were meant to be inflated, yet they remained deflated and unusable”*. As M.H., a released prisoner, lamented: *“I felt the metal bed frame digging into my back”*.

Etzion Detention Center, operated by the Israeli military, hosts Palestinian detainees primarily from Bethlehem and Hebron areas, due to their geographical proximity to the detention centre. The cells at Etzion are designed to accommodate a maximum of 5-6 prisoners per room, with the room size not exceeding 3x6 square meters. Historically, this facility has been plagued with severe overcrowding, with many detainees forced to sleep on the floor because the Israeli military officer in charge often admits more prisoners than the facility’s capacity allows. In many cases, more than 10 detainees have been crammed into a single cell<sup>26</sup>, significantly reducing the available living space to less than one square meter per prisoner, while detainees endure unsanitary conditions.

These oppressive living conditions violate the fundamental rights of prisoners as outlined in international conventions, and they represent a clear breach of international human rights standards, including the Nelson Mandela Rules, which emphasise the need for a living environment that upholds prisoners’ dignity. The United Nations Committee Against Torture (CAT) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) have documented that Palestinian detainees in Israeli prisons are subjected to unhealthy and degrading detention conditions, including inadequate medical care, poor hygiene, and unsanitary facilities.



These conditions threaten the health and safety of prisoners and may amount to cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment, in violation of the Convention Against Torture (CAT) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)<sup>27</sup>. The United Nations Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture (SPT) has also stated that subjecting detainees to severe overcrowding constitutes ill-treatment and, in some cases, amounts to torture, especially when prolonged and combined with unacceptable physical conditions<sup>28</sup>.

### *Solitary confinement*

Due to its severity and harmful effects on detainees' physical and mental health, the use of solitary confinement has been restricted or prohibited under international law and numerous international agreements. According to the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (the Nelson Mandela Rules), solitary confinement is defined as the "*confinement of prisoners for 22 hours or more a day without meaningful human contact*". The Rules further state that "*prolonged solitary confinement for a time period in excess of 15 consecutive days*", constitutes a form of torture<sup>29</sup>. The Mandela Rules stipulate that solitary confinement should be applied only in exceptional cases, as a last resort, for the shortest possible time, and subject to independent review. It must be authorised by a competent authority. This framework reflects a clear legal trend against the arbitrary or routine use of isolation, reinforcing the principle that its application must be necessary and justified by compelling reasons. Importantly, the Rules also prohibit the use of solitary confinement for individuals with mental or physical disabilities if such measures would exacerbate their conditions, even if permitted under domestic law. They emphasise that any disciplinary action must not amount to torture or cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment. Therefore, both indefinite and prolonged solitary confinement must be prohibited. The Mandela Rules also establish minimum conditions for solitary confinement, requiring adequate personal space, access to natural light and ventilation, proper heating and cooling, nutritious food, opportunities for physical exercise, and necessary medical care. These standards reflect a global commitment to upholding the dignity and fundamental rights of prisoners, and they stress the need for proportionality, individualised assessments, and safeguards against abuse.

When assessing the conditions of Palestinian prisoners, it becomes clear that Israeli occupation authorities regularly violate these international standards. In Israeli prisons, solitary confinement is not treated as a last resort but is frequently used arbitrarily and as a tool of retaliation.

During the initial stages of detention in interrogation centres such as Petah Tikva, Ofer, Al-Mascobiya (Jerusalem De-

tention Facility), Al-Jalame (Kishon Detention Facility), and Asqalan (Shikma), this isolation is compounded by the prohibition of legal counsel and family contact. These measures are designed to psychologically break detainees, thereby enabling the Israeli Security Agency (Shabak) to apply pressure and extract information<sup>30</sup>. In fact, instead of providing medical treatment for prisoners with mental illnesses, authorities often isolate them, aggravating their conditions. Article 56 of the Israeli Prisons Ordinance of 1971, along with Commission Order No. 04.13.00 "Prisoners Disciplinary Rules", outlines over 40 disciplinary offences justifying isolation<sup>31</sup>. Many of these offences are vaguely defined—for example, "*disrupting order and discipline in prison*"—granting IPS broad discretion to impose isolation arbitrarily, often to harass or punish Palestinian detainees<sup>32</sup>.

Children are particularly vulnerable to these practices. According to Military Court Watch (2021), 4% of detained Palestinian children had been subjected to solitary confinement. In recent years, this proportion has surged to 20%, reflecting an alarming increase in the use of punitive measures against minors<sup>33</sup>. The expansion of solitary confinement among children raises serious concerns under international standards regarding the treatment of minors in detention.

According to Addameer's documentation over 30 years, isolation cells in Israeli prisons typically range from 1x1.5 meters to 2x3 meters—too small to allow basic movement. The walls are made of solid concrete, which limits both auditory and visual stimuli. Windows, if present, are small, positioned high on the wall, and covered with metal sheets, restricting both sunlight and ventilation.

Even prior to October 7, 2023, when family visits were permitted, prisoners placed in isolation were often denied visits—sometimes for a fixed period (such as one month), other times indefinitely, with repeated renewals extending to months or even years. Isolation was also used to prevent access to legal counsel, a serious violation of international legal standards.

Palestinian prisoners have long resorted to hunger strikes as a peaceful means of protesting various abusive policies, including administrative detention, isolation, poor prison conditions, and denial of medical care. Hunger strikers are often punished by being placed in isolation cells, subjected to frequent invasive inspections, and stripped of their personal belongings.

The case of Khader Adnan illustrates these patterns. Arrested on February 5, 2023, from his home in Arraba near Jenin, Adnan began a hunger strike to protest his arbitrary detention. Although international law protects this form of protest, the IPS treated it as a disciplinary offense and placed him in solitary confinement in Section A of Al-Jalame Prison (Kishon Detention Facility), in a cell measuring 1.8x1.8 meters. The cell

contained only a concrete “bed” and a squat toilet, with no pillow, blanket, or electrical appliances. Adnan was never allowed yard time.

After nearly 30 days on hunger strike, Khader Adnan’s health deteriorated severely, prompting his transfer to the so-called “Ramleh Prison Clinic”<sup>d, 34, 35, 36</sup>. Despite the life-threatening situation, the Israeli courts repeatedly delayed hearings, refusing his release. When Adnan requested hospitalization, he asked to be accompanied by a doctor from Physicians for Human Rights and to receive family visits—both of which were denied by the Israeli District Court. Ultimately, despite persistent legal and humanitarian efforts, Adnan was found unconscious in his cell on May 2, 2023, the same day he died<sup>37</sup>.

#### *Medical atrocities and medical crimes*

Since October 7th, Israeli forces have intensified their targeting of civilian infrastructure in the Gaza Strip, including medical and healthcare centres. Numerous hospitals, clinics, and medical facilities have been bombed, rendering many of them non-operational<sup>38</sup>. In addition to this destruction, Israeli occupation forces have arrested and tortured medical personnel, with a significant number of healthcare workers currently detained<sup>39</sup>.

Israeli authorities consistently violate the right to life and health of Palestinian detainees across various detention centres. Since October 7th, this pattern has worsened significantly, with Israeli authorities deliberately withholding medical care from prisoners, especially in facilities like Ofer Camp<sup>40</sup>.

Widespread arrests have included Palestinians suffering from chronic illnesses such as diabetes, hypertension, and kidney or liver disease, as well as individuals with amputated limbs. These prisoners are subjected to the same abuse, violence, and humiliation as others<sup>41</sup>. During surprise inspections and roll calls, prison guards force detainees to lie face-down for extended periods, ignoring their injuries, disabilities, and limited mobility. Many injured detainees were taken directly from hospital beds in Gaza. Others were initially healthy but sustained moderate to severe injuries after arrest. These conditions have led to the deaths of many prisoners. Since October 7th, between 55 and 65 prisoners have been killed by Israeli detention policies<sup>e</sup>.

Despite the rising death toll, prison authorities have continued a policy of deliberate medical neglect, refusing care even for those with ongoing or severe health issues. Monitoring by Addameer has revealed consistent patterns of medical negligence. Many prisoners suffer from a range of health problems, including cardiovascular disease, diabetes, gastrointestinal disorders, neurological conditions, and psychological trauma. Yet the Israeli Prison Service fails to provide consistent treatment, intervening only in the most critical cases.

Another manifestation of this neglect is the constant displacement of Gaza’s detainees, particularly those with infections or psychological conditions. Upon transfer to Ofer Camp, access to medication is effectively cut off. Detainees report that the only drug available is Paracetamol (a basic painkiller), which is distributed only after repeated requests.

Additionally, the use of harsh restraint techniques, including excessive shackling that causes open wounds and scarring, remains untreated. Detainees state that receiving any form of medical attention requires being critically ill, in extreme pain, or at imminent risk of death.

Psychological harm, though less visible, is equally serious. The mental toll of detention, compounded by neglect and abuse, affects both psychological and physical well-being.

The Geneva Conventions clearly outline the health rights of prisoners and detainees. These international laws mandate the provision of free medical care<sup>f</sup>, prohibit actions that could lead to a prisoner’s death, and classify such acts as serious violations subject to criminal penalties<sup>g</sup>. They also prohibit physical

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September 11): *Treatment of detainees and hostages and attacks on medical facilities and personnel (7 October 2023 to August 2024)* , <https://www.un.org/unispal/document/report-of-the-independent-international-commission-of-inquiry-on-the-occupied-palestinian-territory-including-east-jerusalem-and-israel-11sep24/>

Addameer Prisoner Support and Human Rights Association (2024, March): *Escalating Oppression...*, cited. The Public Committee Against Torture in Israel, Adalah -The Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel, HaMoked - Center for the Defence of the Individual and Physicians for Human Rights Israel (2024, February 16): “*Systemic torture and inhumane treatment of Palestinian detainees in Israeli prison facilities since October 7, 2023*”, cited.

f Article 15 of the Third Geneva Convention: “*The Power detaining prisoners of war shall be bound to provide free of charge for their maintenance and for the medical attention required by their state of health*”.

g Article 129 of the Third Geneva Convention: “*The High Contracting Parties undertake to enact any legislation necessary to provide effective penal sanctions for persons committing, or ordering to be committed, any of the grave breaches of the present Convention defined in the following Article*”.

d They Ramleh Prison Clinic it’s called a “clinic”, but in reality it is essentially a detention facility with minimal medical capacity (PHR, 2022; B’Tselem, 2021; Amnesty International, 2023).

e The Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel provides evidence of the deaths of 55 individuals; however, other sources have been cited that suggest a higher number of fatalities. Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel (2024,

mutilation and medical experimentation unless it is necessary for the individual's treatment and carried out under proper ethical standards<sup>h</sup>.

The Geneva Conventions<sup>42</sup> and their First Additional Protocol<sup>43</sup> obligate the Detaining Power to ensure the comprehensive physical and mental well-being of prisoners, including the provision of a hygienic living environment, essential services, and all necessary medical care at no cost to the detainee<sup>i</sup>. These international legal instruments explicitly prohibit unnecessary or non-standard medical interventions and mandate protective measures against medical experimentation, regardless of prisoner consent, thereby safeguarding both the health and human dignity of individuals in detention.

### *Sexual violence*

Sexual crimes are prevalent in the context of armed conflicts and wars around the world, and reports indicate a significant increase in such crimes in Palestine after October 7th, 2023. While these acts are not primarily driven by the perpetrators' sexual desires, they are deeply rooted in dynamics of power and control. This pattern is sustained by several factors, including a lack of accountability, widespread impunity, and the failure of higher authorities within the occupying state to issue clear and strict prohibitions against such acts.

Legal precedents and analyses have broadened the definition of sexual crimes beyond rape, now encompassing a wider range of abuses, including sexual harassment and forced stripping<sup>44</sup>.

During the initial phase of mass detentions in the Gaza Strip, occupying forces engaged in multiple forms of sexual and degrading abuse. Detainees, including children, were subjected to forced stripping, often repeatedly during detention and transfers. These procedures involved coercing individuals into humiliating positions—such as the frog position or bending over—under the pretext of thorough searches. Security personnel routinely employ metal detectors or magnetometers, running the devices over detainees' bodies and, in some cases, attempting to insert them into the anus or mouth. Devices were

also held beneath male genitalia while detainees were mocked and forced to perform degrading acts on themselves<sup>45</sup>.

Such practices constitute sexual harassment and sexual violence, intended to intimidate, humiliate, and punish detainees. Many individuals were compelled to remove some or all clothing, either fully or partially, including in front of other detainees, and were forced to walk certain distances while unclothed. These acts were frequently carried out at gunpoint and often linked to other abuses, including torture and physical violence. Human rights organisations have documented repeated occurrences of forced stripping in Gaza, emphasising its systematic and coercive nature<sup>46</sup>. Through the monitoring and documentation conducted by Addameer involving around 343 detainees, approximately 95% of those interviewed confirmed they experienced either partial or full stripping. This consists of a systematic approach affecting the majority of individuals arrested from the Gaza Strip. The practice of forced stripping is not restricted to adult males: children and women are also compelled to undress for searches prior to their arrest.

On July 29th, 2024, the occupation's military police raided Sde Teiman military camp, detaining soldiers accused of brutally sexually assaulting a male detainee from Gaza<sup>47</sup>. The male detainee was reported to have severe signs of rape using sharp torture tools. Lawyers have documented numerous cases of torture and sexual violence against detainees from Gaza, revealing a grim pattern of abuse within the Sde Teiman military camp. Despite these well-documented cases, 99% of investigations into the Israeli Police Service's torture and abuse against Palestinians fail to advance, resulting in no accountability or repercussions for the perpetrators<sup>j</sup>.

Prisoner R.A., detained in Sde Teiman Camp, recounts: "I remained in the same barracks for 80 days, during which I was subjected to beatings and torture, including being sodomized with a stick twice: once at the beginning of my detention and once after 3 months. The assault team was accompanied by dogs. A doctor saw me and provided treatment for a fissure in my anus, and without medication, I couldn't go to the bathroom"<sup>48</sup>.

### *Handcuffing and blindfolding*

Beyond physical isolation in prisons, perceptual isolation is systematically imposed on Palestinian detainees from the moment of arrest. Detainees are typically handcuffed behind their backs and blindfolded, and in some cases, their ears are covered, effectively severing their connection with the surrounding environment<sup>49</sup>. This form of sensory deprivation is intended to disorient and destabilise detainees, undermining their perception of time,

<sup>h</sup> Article 13 of the Third Geneva Convention: "[...] In particular, no prisoner of war may be subjected to physical mutilation or to medical or scientific experiments of any kind which are not justified by the medical, dental or hospital treatment of the prisoner concerned and carried out in his interest".

<sup>i</sup> Articles 29 and 30 of the Third Geneva Convention. International Committee of the Red Cross. (1949). *Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949 and their Additional Protocols*. <https://www.icrc.org/en/law-and-policy/geneva-conventions-and-their-commentaries#text940076>

<sup>j</sup> For further reading: <https://addameer.org/news/5382>

direction, and environmental awareness<sup>50</sup>. While Israeli authorities often justify these practices under the guise of security concerns, the experience reported from Sde Teiman Camp reveals a starkly different reality. The use of handcuffs and blindfolds goes beyond mere security measures: they function as a tool of torture and retribution against those detainees.

Detainees are confined day and night with metal cuffs linked by a short chain, severely restricting their ability to move their hands. Additionally, their legs are often restrained, despite the camps being under heavy surveillance. Testimonies from numerous detainees indicate that the pain caused by these shackling methods was at times even more excruciating than the severe beatings they regularly endured.

Some detainees have had their eyes covered for over 100 consecutive days. Prisoner A.J., from Ofer Camp, remarked: *"We were blindfolded and shackled all the time in the camp"*. Extended periods of blindfolding can lead to significant eye health problems, including temporary vision disturbances such as blurriness, difficulty focusing, and dryness. When deprived of air and light for extended periods, the eyes' natural blinking rate decreases, resulting in reduced hydration. Blindfolding can also diminish the eyes' sensitivity to light, causing heightened sensitivity when the blindfold is removed. This adjustment can make it difficult for the eyes to cope with bright environments and perceive fine details effectively.

The effects of prolonged blindfolding, or sensory deprivation, are not just physical but psychological as well. Studies have shown that victims of sensory deprivation often experience auditory and visual hallucinations, perceptual distortions, and sensory imagery<sup>51</sup>. Additionally, sensory deprivation induces fear, anxiety, panic attacks, elevated stress levels, and disorientation of time and space<sup>52</sup>. Blindfolding also negatively impacts balance and coordination due to the lack of vision, heightening the risk of severe physical injury<sup>53</sup>. By preventing detainees from anticipating harm, such as kicks or punches, the likelihood of serious injury and long-term disability increases<sup>54</sup>.

Conditions within detention facilities vary drastically regarding the use of handcuffs. Some prisoners are shackled at all times, while others in nearby cells are uncuffed. In Ofer Camp, for instance, 86 prisoners detained throughout 2024 were reported to be continuously handcuffed<sup>55</sup>. Stripped of the ability to rest, they are unable to shift positions in their beds and are severely limited in their movements.

The handcuffs placed on prisoners significantly restrict their mobility, resulting in immense discomfort and suffering. Many inmates have expressed distress over neck and shoulder pain caused by the inability to move their hands freely. Numerous prisoners have reported injuries such as festering scars and

wounds from the constant handcuffing, which have become inflamed due to neglect from camp authorities.

#### *Lack of hygiene*

Most of the prisoners interviewed by lawyers reported being allowed to bathe only once a week, while a few are allowed this basic act of hygiene just once every two weeks. Each detainee is granted 5 minutes to wash and washing beyond the time results in harsh penalties. The Israeli Prison Service uses denial of showers as a form of punishment, sometimes depriving prisoners of showers for periods up to a month. This leads to skin irritation from the buildup of oils and sweat, as well as an increased risk of fungal or bacterial infections, dandruff, and a dry scalp. They often lack basic hygiene tools, such as nail clippers, haircuts, and toothbrushes, and are not provided with cleaning products to maintain their cells. Consequently, a variety of skin diseases, including scabies, have emerged and spread rapidly throughout the prisons and military camps<sup>56</sup>. The frequent transfer of detainees between facilities has worsened the spread of these diseases, with Naqab (Kzi'ot) prison being particularly affected by the scabies outbreak<sup>57</sup>. The epidemic of scabies has become so severe that some detainees are even barred from meeting with their lawyers due to the severity of their infestations, interfering with their right to legal counsel.

Additionally, the lack of proper hygiene obstructs detainees from practising their religion. Hygiene is essential for prisoners to perform acts of worship, such as ablution in Islam, which is a prerequisite for prayer. Ablution, or Wudu, involves washing specific parts of the body to achieve a state of ritual purity. Without access to clean water and hygiene facilities, prisoners are unable to perform Wudu, thereby preventing them from fulfilling their religious obligations. Access to hygiene facilities is a fundamental human right. Denial of this right can be seen as a form of oppression, preventing prisoners from practising their religion freely. Denying prisoners the right to practice their religion violates their fundamental human rights to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion, as outlined in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and other international treaties, subjecting them to inhuman and degrading treatment and disrespecting their inherent dignity.

Prisoners are not allowed to change their clothes, including underwear, except on designated shower days. Even then, there is no guarantee they will receive clean clothing, and often prisoners are provided with dirty or torn garments. Typically, the only items changed are underwear and shirts.

Personal hygiene items are used as tools of torment. Haircuts and nail clippings are withheld as punishments designed to harm or retaliate against the prisoners. In Ofer Prison, for



months, inmates were not allowed to cut their nails or shave. Soap and toilet paper are provided in minimal amounts. As one interviewed prisoner, M.Z., stated, “*One roll of toilet paper per week for 22 prisoners*”. The lack of cleaning supplies, such as scrapers or mops, prevents prisoners from cleaning their cells, facilitating the spread of insects, lice, and scabies. Prisoner N.J. from Ofer Camp, in an interview conducted on June 10<sup>th</sup>, 2024, recounted: “*I had insects spreading in my head and beard, so I was forced to shave to zero twice*”.

### Conclusion

Taken together, these practices indicate that Israeli detention policies function as an integrated system of abuse rather than isolated incidents. The intersection of documented measures results in cumulative harms that severely compromise both the physical and psychological integrity of detainees and pose concerns under international human rights law. Detaining authorities are obligated to ensure that prisoners receive adequate nutrition, healthcare, and humane treatment. Measures causing undue hardship to constitute cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment. These practices, particularly in the context of administrative detention, may function as forms of collective punishment, disproportionately affecting detainees not individually responsible for security incidents. Ensuring compliance with international legal standards requires transparency, monitoring, and the safeguarding of detainees’ rights.

The evidence reviewed demonstrates that Palestinian detainees in Israeli prisons and military camps since October 7<sup>th</sup>, 2023, are subjected to systematic human rights violations, contravening both domestic regulations and binding international standards, including the Nelson Mandela Rules, the Geneva Conventions, the Convention Against Torture, and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

The sustained use of punitive measures disguised as security procedures reflects a deliberate strategy to inflict physical and psychological suffering. This approach not only exacerbates the vulnerability of already marginalised populations but also signals a broader failure of accountability and adherence to international law. The cumulative impact of these policies has resulted in demonstrable harm, including disease outbreaks, psychological trauma, permanent physical injuries, and preventable deaths, highlighting the urgent need for intervention and remediation.

These findings align with broader literature on detention in the occupied Palestinian territories, which highlights recurrent use of restrictive measures, including administrative detention, to exert control over detainee populations<sup>58</sup>. Nevertheless, from October 7<sup>th</sup>, 2023, to May 2025, more than 17,000 Palestinians

have been detained by Israeli forces. Among them are approximately 500 women, including those from territories occupied in 1948, around 1,200 children, and thousands held under administrative detention – without charge or trial. Throughout this period, the conditions inside prisons have deteriorated further. Beyond immediate physical consequences, such restrictions have potential psychological effects, compounding the vulnerability of detainees during periods of heightened conflict.

Future research and monitoring should prioritise systematic documentation of detention conditions, enforce compliance with international standards, and hold responsible actors accountable. Ensuring detainees’ access to adequate nutrition, hygiene, medical care, and protection from abusive restraints is essential to safeguarding human dignity and upholding the principles of international humanitarian and human rights law.

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