

11 October 2011
Joint Open Letter

To: The European Parliament's Subcommittee on Human Rights
Cc: The European Parliament's Delegation for Relations with the Palestinian Legislative Council

Update on the Collective Punishment of Palestinian Political Prisoners Held in Israeli Prisons

We are writing, as Palestinian human rights organizations dedicated to the promotion and protection of human rights in the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt), to follow up on our [letter](#) of 5 October 2011 regarding the collective punishment of Palestinian political prisoners held in Israeli prisons. In light of measures taken in recent days by the Israeli Prison Service (IPS) against Palestinian prisoners taking part in a large-scale campaign of disobedience, we would like to reiterate our concerns about their situation and call on you to take immediate action to condemn these measures.

Palestinian prisoners held in various Israeli prisons announced the launch of a campaign of disobedience, including a hunger strike, starting on 27 September 2011 to protest punitive and collective measures taken against them by the IPS. Since then, the IPS has started punishing participating prisoners in an effort to undermine the campaign. More than 70 prisoners participating in the open hunger strike have already been transferred from Ketziot and Megiddo prisons to Ohal Keidar and Shatta prisons. Several other prisoners, including 12 prisoners in Ofer Prison alone, have been placed in isolation. In addition, the IPS has confiscated fluids like milk and juice, and salt from all striking prisoners, leaving some of them in dire health conditions. Lawyers attempting to visit striking prisoners have also been prevented from doing so, with prison administrations declaring "situations of emergency" right before or during scheduled and pre-approved visits. On 11 October, the administration of Ohal Keidar prison explicitly informed lawyers that visits to striking prisoners have been banned, a policy that is likely to be officially adopted by other prisons.

On 4 September 2008, the European Parliament adopted a resolution calling on Israel "to guarantee that minimum standards on detention be respected, to bring to trial all detainees, to put an end to the use of 'administrative detention orders', and to implement adequate measures for minors and prisoners' visiting rights, in full compliance with international standards." In light of recent developments, we call on you, as the European Parliament's committee concerned with the protection and promotion of human rights in third countries, to act on the basis of this resolution by immediately taking up the question of the Palestinian prisoners' deteriorating detention conditions and condemning the IPS's measures, which violate international humanitarian and human rights law. We urge you to take heed of the call circulated by the General Delegate of Palestine to the European Union on 10 October 2011, notably with regard to sending a fact-finding mission on the situation of Palestinian political prisoners in Israeli prisons, a measure first suggested by the Minister of Detainees and Ex-Detainees to the European Parliament on 15 March 2011. We believe that expediting such a mission would be particularly useful at this time, not only because of the prisoners' campaign of disobedience but also because

of the steps taken by the Palestinian Authority and the Arab League to request an advisory opinion from the International Court of Justice on the status of Palestinian prisoners.

We once again emphasize that the measures adopted by the IPS at the Israeli government's behest constitute a clear form of collective punishment, which is prohibited under Article 33 of the Fourth Geneva Convention law. As such, we ask that you use all tools at your disposal to pressure the Israeli authorities to meet the rightful demands of the prisoners and ensure that until all 5,374 Palestinian political prisoners are released, they are afforded the treatment they are entitled to under international law. In that context, Israel should be reminded that it is bound to respect the Geneva Conventions in the oPt, including with regard to the treatment of prisoners and detainees.

Sincerely,

Addameer Prisoner Support and Human Rights Association

Al-Dameer Association for Human Rights

Al-Haq

Al Mezan Center for Human Rights

Badil Resource Center for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights

Defence for Children International - Palestine Section

Ensan Center for Human Rights and Democracy

The Center for Defense of Liberties and Civil Rights "HURRYAT"

Jerusalem Center for Legal Aid and Human Rights

Ramallah Center for Human Rights Studies

Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling