



Israeli torture of Palestinian prisoners:

**Systematic cruelty in a
climate of total impunity**

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Background

Since the beginning of its illegal occupation in 1967, Israel has detained over **1 million** Palestinians. This policy of mass arbitrary arrest is one of the tools that aim at maintaining Israel's illegal occupation and apartheid regime. Every year, Israeli occupation forces detain **thousands** of Palestinians, including women and **hundreds of children**. As of today, there are **4,700 political prisoners** in Israeli jails, including **640 administrative detainees, 32 women** and **170 children**.

Every year, June 26 marks the **International Day in Support of the Victims of Torture**. Despite the **absolute prohibition** of torture and ill-treatment under international law, Israeli occupation forces and prison authorities employ various **torture** and **ill-treatment** techniques against almost **all** Palestinian political prisoners and detainees, including **women** and **children**, leaving grave **physical** and **psychological damage**.

Israeli prison authorities, occupation forces and interrogators feel emboldened to commit such acts of torture with **full impunity** knowing that neither the complicit Israeli legal system nor the international community will hold them accountable.



Torture & ill-treatment techniques

Israeli prison authorities use various forms of torture and ill-treatment techniques against Palestinian political prisoners and detainees, namely prolonged stress positions, beatings, solitary confinement, sleep deprivation, deliberate medical negligence, physical and verbal sexual abuse, force-feeding, humiliation, threat on family members etc...

Israel also extensively uses **administrative detention** to detain **hundreds** of Palestinians for indefinite periods of time with **no charge or trial** based on "secret charges", something Palestinian human rights organization Addameer has identified as a cruel form of **psychological torture**.

Inevitably, these techniques lead to terrible long-term physical effects, psychological traumas, and sometimes death. Since 1967, **73 Palestinian prisoners** have been killed as a result of Israeli torture.

Women and children

Palestinian women and children detainees are also subjected to **additional, specific forms of torture and ill-treatment.**

Palestinian women prisoners report cases of abusive strip searches, physical and verbal sexual abuse, threat of rape against them and family members, denial of basic sanitary products, denial of adequate food and water, including for pregnant detainees...

Israel is also the **only country in the world** with a **juvenile military court system** designed to prosecute Palestinian children **as young as 12**. Israeli military courts have a conviction rate close to **99%**.

Almost all Palestinian child detainees experience some form of torture or ill-treatment. They are typically arrested from their homes during military night raids, blindfolded and handcuffed, denied to see a family member or a lawyer, in an effort to instill permanent fear in them.



Legal Dimension

There is an **absolute ban on torture** and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment under **international humanitarian law** and **international human rights law**. It is also prohibited under **international customary law**.

Torture is considered a **war crime** by the **Third and Fourth Geneva Conventions** and a **crime against humanity** under **international criminal law** and the **Rome Statute**.

Although Israel ratified international treaties like the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights**, the **ICCPR** and the **Convention against Torture (CAT)**, it has never passed any domestic legislation strictly prohibiting torture.

Despite a 1999 Israeli court ruling allegedly outlawing torture, rulings by Israeli courts have allowed it in "ticking time bomb" cases, a vague definition that serves as a **green light** for the widespread use of **torture**. Despite **over 1,200 complaints** issued by Palestinians since 2001, all "investigations" were closed and **no Israeli torturer has been prosecuted**.

Conclusion and recommendations

The systematic use of torture and ill-treatment by Israeli occupation authorities adds to the long list of crimes committed against Palestinians in an effort to control, instill fear, and repress.

Israel continues to widely employ torture in spite of worldwide consensus on the prohibition of torture. This is a clear manifestation of the climate of impunity that surrounds Israel's actions and allows it to maintain its illegal occupation and apartheid regime to advance its settler-colonial project.

MIFTAH calls on the international community to:

- to meet its obligations under international law and universal jurisdiction to hold Israel accountable through effective measures for its persistent crimes and human rights violations
- support the investigation by the International Criminal Court into the Situation in Palestine, including the crime of torture