

## From Palestine

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RAMALLAH (LAW):

Palestinian female detainees in Israeli prisons are ill-treated. Today, fifty Palestinian women are imprisoned in Israeli prisons and detention centers. Forty female detainees are detained at Al-Ramle prison, including six minors. The other female detainees are detained in al-Jalameh and the Russian Compound ('Moscowbiya').

Prison conditions in Al-Ramle do not meet the basic minimum standards. Palestinian female detainees are exposed to humiliating body searches. Those who refuse to undergo this humiliating search are being handcuffed, with the hands on the back, and forced to take off their clothes. There have been cases when Palestinian female detainees were threatened of being stripped and searched by Israeli male guards and of solitary confinement. Inspections of the cells of Palestinian female detainees are done in an aggressive manner, properties are thrown on the floor, to be left for the detainees to clean up.

Palestinian female detainees are exposed to humiliation, degradation and verbal harassment by Israeli prison guards and Israeli criminal prisoners. Only a metal fence separates political prisoners from criminal prisoners. This has especially a negative effect in terms of psychological problems, in particular, on the detained Palestinian minors. There are only seven cells in Al-Ramle prison. Each cell hosts five to seven Palestinian female detainees. Recess periods depend on the relation between the prison authority and prisoners. Regularly, recess periods for Palestinian female detainees have been reduced or banned completely.

Medical treatment is poor. There is a physician at Al-Ramle prison, but since she is Russian, she does not speak or understand Arabic, which makes it impossible to treat psychological problems, which has, in particular, a negative effect on minors. The female detainees are in general not allowed to call their families. Even if the Palestinian female detainee is allowed to call her family, the prison authorities record the phone call, and she is not allowed to inform her family that the phone conversation is recorded. Palestinian female detainees with Westbank identity cards are prevented from family visits. Family visits are only allowed for female prisoners who carry a Jerusalem identity card.

On Monday, July 29, waste water flooded into the prison cells. Prison guards assaulted the Palestinian female prisoners with teargas grenades and two of the female prisoners fainted. This assault followed a request by the Palestinian female prisoners at the prison authorities of Al-Ramle prison to do something about this.

Prison guards broke into their cells and transferred Amna Mona to al-Jalameh prison, and Suad Ghazal (18), who

was arrested at the age of 15, to Abu Kbir detention center, and Ahlam al-Tamimi to the Russian Compound ('Moscowbiya') in Jerusalem. The prison authorities placed a number of Palestinian female prisoners in solitary confinement as a punitive measure for protesting the transfer of the three female prisoners. Subsequently, the Palestinian female prisoners started a hungerstrike, which lasted until August 16. As a punitive measure, nine other Palestinian female detainees were held in solitary confinement and Palestinian female prisoners carrying a Jerusalem identity card were also prevented from family visits.

LAW is deeply concerned about the inhuman and degrading treatment of Palestinian female prisoners in Al-Ramle prison. In the same way that Israel is accountable under international law for preventing torture and ill-treatment, it is also required to uphold prisoners' privacy rights as codified in article 17 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

The Fourth Geneva Convention clearly prohibits the transfer of Palestinian detainees from the Occupied Palestinian Territories to Israel. Article 76 states that 'Protected persons accused of offences shall be detained in the occupied country, and if convicted they shall serve their sentences therein'. Israel's treatment of Palestinian detainees does not meet the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners, the Body of Principles for the Protection of All Persons Under Any Form of Detention or Imprisonment, and the Basic Principles for the Treatment of Prisoners. These instruments are binding on Israel to the extent that the norms set out in them explicate the broader standards contained in human rights treaties. LAW further calls on the Israeli government to ensure that the rights of detainees are protected in accordance with international human rights and humanitarian law. Moreover, LAW calls on the international community, in particular the member states of the European Union to ensure Israel's respect for the Fourth Geneva Convention and to live up to their legal obligations.

LAW is gravely concerned about the fate of thousands of Palestinian political prisoners who are still in custody, without charge or trial, often under administrative detention orders which may be renewed indefinitely. There is strong evidence that the majority of those detained have been arbitrarily detained, and that thousands of Palestinians have been rounded up, humiliated, ill-treated and held in poor conditions as a collective punishment.

*Source: LAW - The Palestinian Society for the Protection of Human Rights and the Environment is a non-governmental organization dedicated to preserving human rights through legal advocacy. email: law@lawsociety.org, web: www.lawsociety.org*