

International Women’s Day: 72 Palestinian Female Political Detainees in Israeli Occupation Prisons Face Abuse, Severe Violations

Report by Commission of Detainees’ Affairs, the Palestinian Prisoner’s Society, and the Addameer Prisoner Support and Human Rights Association.

March 8, 2026

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“One prisoner had her shoulder dislocated while being dragged violently while lying on the ground. Another was dragged in a brutal way that exposed her back and hair in front of the guards, and her knee was displaced; she suffered from pain for months and they refused to take her to the clinic. Another prisoner was beaten on her back and stomach.” – (D.B.), a female Palestinian political prisoner currently held by the Israeli occupation.

Ramallah, occupied Palestine – International Women’s Day, observed annually on March 8, is an occasion to celebrate the achievements of women and their struggles for justice and equality. In occupied Palestine however, this occasion arrives burdened with a different reality; Palestinian women live under a severely oppressive system of Israeli occupation, where the symbolism of this day is intertwined with loss, oppression, deprivation, and suffering.

In this new report, the Commission of Detainees’ Affairs, the Palestinian Prisoner’s Society (PPS), and the Addameer Prisoner Support and Human Rights Association—present key data related to the reality of incarcerated Palestinian women and the accompanying crimes and violations. The report includes several testimonies from Palestinian female prisoners gathered through lawyers of our organizations, and presents the worsening detention conditions for detained women following the start of the genocide in occupied Gaza.

Among the main ways the Israeli occupation targets Palestinian society is through its women. For decades, Palestinian women of all ages have been subjected to arrest, ill-treatment, torture, and the denial of their most basic rights. What Palestinian women experience today—including women prisoners in Israeli occupation prisons—represents a continuation of long-standing policies of suppression and erasure. However, since the occupation’s genocide in the occupied Gaza Strip, matters have become unprecedentedly difficult for all Palestinians, including women, one of the most vulnerable segments of society.

The scale and severity of violations and crimes against Palestinian women have surpassed all past violence. This has coincided with a significant escalation in mass arrests across occupied Palestine, alongside a noticeable rise in the number of women imprisoned, and worsening conditions of their detention. These conditions fall within a system of systematic torture that begins from the moment of arrest and continues through interrogation and imprisonment. The occupation's prisons have turned into arenas for torture and the systematic destruction of male and female prisoners, and one of the fields in which the crime of genocide is being carried out.

More than 700 Palestinian women have been arrested since the start of the genocide. Women and girls arrested include university students, activists, housewives, and women with no direct political involvement. These arrests cannot be viewed in isolation from a wider policy that targets the Palestinian family and social structure, within an approach based on collective punishment and abuse.

The arrests of women from occupied Gaza following the genocide have also become one of the most prominent issues, due to the serious violations they faced and the humiliation of their human dignity, in addition to the crime of enforced disappearance that affected dozens of them at the beginning of the genocide. Prisoner institutions later managed to determine the fate of many of these women and secure their release, while to this day there is no available data indicating that women from occupied Gaza remain in detention.

The majority of female prisoners who were arrested were subjected to physical and psychological abuse accompanying the moment of arrest, whether they were arrested from their homes after raids or while passing through military checkpoints.

Countless testimonies over the past two years show that sexual violence has been among the prominent violations experienced by Palestinian women during detention, including harassment, strip searches, and threats of rape. The United Nations has also stated in an official announcement that there are credible reports indicating that detainees from Gaza were subjected to sexual violence, including rape. Prisoner groups have documented testimonies from women who were released and others still in prison who reported humiliating practices, foremost among them the widespread use of strip searches.

Latest Statistics on Palestinian Female Political Prisoners

As of March 2026, Israeli occupation authorities are currently imprisoning 72 Palestinian women, most of them held in Damon Prison in the country's north. Among them are three minors and 32 mothers, who collectively have 130 children.

Additionally, 17 women are held under administrative detention without trial or charge, while five female prisoners are serving varying sentences - the longest being 16 years.

There are also 50 women awaiting trial, including 16 who are detained on charges related to what the occupation refers to as “incitement,” with estimates that the actual number may be higher.

There is one female prisoner previously wounded by Israeli occupation forces, and 18 sick female prisoners, including three women suffering from cancer, in addition to 12 female university students and three female school students.

Geographically, the majority were arrested from the occupied West Bank and occupied Jerusalem (69 female prisoners), alongside three female prisoners from the 1948-occupied territories.

Anonymized Testimonies of Palestinian Female Political Prisoners

1. Prisoner (D.B.):

“The suppression forces would raid the rooms accompanied by the ‘Yamaz’ unit and dogs. In one raid, a dog was brought into my room with a soldier holding it. It was only about a meter away from me, which was terrifying—especially for the younger prisoners who began trembling.

“The raids happen like this: they storm the rooms one by one, force us to lie face down, walk over us, tie our hands behind our backs, then drag us one by one to the yard while pulling our shoulders backward as they lift us from the ground, causing severe pain. Some prisoners suffered fractures. In one raid I was tied and lying on the ground; they told me to stand but I couldn’t, so they violently pulled me up by my shoulder from behind. The pain lasted for a long time.”

She continued:

“One prisoner had her shoulder dislocated while being dragged violently while lying on the ground. Another was dragged in a brutal way that exposed her back and hair in front of the guards, and her knee was displaced; she suffered from pain for months and they refused to take her to the clinic. Another prisoner was beaten on her back and stomach.”

“After dragging the prisoners, some of us were taken for strip searches in the bathroom, while others were taken directly to the yard. We were forced to remain kneeling or lying on our stomachs for between half an hour and an hour until the searches were finished. Sometimes they would walk over us. Any prisoner who tried to change her position was beaten. I personally was beaten with kicks and hands. Once the prison director beat me when I tried to relieve the pressure on my body and said: ‘You are not in your home.’ In one raid we remained on our stomachs for nearly an hour while guards and special units walked over us and filmed videos. The pretext was ‘searching the rooms.’”

2. Prisoner (R.R.):

“They took me from the outdoor yard to a small room. A female soldier carried out a strip search. She lifted my arms and grabbed and examined my chest. She ordered me to stand and sit twice while I was naked. Then she gave me underwear and a prison pajama uniform to wear and handed me a head covering, while throwing my clothes in the trash. After that they handcuffed my hands behind my back and shackled my legs. They did not put a blindfold on me. Then a very tall soldier came, grabbed my left arm from behind, and walked me while repeatedly hitting my left shoulder with his elbow along the way. My arm became swollen and the blows were strong. I don’t know how many times he hit me, but the next day my arm was swollen. When they saw it during interrogation they were alarmed and said they would take me to the clinic, but they never did.”

She also described the conditions of her interrogation cell:

“The soldier placed me in a very small cell, about one meter by one meter. I couldn’t fully stretch my legs inside it. When I slept, my head was near the toilet seat. The walls were rough and gray. The cell had only a toilet seat, a sink, and a floor—no mattress, blanket, or pillow. There was toilet paper and drinking water only from the sink. They took my hijab and left me only with the head cover beneath it. The cell was full of bugs, and I developed a fungal infection inside it. I stayed there until the next morning. Around eight in the morning, a guard took me to the interrogation room.”

She added regarding the interrogation period:

“They entered my cell frequently. Two female soldiers would come in with other guards standing outside, and suddenly they would conduct a strip search. They would order me to remove all my clothes. The searches were humiliating.”

3. Prisoner (M.M.):

Here we refer to the case of the prisoner (M.M.), who was abducted as a hostage to pressure her father, who is detained in Israeli occupation prisons. During her arrest and interrogation, she was subjected to abuse, assaults, and humiliation.

“When I was arrested, the soldiers started asking me in the military jeep, ‘Where do you want to go? Which prison?’ I told them, ‘Asqalan.’ They started laughing at me and said: ‘So you want to go where your father is.’”

“From the first day I entered the Asqalan (Ashkelon) interrogation center, they began interrogating me. I was interrogated continuously for 18 days, every day in several sessions, each session lasting three or four hours. They would take me into interrogation about three times a day. Each time there was one interrogator and one female soldier. The interrogation consisted of continuous questioning. They would leave to rest for two or three hours. I was unable to sleep throughout the interrogation, which lasted 27 days.”

She added:

“After 27 days they transferred me to Damon Prison. I was transferred by the Nahshon unit, and they pushed me a lot during the transfer. They moved me in prison transport vehicles (‘bosta’). I was taken through more than one prison whose names I don’t know before arriving at Damon, but I arrived there on the same day.”

She continued in her testimony:

“On the 18th day of interrogation, when I was about to finish interrogation, an interrogator came and said: ‘We’ll let you see your father.’ Then they took me to an interrogation room where my father was sitting on an interrogation chair like school chairs, with his hands tied behind him. When I entered, it seemed he knew I was coming and was prepared for it; he was looking toward the door. When I entered, they removed the cover from my eyes, and my hands were tied in front of me. My father started crying a lot when he saw me. I ran toward him and hugged him while I was still tied up. He kept kissing me and saying reassuring words to comfort me. Then they seated me on a regular chair while my hands were still tied in front. He looked extremely exhausted. There were about twelve interrogators in the room, including only one female interrogator.”

This testimony is one of dozens from women who were arrested as hostages to pressure members of their families.

4. Prisoner (H.B.):

“I was transferred to Hasharon Prison. When I arrived, a female soldier received me, and as I climbed a long staircase she kept insulting and pushing me. She took me to a small, filthy solitary cell that had nothing but a mattress on the floor without a blanket or pillow and a very small bathroom. I stayed there alone for four days without anyone speaking to me. They brought me cold, bad food, and during those four days I didn’t eat and threw the food away. The weather was extremely cold, and when I asked for a blanket they refused and told me it was forbidden. The mattress cover was made of cold plastic.”

This testimony is one of dozens describing similar experiences of women detained in Hasharon Prison.

5. Prisoner (L.Y.):

“When I arrived at Damon, they stripped me of all my clothes and threw them in the trash, including my jilbab and jacket. They gave me a prison uniform and only two pieces of underwear. I was subjected to a strip search and then taken down to the prison section wearing the prison uniform (shirt and trousers). It was psychologically very painful for me.”

Prominent Policies of Abuse, Humiliation and Violence Against Palestinian Women During Arrest and Detention

Palestinian women face systematic abuse, humiliation, and violence throughout the process of arrest and detention. Arrests often begin with violent night or dawn raids on homes, during which Israeli occupation forces break or blow up doors, spread throughout the house, destroy and cause deliberate vandalism of belongings and furniture, and shout threats while holding residents at gunpoint. Women are frequently taken from their homes in front of their families. In other cases, arrests occur at military checkpoints, where women may be detained for hours under the sun or in the cold before being subjected to detailed and humiliating searches.

Testimonies indicate that women were pushed, beaten, and violently removed from vehicles. Detainees have also reported being blindfolded and having their hands tied behind their backs for extended periods, while being insulted and threatened. Abuse can continue during transportation in military vehicles, where women are forced to remain in painful positions and denied access to toilets for long periods.

A long-standing practice has been the arrest of women as hostages to pressure male relatives, a policy that has become particularly visible in the period since the start of the Gaza genocide. In these cases, women are detained not because they are the primary targets but to force a family member to surrender, or as a form of revenge. Dozens of women—including wives of prisoners, wives of those killed, mothers, and even elderly women—have been arrested for this purpose. These arrests are often accompanied by psychological pressure and threats, including threats to kill or harm the targeted relative. Raids frequently involve the destruction of homes, theft of large amounts of money and jewelry, and the terrorizing of children, reflecting a broader pattern of collective punishment against entire families. Many of the women arrested come from families that have already endured years of repeated raids, arrests, imprisonment, and killings.

Another major phenomenon has been the sharp rise in arrests of women on charges of “incitement,” under Israeli occupation military laws, particularly related to social media activity. Since the genocide, Israeli occupation authorities have expanded the

interpretation of “incitement” to include posts, reposts, personal expressions, or even interactions with online content. As a result, the digital sphere has effectively become a space for surveillance and prosecution, where any online activity can be grounds for arrest regardless of context. Many women detained since the Gaza genocide—including journalists, activists, university students, human rights defenders, and relatives of prisoners or those killed—have faced such charges. This expansion has significantly restricted freedom of expression and placed Palestinian women under constant monitoring.

Inside Israeli occupation prisons, particularly Damon Prison, women detainees report an unprecedented level of repression and abuse during the ongoing war. Their ordeal typically begins with interrogation and temporary detention in Hasharon Prison before being transferred to Damon, the main facility holding Palestinian female political prisoners. Testimonies describe Damon Prison as a site where torture, starvation, humiliation, and degrading treatment are widespread. Prisoners have reported confiscation of personal belongings, severe overcrowding due to mass arrest campaigns, and practices such as arbitrary and excessive strip searches, harassment, and other forms of sexual abuse. During certain periods since the genocide began, the number of female prisoners has exceeded 100 women and girls, further worsening already harsh conditions.

Female prisoners have also faced systematic denial of adequate amounts of food, like all Palestinian political prisoners. Meals provided by the prison administration are minimal, often cold and of poor quality, and insufficient to meet basic daily needs, directly affecting prisoners’ health and immunity. Basic necessities have also been used as tools of humiliation, including limiting access to sanitary pads and hygiene supplies. Prisoners have been deprived of enough clothing and adequate blankets, and many have been denied medical care. Current data indicates that three women prisoners suffering from cancer remain detained, including one charged with “incitement,” one held under administrative detention without trial or charge, and another awaiting trial.

Isolation has intensified since the start of the genocide. Women prisoners, like all detainees, have been denied family visits for two and a half years, as well as visits from the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), leaving lawyers’ visits as the only remaining channel of communication with the outside world, with even those severely restricted. This isolation has significantly increased the psychological pressure on female detainees, particularly as many are mothers and have been denied any contact with their children.

Hasharon Prison, which serves as a temporary detention station before transfer to Damon, has also been described as a place of humiliation and intimidation. Testimonies collected show prisoners are held in filthy cells unfit for human habitation, provided with extremely small amounts of inedible food, and forced to sleep on thin, dirty mattresses. Degrading strip searches are frequently conducted, and several women reported being beaten after refusing to comply with these procedures.

In addition to daily hardship, women prisoners have been subjected to frequent physical assault and raids by occupation prison forces. These raids, sometimes carried out with police dogs often involve beatings, strip searches, stun grenades, and tear gas. Female prisoners' remaining personal belongings are confiscated during these operations. Some women have been placed in solitary confinement as punishment after such raids, while others have been prevented from leaving their cells for the prison yard. In many cases, female prisoners were forced to sit in humiliating positions for long periods while being threatened and filmed.

Together, these practices illustrate severe policies of systematic abuse, maltreatment rising to the level of torture at times, and collective punishment directed at Palestinian women throughout the stages of arrest, interrogation, detention, and imprisonment.

In light of the above, there is an urgent need for serious international action that translates legal obligations into practical measures. This includes working to implement the advisory opinion issued by the International Court of Justice, which considered the occupation illegal, along with the obligations that arise from it to end it and not recognize its consequences.

It also requires working toward the unconditional release of all Palestinian political prisoners – including women - in a context where prisons have effectively become systems of torture and collective destruction, turning them into one of the arenas of the ongoing crime of genocide.
