



Israeli and Palestinian human rights organizations: Hunger striking Palestinian prisoner Maher al Akhras may die any day, must be immediately released

Adalah, Addameer, PCATI, PHRI call on international community to urge Israel to allow al-Akhras to move to West Bank hospital or to release him immediately – before it is too late.

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Maher al-Akhras is in his 86th day of hunger strike, in protest of his administrative detention and is at great risk of death. A Physicians for Human Rights Israel (PHRI) volunteer doctor visited al-Akhras on Friday, 16 October 2020 and noted that although he is generally lucid, he is also periodically confused, very dizzy, cannot move his legs, stand, or change position in bed. His vision and hearing are rapidly deteriorating and he complains of severe chest pains. According to international medical consensus on hunger strikes, al-Akhras may die any day. The undersigned organizations call for his immediate release.

Al-Akhras, has been on hunger strike since 27 July 2020 following his administrative detention. He has appealed to the Israeli Supreme Court demanding to be released, but the court decided not to cancel his administrative detention – leaving that decision to the security apparatus. Instead, the court only suspended his administrative detention, despite his deteriorating situation, which may result in his death. Al-Akhras is simultaneously prevented from leaving Kaplan hospital and is therefore under de-facto arrest. These court decisions were, *interalia*, made on incorrect translations of a video of al-Akhras.

Al-Akhras has expressed distrust towards the Kaplan medical team, as occurs often in hunger strikes. He refuses any treatment or medical tests and monitoring from the medical team. He has confirmed that should he lose consciousness, he does not want to receive any medical intervention. It is worth mentioning that current legislation in Israel allows medical staff to feed a person in hunger strike by force, a position which is both unacceptable according to medical ethics and, according to international law, may amount to torture.

Al-Akhras's case highlights the continued and excessive use of administrative detention in Israel: a procedure that allows the Israeli military commander to hold detainees indefinitely based on secret

information without revealing the allegations against them or putting them on trial. The courts who review administrative detention orders do so based on information presented to the court *ex-parte* by the security agencies, and Palestinians detainees are often jailed for months and even years without formal charges or a trial. Israel currently holds over 300 Palestinians in administrative detention, contrary to the Geneva Convention, which demands that this practice be used only in exceptional circumstances and subject to strict procedural safeguards. In 2016, the UN Committee Against Torture recommended that Israel, “urgently take the measures necessary to end the practice of administrative detention and ensure that all persons who are currently held in administrative detention are afforded all basic legal safeguards” (para. 23.) In 2012, the EU reiterated its longstanding position on Israel's use of administrative detention without charge; detainees, 'have the right to be informed of the reasons for their detention and be subject to a fair trial without undue delay.'

We call on the international community to urge Israel to allow al-Akhras to, at the very least, move to a hospital in the West Bank, so he may be treated by a medical team in which he has trust or release al-Akhras immediately, before it is too late. We urge the international community to voice their grave concern and call on Israel to stop the continuous and systematic human rights violations of Palestinian prisoners.

- Adalah – The Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel
- Addameer Prisoner Support and Human Rights Association
- Physicians for Human Rights Israel (PHRI)
- The Public Committee Against Torture in Israel (PCATI)