



Joint NGO Statement Marking the United Nations International Day in Support of Victims of Torture
Prohibit force-feeding, end administrative detention, and retract any permission to torture
26 June 2014

On the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture, four Palestinian and Israeli human rights organizations – Adalah, Al Mezan Center for Human Rights, Physicians for Human Rights-Israel (PHR-I) and the Public Committee Against Torture in Israel (PCATI) – are issuing this joint statement to draw attention to three urgent issues: the “Force-Feeding Bill”, Administrative Detention, and the “Green Light to Torture”.

The Force-Feeding Bill: This week, the Israeli Knesset continued to discuss a proposed law, known as the “Force-Feeding Bill”, which will permit security authorities and medical workers to forcibly feed prisoners and detainees on hunger strike. The intention behind the law’s swift progress was to break a two-month hunger strike, which began on 24 April 2014 and ended on 25 June 2014, by around 125 Palestinian detainees protesting administrative detention. About 80 hunger strikers are still hospitalized in Israel due to their dire health status. They are shackled to their beds 24 hours a day and face many further restrictions. The next reading and vote on the bill is expected to take place on Monday 30 June 2014. The four human rights organizations believe that force-feeding constitutes torture and is an egregious violation of Israeli and international law as well as of internationally accepted medical ethics and regulations. The use of force-feeding has been defined as a form of cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment by the [UN Special Committee on the Rights of the Palestinian People](#), the [International Committee of the Red Cross](#), and the [World Medical Association](#) (WMA). Furthermore, the [Israel Medical Association](#) and the [Israel National Bioethics Council](#) have come out against force-feeding, adopting the WMA’s position that force-feeding hunger strikers is torture. The [UN Secretary General](#) and [UN High Commissioner for Human Rights](#) have also expressed strong concerns against the bill. On 25 June 2014, the [UN Special Rapporteurs on Torture and Health issued a statement](#) explicitly describing force-feeding as a form of cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment, and called on the Knesset to cancel the Force-Feeding Bill.

Administrative Detention: Before June 2014, [around 200 Palestinians](#) from the occupied Palestinian territory (OPT) were being held in administrative detention by Israel under a legal procedure that allows the state to arrest individuals without charge or trial through the Emergency Powers (Detention) Law (1979). While international law permits the use of administrative detention in only a limited manner, Israel has abused this process against thousands of Palestinians since 1967. Many administrative detainees are held for periods of time ranging from months to years, in which they are denied basic due process rights including the opportunity to challenge secret evidence against them. Since the disappearance of three Israeli teenage settlers in the occupied West Bank on 12 June 2014, the Israeli military has arrested hundreds of Palestinians, mostly members of Hamas. [According to Haaretz](#) on 23 June 2014, approximately 100 of the detention orders have already been signed by Israeli army officers and another 200 new administrative detention orders are expected. United Nations (UN) human rights treaty bodies, including the [UN Committee Against Torture](#) and the [UN Human Rights Committee](#), have called on Israel to end the discriminatory procedure of administrative detention. The [European Union](#) has also expressed concern about Israel’s continued use of administrative detention.

Green Light to Torture, Permission to Torture: Recent media reports indicate that Israeli interrogators in the Israel Security Agency (ISA or Shabak) received a “green light” to treat Palestinians, who are newly arrested in response to the disappearance of the teenagers, as “ticking bombs”. The ticking bomb is a theoretical scenario in which a captured individual is said to have vital information which, if disclosed, will prevent an impending armed attack that would result in the loss of human life. Interpretations of the [1999 Israeli Supreme Court case](#) on torture have resulted in an understanding that there could be an allowance for “enhanced interrogations” or Moderate Physical Pressure (MPP) in the case of a “ticking bomb situation”. MPP is a euphemistic term for practices that constitute torture or ill-treatment, which are strictly prohibited by international law. The sweeping designation of the new detainees as ticking bombs therefore means that MPP can be used during their interrogations by Israeli security authorities. The ISA’s policies regarding interrogations are kept secret and have never been scrutinized by any independent external body; for example, although over 850 complaints of torture have been submitted to the Israeli Attorney General since 2001, no criminal investigations or prosecutions were ever opened during this period.

In light of these developments, the human rights organizations reassert that there is never an acceptable reason for the use of torture or ill-treatment, and that force-feeding and “enhanced interrogations” are nothing less than a guise for the use of torture. Torture and CIDT are absolutely prohibited by international law without exception, and the state cannot grant permission to use torture or ill-treatment under any circumstances. We therefore demand the end of the use of administrative detention, the cancellation of Israel’s proposed Force-Feeding Bill and the end to Israel’s permission to torture, in accordance with international law and respect for the basic human rights and dignity of detainees.

Signing organizations:

Adalah - The Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel
Al Mezan Center for Human Rights
Physicians for Human Rights-Israel (PHR-I)
Public Committee Against Torture in Israel (PCATI)



PROJECT FUNDED BY THE EUROPEAN UNION - JOINT PROJECT OF ADALAH, PHYSICIANS FOR HUMAN RIGHTS-
ISRAEL AND AL MEZAN (GAZA)