

*The New England Committee to Defend Palestine calls:*

# Rally In Support of Palestinian Prisoner Hunger Strike

**Saturday, September 4, 1 PM, Copley Square, Boston**

Why should US citizens be concerned about prisoners in Palestine? Because the US government directly supports the occupation of Palestine, and is fully aware of the abuse and torture being carried out daily in Israeli prisons there. The occupation is itself a form of imprisonment. US taxpayers pay for this and other forms of injustice in Palestine directly.



There are 7,500 Arab and Palestinian political prisoners detained in Israeli prisons and military detention facilities. 3,500 of them are currently on an open-ended hunger strike which began on August 15. Their conditions of detention have continued to deteriorate over a long period of time and this deterioration has accelerated since the start of the current *Intifada*. Prisoners are routinely subjected to torture, degrading treatment, and humiliation. They are prevented from having family visits, subjected to strip searches in front of other prisoners, placed in solitary confinement for extended periods of time, provided with inadequate and unhealthy food, and prevented from pursuing educational and other recreational activities. Such treatment is unacceptable and in violation of all internationally recognized and agreed standards of behavior.

According to the Palestinian Center for Human Rights, Israeli Security Minister, Tzahi Hanegbi has vowed to fight the demands of Palestinian and Arab Detainees “until death” if necessary. Israeli authorities have publicly committed themselves to using methods of extreme psychological and physical pressure to bring the prisoners off hunger strike, in violation of their right to express their demands “through any media of [their] choice” (Article 19 International Covenant on

Civil and Political Rights). They have explicitly stated that they will use the experiences of dealing with prisoners on hunger strike in South Africa, Ireland, Turkey and Latin America to break the strike. (Source: <http://www.pchrgaza.org/Library/call.htm> .)

While solidarity hunger strikes are being held in the US and Canada August 27-28, and worldwide September 3-5, we call on people of conscience to demand **an end to all US support for Israel now!**

## Some facts about “the only democracy in the Middle East”:

(Source: Imprisoned Decency Arjan El Fassed, *The Electronic Intifada*, 18 August 2004

<http://electronicintifada.net/v2/article3008.shtml>><http://electronicintifada.net/v2/article3008.shtml> )

- From 1967 to now, Israelis have arbitrarily detained over 630,000 Palestinians.
- 32,000 Palestinians were arrested by occupation forces during the first three years of the Al-Aqsa Intifada, which began in September, 2000.
- In 1989 alone, Israelis detained 50,000 Palestinians, representing 16% of the entire male population of the West Bank and Gaza Strip between the ages of 14 and 55.
- Over 200 Palestinian prisoners have died while in Israeli custody, due to torture, ill-treatment, deprivation of medical treatment, and neglect.
- Only one month ago, *Newsweek* reported on Israel's secret torture facility 1391, which was used for prisoners rounded up during the Israeli military assault on Jenin in April 2002. Facility 1391 has been airbrushed from Israeli aerial photographs and purged from modern maps.
- Israelis have systematically tortured and ill-treated approximately 80% of all Palestinian detainees. The torture is both psychological and physical, and includes beatings of sensitive organs, choking, pulling of hair off the body, prolonged solitary confinement, subjecting detainees to noise, screams, and threats against their families. Prisoners are also tear-gassed in confined spaces.
- Other forms of torture and ill-treatment include forcing Palestinian detainees to stand hooded and handcuffed for long periods of time, the use of electric shock, burning, beatings with hands, fists, truncheons, and boots, deprivation of sleep and basic hygiene; and starvation. In the occupied Palestinian territories, Israelis have established military courts that do not comply with fair trial standards. There are no standards. Justice, where it exists, is completely arbitrary.
- About half of the nearly 8,000 Palestinian prisoners are being detained without charge. The vast majority of Palestinian prisoners are political prisoners who have been arbitrarily imprisoned or detained for no legitimate security reason, but for political expression or simply because they are Palestinian.
- Between September 2000 to the end of June 2003, approximately 2,000 Palestinian children were arrested and detained. Children as young as 13 are held in Israeli prisons, with children aged 13 and 14 constituting approximately 10% of all child detainees. Almost all child detainees have reported some form of torture or mistreatment.

.No issue symbolizes Israel's denial of freedom to Palestinians better than that of political prisoners. Palestinians have been subjected to the highest rate of incarceration in the world -- approximately 20 percent of the Palestinian population in the occupied Palestinian territories has, at one point, been arbitrarily detained or imprisoned by the Israeli occupation.

***New England Committee to Defend Palestine:*** [www.onepalestine.org](http://www.onepalestine.org)

For more information on the hunger strike, see the statement from Families of Palestinian Political Prisoners Committee: <http://www.palsolidarity.org/prisoners/announcestrike.html>

See also *Palestinian Center for Human Rights:* <http://www.pchrgaza.org>