



## Support Palestinian Resistance



### Defend Hunger Strikers! End Indefinite Detention

## Hunger Strike Continues in Face of Humiliation and Threats of Force-Feeding

*Addameer, June 24, 2014, Occupied Ramallah*

One hundred Palestinian administrative detainees continue their 62nd day on hunger strike in protest of the policy of administrative detention, which has denied them their

right to know their charges or stand trial. (The strike began April 24. Some ended their strike June 27, while others have continued).

**Hunger Strike Continues • 12**

### COLLECTIVE PUNISHMENT IS A CRIME

## Support Palestinian Resistance and Hunger Strikers

Widespread resistance is unfolding in Palestine, in response to the U.S.-backed mass arrests, indefinite detention and bombing raids by Israel. The Israelis unleashed this latest attack, mainly against

Gaza but also in the West Bank, using the kidnapping and killing of three Israeli teenagers as justification. The Israeli government claims Gaza governing party Hamas

**Support Resistance • 3**

### SYRIAN PEOPLE AFFIRM RIGHT TO SELF-DETERMINATION

## Syrian Elections and Imperialist Crisis of Legitimacy

*Voice of Revolution Correspondent in Syria*

According to the U.S., a good election is one that lives up to imperialist expectations and desires. Syria instead held

true to the efforts of the people to take their stand against imperialist intervention and

**Syrian Elections • 18**

### GET OUT OF IRAQ AND AFGHANISTAN

## All U.S. Troops Home Now!

President Obama announced that he is considering military action against Iraq, including bombing raids. An additional 300 troops were sent and battleships have also been sent to the area. The announcement comes as the chaos and

anarchy the U.S. unleashed in Iraq with its brutal aggressive war is threatening the existing U.S.-backed government. Various forces, some initially armed and trained by the U.S., are contending for control of

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## 1 • Support Palestinian Resistance

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was responsible, although Hamas has stated they are not and condemned the killings. Israel has presented no evidence to prove guilt, but rather has unleashed its own crime of mass collective punishment.

According to reports, there have been massive arrests of more than 640 Palestinians since mid-June, injury to more than 170 and the death of six, along with home demolitions and more recently bombing raids against Gaza. The attack was also reportedly planned in advance, timed to occur before upcoming Palestinian elections. They aim in part to divide Palestinians and block development of the recently announced unity government, bringing Gaza and the West Bank together. But indications so far are that the people of Palestine are rejecting this latest repression and uniting to say Enough! They are demanding an end to the U.S.-Israeli crimes, affirming their right to resist and carrying forward their fight to *Free Free Palestine!*

Thousands have demonstrated and clashed with Israeli police, especially after the brutal killing of a teenage Palestinian youth by Israeli-backed settlers. These gangs are reminiscent of U.S. government-backed KKK lynch gangs, as they roam in groups in search of Palestinian youth to kidnap and kill. Numerous reports of attempted kidnappings have been made, but most have been blocked by mass actions by the Palestinians.

President Obama issued a statement condemning the killing of the three Israeli youth: “The United States condemns in the strongest possible terms this senseless act of terror against innocent youth. . . . As the Israeli people deal with this tragedy, they have the full support and friendship of the United States.” Given the U.S. backs and funds the Israeli military and police, the U.S. has not condemned the bombing raids on civilians and mass arrests and home demolitions. As well, no similar statement was issued by the president for the Palestinian youth who was kidnapped and burned to death. His press secretary did state: “The United States condemns in the strongest possible terms the heinous murder of Palestinian teenager Mohammed Hussein Abu Khudair. We send our condolences to his family and to the Palestinian people.” Nothing about the “full support and friendship of the United States.” Instead, as is common, while not condemning the Israeli military and police attacks against Palestinian civilians, his press



secretary added: “We call on the government of Israel and the Palestinian Authority to take all necessary steps to prevent an atmosphere of revenge and retribution.” In this manner, Israeli crimes are sanctioned, while Palestinians are called on not to resist.

In addition, the U.S. State Department has not assisted the family of a 15-year old U.S. youth from Tampa, Florida

whose family have been visiting relatives in Palestine. He was brutally beaten and placed under indefinite detention and remains in jail, despite efforts by his family to secure his release.

Reading the reports of the police actions and brutality, one cannot help but see the resemblance to police actions and brutality in the U.S. against African American youth. Profiling, unjust arrests and beatings, all done with impunity.

Similarly, the treatment of Palestinian hunger strikers and use of indefinite detention without charge are much like that against U.S. hunger strikers in California and at Guantánamo. More than 170 more people have been placed in indefinite detention in Israeli jails in the past two weeks. The hunger strikers, numbering more than 100 with many on strike now for 70 days, are still being shackled and every effort made to humiliate them. Israel appears ready to either let them die, or begin the torture of force-feeding them, as is occurring with hunger strikers at Guantánamo. Despite every effort to break them, they remain firm in condemning indefinite detention without charge or trial, with many kept for years and repeatedly jailed in this manner. They have condemned the indefinite detention as “against democratic and humane values.” And as the son of one of the strikers, quoting Irish hunger striker Bobby Sands who died for Irish freedom, “Our revenge will be the laughter of our children.” He added that his father said, “My determination reaches the furthest point of the sky.”

The hunger strikers are inspiring all Palestinians in their firm efforts, and the just struggle of all Palestinians for their rights are inspiring the world’s people. *Voice of Revolution* stands with the Palestinians in condemning the U.S./Israeli crimes and demanding an end to collective punishment and an end to the occupation. End All Aid to Israel Now! We salute the resistance and urge all to join in defending the hunger strikers and supporting all the Palestinians in their just struggle for their rights.

# Thousands Protest Israeli Aggression and Killing of Abu Khdeir

*International Middle East Media Center*

Thousands of Palestinians participated in massive protests held in different parts of historic Palestine July 4, denouncing the ongoing Israeli aggression on Gaza, and the brutal killing of Mohammad Abu Khdeir, who was kidnapped, tortured and burned to death by Israeli extremists, in Jerusalem.

The protesters chanted against the escalating war crimes against the Palestinian people, [waved Palestinian flags and chanted, “Enough of the suffering, enough of the pain.”] More protests will be held in different parts of the country.

Hundreds marched in Majd al-Kroum in the Upper Galilee, while hundreds also marched in the al-Fredees village, Jisr az-Zarqa coastal town, chanting against the escalating Israeli crimes

and violations carried out by Israeli soldiers and settlers against the Palestinian people.

The protesters carried Palestinian flags and posters calling for ending aggression against the Palestinian people, an end to racism, and calling on the Israeli government to put an end to those crimes. They expressed solidarity with the family of Abu Khdeir, and all Palestinians living under constant Israeli aggression in the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and occupied Jerusalem.

Hundreds also marched in Sakhnin and in Majd al-Kroum, denouncing the torture and execution of Abu Khdeir. Several Arab Members of the Knesset, political leaders and public figures participated in the protests.

## ISRAEL CONDUCTS BOMBING RAIDS AS RESISTANCE CONTINUES

# Thousands Defy Israeli Soldiers, Demand Justice

On July 3, Israel conducted bombing raids against Gaza, attacking 15 targets medics said. Gaza health ministry spokesman Ashraf al-Qidra said 11 Palestinians were hospitalized following the multiple airstrikes, including a 17-year-old boy who sustained shrapnel wounds near Gaza City. An elderly woman and teenage girl sustained injuries from the bombings in the northern Gaza Strip. The airstrikes are collective punishment and an effort by Israel to weaken Hamas and block efforts by Palestinians to develop a unity government.

Widespread resistance took place the same day, as thousands of Palestinians demonstrated and protested the continued siege of Gaza and the killing of 16-year-old Palestinian Muhammad Abu Khdeir from the Shufat neighborhood. A report from Palestinian news agency Ma’an said more than 170 Palestinians were injured in clashes with Israeli forces in occupied East Jerusalem on Wednesday following the kidnapping and killing. At least 35 people were injured by rubber bullets, including six journalists, and three people suffered fractures after being assaulted by Israeli police officers. Palestine TV reporter Kristine Rinawi and cameramen Ali Yasin and Ahmad Gharabla were among those reported injured.

Rajih al-Hawarin, a Red Crescent paramedic, said soldiers were firing tear gas, rubber-coated bullets, stun grenades, and live fire at protesters. Hundreds of masked Palestinians faced off with Israeli police in riot gear.

As the clashes raged in Shufat, where the streets were littered with burning dumpsters and makeshift barricades, the only place of relative calm was the family home, an AFP correspondent said. Ansam Abu Khder, one of the teenager’s cousins, said witnesses had written down the car’s license plate and that police were examining CCTV footage. “We knew about Mohammed’s kidnapping by three Israelis just before the dawn prayers. A witness saw them and took



down the license plate,” he told AFP.

The family denied allegations that the boy could have been killed in a family dispute, citing eyewitnesses as saying they tried to stop the kidnapping but the suspects took Abu Khdeir and fled the scene. Israeli police circulated the disinformation that Abu Khdeir was killed by family because he was gay, all in an effort to divide resistance and divert from the role of the Israeli state in the arrests, indefinite detention, killings and unleashing and protecting of terror squads of settlers, reminiscent of KKK-style lynchers.

The families of the three Israeli teenagers killed issued a statement condemning the incident.

“If the Arab youth was murdered because of nationalistic motives then this is a horrible and horrendous act,” it said. “There is no difference between Arab blood and Jewish blood. Murder is murder. There is no forgiveness or justification for any murder.”

# Israel Holds U.S. Teenager Without Charge After Police Nearly Beat Him to Death

*Rania Khalek, raniakhalek.com*

Fifteen-year-old Palestinian-American Tariq Abukhdeir, cousin of recent lynching victim Muhammed Abu Khudair, was brutally beaten by masked Israeli police on Thursday evening in the Shuafat neighborhood of occupied East Jerusalem. He has since been arrested and held without charge and denied medical treatment, according to his family and the rights group Addameer.

Tariq's family lives in Tampa, Florida and have been on vacation in Palestine since early June. They are scheduled to return to the United States on July 16. Tariq's next court hearing is scheduled for Sunday, July 6.

As photos of Tariq's horrific facial bruises surfaced, so did two videos that show masked Israeli officers punching, kicking and dragging a handcuffed Palestinian in Shuafat. Salahedeem Khdeir, Tariq's father, told The Electronic Intifada by phone from Shuafat that the Palestinian in the video is his son Tariq and that the footage was recorded by neighbors who then released it to a Palestinian media outlet.

Salahedeem says Tariq was visiting his uncle's house in an area devoid of clashes between Israeli forces and Palestinians when he and five other youths were attacked in the yard by two masked Israeli police agents. Tariq was roughed up the worst, beaten so badly that he lost consciousness. But that didn't stop the Israeli forces from arresting Tariq and the others without charge and preventing Tariq from receiving medical treatment for five hours.

"Tariq was arrested at 7:35pm but wasn't transferred to the hospital until around 1:30am," said Salahedeem. During those five hours his parents were prevented from seeing him as well. At the police station, Salahedeem came face to face with his son's attackers, who called Tariq "a tough boy" and claimed he tried to attack them.

## **Kangaroo court**

Tariq's parents did not see him again until Friday in an Israeli court where the judge extended his imprisonment another 48 hours as requested by the Israeli police, who argued they still needed to question him.

The officers told the judge that Tariq and his cousins were throwing stones, an accusation Tariq and his family vehemently deny. When asked if they had any witnesses to the alleged stone throwing, the officers said no, Salahedeem recounted.

When Salahedeem showed the video of Tariq's beating to the judge, he said, she was appalled and asked the officers why they beat a boy who was handcuffed. She also asked why Palestinian youths arrested for throwing stones appear in court with bruises while Israeli Jewish youths arrested for throwing stones appear unharmed.

The officers responded, "When we tell the Jewish kids to

stop throwing stones, they stop and let us lock them up. But the Palestinians kids want to fight," recounted Salahedeem.

"Tariq is scared," said his father, adding that his son speaks very little Arabic and no Hebrew, making an already nightmarish ordeal even more terrifying for the 15-year-old. Salahedeem begged the judge to let him stay with Tariq in jail so he so he could check his son's urine for blood each time he uses the bathroom, as advised by the doctor who treated the boy. This has led his family to fear that he may have internal bleeding. The judge denied Salahedeem's request, promising that she would personally notify the jail to look after Tariq.

## **"No protection for Palestinians"**

When asked if he expects any accountability or justice for the treatment of his son, Salahedeem said, "No way, this is Israel. There is no protection for Palestinians from the police or soldiers or army."

Referring to 16-year-old lynching victim Muhammad Abu Khudair, Salahedeem added, "My cousin was kidnapped from outside and got killed after 45 minutes and we gave the police pictures of the kidnappers, the car tags, exactly when and where he was taken and still the police say maybe this is a family problem."

"He's a good boy, he's good in school, he loves soccer, loves music," Salahedeem said of his son. "This is the first time he went to sleep far away from his home. And where does he end up? In a jail next to the people who beat him almost to death."

Asked whether the State Department is aware that an American child is being held without charge by Israel, a State Department official responded, "We are aware of these reports but have no comment due to privacy considerations."

Salahedeem says he has an appointment on July 5 with the US consulate, which had not yet responded to a request for comment.

The Palestinian prisoner rights organization Addameer reports that Tariq is one of eleven Palestinians who were beaten and arrested in Shuafat on Thursday, many of whom were minors. "The continued state-sanctioned violence against children is unlawful and unacceptable," Addameer stated in an appeal for protests against Tariq's treatment.

"Addameer urges immediate action and calls on the United Nations, the International Committee of the Red Cross, the United States consulate and all regional embassies and consulates, human rights organizations and journalists to attend Tarek Abu Khdeir's hearing on Sunday 6 July to investigate the intensified aggression against Palestinian children," the group added.

[Update: To date the U.S. government has done nothing to condemn the beating and arrest nor to assist the family. In

addition, the Israeli court extended the detention of 14 Palestinians from Jerusalem, according to Palestinian Prisoners' Society lawyer Mufeed al-Hajj. Tariq Abu Khdeir's was extended until Monday July 7, likely an effort to block planned actions at his hearing that was scheduled for Sunday, July 6. In addition Mahmoud Abu Khdeir, 16, Mohammad Abu Nie, 15, Karim

Abu Khdeir, 23, Amer Hassan, 32, Shawish Fathi, 22, all from Shufat also had their detention extended until July 7. The detention of Mohammad Gosheh, 21, Ashraf al-Zatari, 26, Fayez al-Baytuni, 18, Ahmad Salhab, 15, Nasser Abu Sbeih, 21, Khalid Abu Sneineh, 24, Alaa Abu Laban, and Shafi Salhab, 18, was extended to Sunday, July 6.]

## **Report: Israeli Cruelty to Palestinian Children, From Abduction to Prison**

*Euro-Mid Observer for Human Rights, June 30, 2014*

As Israel conducts a wave of mass home break-ins and arrests across the West Bank in retaliation for the alleged kidnapping of three youth from one of its illegal settlements, a new report documents that Palestinian children are at much greater, ongoing risk from Israeli forces. According to the report issued today by the Euro-Mid Observer for Human Rights, Israel seized an estimated 2,500 Palestinian children and youth between January 2010 and June 2014 – with approximately 400 just 12-15 years old.

“The Israeli police or military typically break into homes in the middle of the night or take youth right off the streets without telling them what they are charged with or informing their parents, as required by the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights,” says Ihsan Adel, a legal officer at Euro-Mid. “How is that different from the reported kidnapping of the Israeli students? And yet it is occurring every day, every year. Where is the international outrage?”

To date, Israeli authorities have raided more than 1,500 Palestinian homes and businesses and arrested more than 550 Palestinians, in a search for the kidnappers and an attempt to wipe out the Hamas political party, which it has labeled as responsible without citing evidence. Six Palestinians have died as a result – including a 14-year-old boy who was shot in the chest at point-blank range and a 78-year-old woman who suffered a heart attack during a house raid.

Yet the Euro-Mid report documents continuing abductions of Palestinian youth and children, as well as numerous human rights violations such as torture and coerced confessions during detention, in violation of international laws. The Euro-Mid findings echo earlier conclusions by other international bodies. In a February 2013 report, UNICEF concluded that “ill-treatment of children who come into contact with the Israeli military detention system appears to be widespread, systematic and institutionalized throughout the process.”

Euro-Mid is calling for equal coverage of the plight of Palestinian children by the international media, and for the signatory states of the Geneva Conventions and other international stakeholders to bring all pressure at their disposal (including denial of financial pacts and assistance) on Israel to immediately halt violations of their human rights.



“The disappearance or ill treatment of any child is tragic and should outrage all humans with consciences,” says Sandra Owen, a policy officer at the Euro-Mid. “Are not the lives and liberties of Palestinian children worth as much?”

*The Euro-Mid Observer for Human Rights is a nonprofit, non-governmental human rights organization dedicated to exposing human rights violations and defending human rights.*

ISRAEL'S OPERATION BROTHERS' KEEPER

# Joint Open Letter Demanding End to Collective Punishment of Palestinians

*Palestinian Human Rights Organizations Council (PHROC)*

*We reprint below the PHROC Joint Open Letter to the European Union High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy calling for action against Israel's crime of collective punishment and other human rights violations. The call can equally be made to the U.S. government, the main backer and defender of Israel and its occupation of Palestine.)*

\* \* \*

On 12 June 2014, three Israeli settlers disappeared from the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT). Since their disappearance, Israel has engaged in large-scale searches, closures, and raids across the OPT, resulting in the killing of two Palestinians, Ahmad Sama'da, 20, and Mahmoud Dudeen, 15. Additionally, one Palestinian was shot in the head and is said to be in a state of clinical death. As of 21 June, Al-Haq has documented the detention of approximately 454 Palestinians across the West Bank.[1] Further, 51 of the detained Palestinians had been released in the Shalit prison exchange deal in 2011. In total, 12 members of the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) have been arrested since 12 June, including the head of the PLC.[2] The large-scale wave of arrests is reportedly accompanied with permission being given to Israeli interrogators to resort to “moderate physical pressure” against the Palestinian detainees.[3] During late-night house raids, Israel has also been ransacking houses and destroying private possessions while intimidating and harassing the residents of the West Bank in reprisal for the missing settlers. The closure of checkpoints, particularly the Container checkpoint east of the City of Bethlehem, has led to further restrictions on the freedom of movement of approximately 100,000 Palestinians, many of whom are university students. Furthermore, many Palestinian residents in the West Bank have been forced to limit their movement as a result of a dramatic escalation in settler violence.

As the Occupying Power, Israel is obligated to carry out its search for the missing settlers in line with its obligations under international human rights law (IHRL) and international humanitarian law (IHL). IHRL obligates Israel to respect the right to life of Palestinians by ensuring that the use of force and firearms by law enforcement officials is carried out in a manner that minimizes damage and injury and respects and preserves human life. IHRL further prohibits arbitrary or unlawful interference with privacy, family, home and correspondence and affords all persons the right to liberty and security of person. As such, Israel may not arrest and detain Palestinians in a sweeping fashion; there must be a legal basis for each and every individual arrest. Furthermore, all persons that are arrested must be treated with humanity and respect for their inherent dignity. Israel is absolutely prohibited from resorting to torture, cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment. Unlike the ruling of the Israeli Supreme Court, Israel is not allowed to inflict so called ‘moderate physical pressure’ against Palestinians, regardless of the situation.

Under IHRL, Israel is also prohibited from restricting the freedom of movement of the thousands of Palestinian civilians as a form of collective punishment. The grave infringement currently imposed on Palestinians in the OPT, in particular residents of Hebron, is not proportionate nor necessary to protect Israeli national security and is highly intrusive.



Israel is also bound by IHL in the OPT. Particularly, Article 27 of the Fourth Geneva Convention defines the unequivocal duties of the Occupying Power, including the obligation to respect persons, their honor, freedom from physical or moral coercion and freedom from collective punishment. This entails a duty on Israeli occupying forces to protect civilians from all acts of violence or threats thereof, against humiliating punishment, and to ensure that homes do not become the object of arbitrary interference. While Article 27(4) of the Fourth Geneva Convention authorizes the Occupying Power to take stringent measures of “control and security,” such as imposing restrictions on movement or depriving individuals of their liberty, these can be adopted only on necessary security grounds, and in a manner that is not discriminatory.

Significantly, the collective punishment of the civilian population is absolutely prohibited under Article 33 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, which forbids the Occupying Power to use “[c]ollective penalties and likewise all measures of intimidation [...]” Article 75(2)(d) of the First Additional Protocol to the Geneva Conventions, reflective of customary law, confirms that collective punishments are prohibited at any time. The Israeli army has previously claimed to use closures as preventative and deterrent measures, despite international law recognizing their effect as being punitive and collective, in particular due to their indiscriminate nature.

The methods employed in Israel’s investigation into the disappearances of the settlers are indiscriminate in their nature and are undermining the fundamental rights of the Palestinian population. Article 26 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights provides that all persons are entitled to equal protection before the

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## COLLECTIVE PUNISHMENT IS A CRIME

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law without discrimination. Furthermore, the violations that are being carried out are based on mere speculation regarding the circumstances surrounding the disappearance of the settlers, the possible identity of those responsible and their location. As such, these measures indicate Israel's

intention to impose punitive measures against large portions of the Palestinian population in violation of Article 33 of the Fourth Geneva Convention prohibiting reprisals against protected persons and their property, as well as collective punishment.

Furthermore, threats by the Israeli Government to expel Hamas officials from the West Bank to the Gaza Strip on the basis of allegations that the organization is responsible for the settlers' disappearances not only amounts to indiscriminate collective punishment but also violates Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, which prohibits forcible transfers and deportations of protected persons in occupied territory. The violation of this provision amounts to a grave breach of the Geneva Conventions and as such may constitute a war crime under Article 8(2)(a)(vii) of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

The manner in which Israel is carrying out so called Operation Brothers' Keeper, including threats issued regarding Hamas officials, the re-arrest of Palestinian prisoners that were released under the Shalit prisoner exchange deal, the increasing number of administrative detainees despite an ongoing hunger strike in protest of Israel's illegitimate use of administrative detention, and the large scale closures and raids, raises grave concern regarding the actual purpose of Israel's actions in the OPT — one that is not consistent with the alleged purpose of the investigation into the disappearance of the settlers.

The EU's [and U.S.] response to Israeli measures undertaken in the context of the disappearing settlers has dangerously ignored Israeli violations and failed to distinguish between lawful measures employed by Israel to locate the settlers and measures that infringe on the rights of Palestinians. The search for the settlers may not be used as a pretext to kill, arrest, torture, and infringe on the privacy of Palestinians. The EU statement of 17 June 2014, and subsequent statement under Item 4 during the 26th session of the Human Rights Council illustrate an utter and worrying disregard for Israel's unlawful acts following the disappearance of the three

settlers. An accurate analysis of Israel's response demands that the EU, including in international fora such as Item 7 of the 26th Human Rights Council session:

- strongly condemn Israeli actions amounting to IHL and IHRL violations undertaken during so-called Operation Brother's Keeper;
- demand that Israel strictly adhere to its responsibilities as an Occupying Power and discontinue the investigation in its current form;
- demand that Israel releases Palestinians arbitrarily detained, including administrative detainees;
- demand that Israel promptly investigate, in accordance with international law standards, and hold to account the perpetrators involved in the killing of Palestinians, including Ahmad Sama'da and Mahmoud Jihad Muhammad Dudeen;
- demand that Israel calls on the Attorney General to clearly articulate to all security officials that torture is absolutely prohibited and to hold to account any Israeli official who resorts to it;

One must consider that Israel is obligated to protect the occupied Palestinian people — including during investigations surrounding Israelis. The EU must not give Israel a *carte blanche* for undertaking any measure — regardless of its implications on the Palestinians — they deem fit in their blindsided search for the three settlers. We recall that in 2011, Israel also engaged in collective punishment when carrying out a large-scale investigation in the village of 'Awarta (Nablus governorate) and that the failure of the EU to properly address Israel's so called investigation can only be seen as encouraging Israeli violations of Palestinians' rights. To that end, we ask that the EU take strong action to ensure Israel's violations of international law during this investigation is not encouraged but rather restrained. Finally, it must be recalled that each individual EU member state, as High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention are under an obligation to ensure respect for its provisions [as is the U.S. — VOR ed note].

Signed,

Adameer Prisoners' Support and Human Rights Association, Aldameer Association for Human Rights, Al-Haq, Al Mezan Center for Human Rights, Badil Resource Center for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights, Defense for Children International — Palestine Section, Ensan Center for Human Rights and Democracy, Hurryyat Center for Defense of Liberties and Civil Rights, Jerusalem Center for Legal Aid and Human Rights, Palestinian Center for Human Rights, Ramallah Center for Human Rights Studies, Women's Center for Legal Aid and Counseling

### Notes:

[1] According to Al-Haq data, 200 Palestinians were arrested in Hebron, 78 in Nablus, 48 in Ramallah, 34 in Jenin, 23 in Tulkarem, 7 in Tubas, 1 in Jericho, 13 in Qalqiliya, 30 in Bethlehem and 20 in Jerusalem.

[2] According to Al-Haq data, one PLC member was arrested in Tulkarem, 3 in Nablus, 5 in Ramallah, 1 in Tubas and 2 in Hebron.

[3] <http://www.stoptorture.org.il/en/node/2007>



# Missing Settlers Become Weapons in a War on Unity

*Ramzy Baroud, Palestine Chronicle, June 16, 2014*

(The article below was written before the three teenage Israeli settlers were found dead and before the U.S.-backed and funded bombing of Gaza by Israel and escalation of the mass arrests and collective punishment of Palestinians. More than 450 Palestinians have been arrested, homes ransacked, and more. The commentary has continued significance in addressing the effort by the U.S/Israel to block the development of a unified Palestinian government.)

\* \* \*

When three teenage Israeli settlers from the illegal Jewish settlement of Gush Etzion went missing on 12 June, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu saw an opportunity to discredit the fledgling Palestinian unity government.

His statements and the actions of the Israeli army since have centered on indicting the Palestinian movement Hamas, while also holding the Palestinian Authority (PA) of Mahmoud Abbas responsible for the safety of the settlers.

But is there a link between the newly formed Palestinian unity government and the safety of illegal settlers in the West Bank? According to Netanyahu there is.

Scores of Palestinians have been rounded up by the Israeli army since the disappearances in what could be considered a mass arrest campaign, mostly in the Hebron region. Many of those arrested were Hamas members, including senior figures in the movement.

“Those who carried out the kidnapping of our youngsters are Hamas people,” Netanyahu insisted at a cabinet meeting on Sunday.

Hamas spokesman Sami Abu Zuhri has since described the statements by Netanyahu as “silly”. He added that targeting Hamas figures through arrests was “aimed at breaking the will of the Hamas movement in the West Bank”.

Israeli officials were quick to link the disappearance of the settlers – the 16-year-olds Naftali Frenkel and Gilad Shaar and the 19-year-old Eyal Yifrach – to the newly-formed unity government.

A day after the three went missing, US Secretary of State John Kerry phoned Netanyahu to express his government’s concern. According to the daily Jerusalem Post, he also contacted PA President Mahmoud Abbas with the same message.

The PA is reportedly cooperating. “The Israelis and the Palestinian Authority are working closely together on efforts to find

the three teenagers and to hopefully bring a quick resolution to the matter,” a Washington official told the post.

No concerns were offered the regarding hundreds of Palestinian children and teenagers in Israeli jails. For some reason, both issues are treated as entirely different subjects.

Meanwhile, Netanyahu is capitalizing on the story in every way he can. In his call with Kerry, he claimed that the alleged kidnappings were “the destructive result” of the newly formed PA unity government.

Since PA Prime Minister Rami Hamdallah announced a transitional government as a first step towards reconciliation between Hamas and Fatah, Netanyahu along with other Israeli officials have been working hard to thwart its mission.

Netanyahu is insisting that the unity government must be dissolved and the unity pact with Hamas dismissed if he is ever to return to the negotiations table. But what talks is he referring to?

US-backed peace talks failed this year to take a step forward because Netanyahu carried on seizing Palestinian land and expanding settlements. He did not even fulfill the largely symbolic promise of releasing a few Palestinian political prisoners – something that would have allowed Abbas to save face and carry on with the talks.

Abbas on 12 June dropped the condition of an Israeli settlement freeze, and was ready to settle with the release of some long-serving prisoners, yet Netanyahu still found this unacceptable.

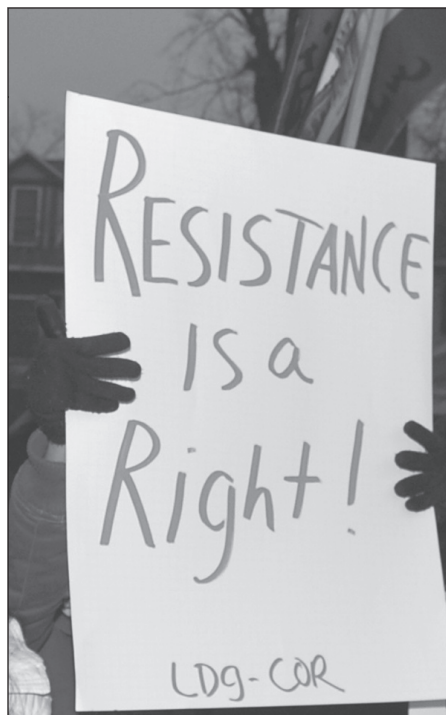
In a statement two days later to Israel Radio, Netanyahu described the gesture as “meaningless”.

Abbas’ moves reflect how difficult his position remains since his Fatah party and Hamas reached an agreement in the Shati’ refugee camp in April, which led to the formation of a transitional government in June.

The agreement left many points of contention to be discussed and settled by various sub-committees with uncertain chances of success. Since then, disagreements have flared over crack-downs on Hamas supporters in the West Bank, unpaid salaries and other matters.

But this is only part of Abbas’ dilemma. His security forces are allowed to currently operate in the West Bank – but only under the watchful eye of the Israeli army.

In return for allowing the PA a space for its operation, PA



forces need to be involved in “security coordination” aimed at securing illegal Jewish settlements, reining in Palestinian groups and offering a line of defense for the Israeli army, which in reality is the one and only ruler of the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

Unity or no unity, Netanyahu’s expectations are unchanged: “I expect you to help in the return of the kidnapped youths and the capture of the kidnappers,” Netanyahu told Abbas in a telephone interview on June 16.

If these are indeed kidnappings, they could have been carried out other groups. But Israel’s targeting of Hamas can only be politically motivated.

Netanyahu certainly benefits from tension between the Hamas and Fatah movements, and anything that threatens a collapse of the unity government. Hamas had already criticized Abbas for cooperating with Israel.

The longer it takes to find the settlers, the more political leverage Netanyahu will have. “The Hamas kidnappers went out from territory controlled by the Palestinian Authority and returned to territory controlled by the Palestinian Authority,” according to Netanyahu, in an carefully worded indictment of both Hamas and the PA.

Netanyahu is even mulling over the deportation of Hamas members outside the West Bank, a dangerous option that could complicate relations between Palestinian factions and drive many Hamas members underground.

For Israel, all of this is creating the necessary distraction needed to ensure the downfall of the unity government, and the postponement of any discussion pertaining to the return to peace

talks. For Netanyahu, it is a win-win situation.

Abbas however is bound by his “commitment” to Israel’s security, a condition through which he continues to receive support from the U.S. government. Recently, he even went as far as describing collaboration with the Israeli army as sacred.

Even chief negotiator Saeb Erekat, himself discredited by many Palestinians because of his central role in the Palestine Papers scandal, is attacking Abbas for his failure to take any action at all. In a leaked recording, he refers to Abbas as “discredited” and “useless.” [...]

Under these difficult circumstances, it is not easy to imagine the attainment of real unity. Meanwhile, Netanyahu will continue to push with all of his might to guarantee Palestinian failure.

The fact that Netanyahu would go as far as blaming a government of Palestinian technocrats operating under Israeli military occupation for failing to protect illegal Jewish settlers is a testament to the conceit of the Israeli government.

Regardless of the circumstances behind the disappearance of the Jewish settlers, this highlights Netanyahu’s determination to ensure the collapse of the Palestinian unity government at all costs. Yet considering the many options at his disposal, he might well succeed.

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## Children’s Lives in the Balance: Is One Worth More Than Another?

*Medea Benjamin and Pam Bailey, CodePink , July 2, 2014*

With the news that the bodies of three missing Israeli teens had been found in a field not far from the stretch of road where they disappeared June 12, people everywhere reacted rightly with sorrow and anger.

Eyal Yifrah, 19, Gilad Shaar, 16, and Naftali Fraenkel, also 16, were students who lived with their families in a Jewish-only settlement near the Palestinian city of Hebron in the West Bank. The settlement and others like it have been declared illegal by the International Court of Justice because they are located in occupied territory and impede Palestinians’ liberty of movement and right to employment, health and education. We must condemn such violence.

We must also condemn the collective punishment and violence unleashed by the government of Israel in response. To date, the Israeli police and military have broken into and ransacked 1,500 homes, businesses and schools in its rampage, arresting more than 550 residents. [...] As this article was written, the 680,000 residents of greater Hebron had been surrounded by angry troops and settlers, with ominous reports trickling out of

death and mayhem.

Imagine if similar homicides occurred in your town. Despite the tragedy of the crimes and the desperate desire to find the perpetrators, would society countenance the widespread ransacking of property, imprisonment of hundreds and the death of innocents? No, of course not. So why should it be considered an acceptable response among a population [punished by] decades of military occupation?

To fully understand just what happened and why, an analysis must begin before the June 12 disappearance of the three teenagers, residents of a Jewish-only settlement near the Palestinian city of Hebron in the West Bank. Rather, it should start with April 23, when the two main Palestinian political factions, Fatah (which had governed the West Bank) and Hamas (which filled the same role for the Gaza Strip) announced formation of a unity government. While the Fatah-run Palestinian Authority has long cooperated with Israeli security forces, Hamas continues to actively resist Israel’s control over the Palestinian territory. The announcement of the reconciliation was condemned by

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who was enraged when the U.S. and other governments instead took a wait-and-see approach.

When the three Israeli teens disappeared, Netanyahu immediately blamed Hamas, although it has reportedly denied responsibility. Israel launched a campaign to punish any person associated with the party, as well as those it wanted to target for other reasons (such as previously released prisoners). An informed observer cannot help but conclude that he seized on the personal tragedy of the families involved to pursue a broader political goal. Israel's intention to "perform a root canal to uproot everything green [Hamas-related] in the West Bank" was announced on the national Army Radio, while Economy Minister

Naftali Bennett promised to "turn membership of Hamas into an entry ticket to hell." A high-ranking Israel Defense Forces (IDF) officer told the Israeli newspaper *Haaretz* that the mass arrests are "a kind of thorough cleaning." Israel, he said, had decided "to use the upcoming days to arrest anyone 'infected' with Hamas." In one Israeli news source, an IDF officer even admitted that the operation had been planned ahead of time, and that its goal was not to find the boys, but provoke unrest.

With the discovery of the Israeli teens' bodies, Israeli military and the settlers intensified the attack on Hebron and other towns, with a 17-year-old boy shot in the Jenin refugee camp. Renewing his vow that "Hamas will pay," Netanyahu ordered an escalation of airstrikes on the Gaza Strip – more than 40 in just the first night, terrorizing the entire population of 1.8 million. Although the strikes in part are in retaliation for rockets shot into Israel by a faction that is not affiliated with Hamas, Netanyahu's own words make the connection clear.

According to the prisoner advocacy group Addameer, about a quarter of the hundreds of arrested Palestinians are being placed in "administrative detention," a procedure that allows the Israeli military to hold individuals indefinitely based on secret information without charging them or allowing them to stand trial. Israel routinely uses administrative detention in violation of the strict parameters established by international law, claiming to be in a continuous state of emergency since its inception in 1948. In



addition, says Addameer, administrative detention is frequently used – in direct contravention to international law – for collective and criminal punishment rather than for the prevention of a future threat.

Children and youth are frequently targets. Defense for Children International has documented the killing of more than 1,400 Palestinian children by Israeli soldiers or settlers since 2000, of which only 40 were found to be active participants in hostilities. That is the equivalent of one Palestinian child killed by an Israeli every three days for the past 13 years.

In addition, a report issued this week by the Euro-Mid Observer for Human Rights documents that 2,000-3,000 Palestinian minors have been seized and detained by Israeli forces every year for the last five

years, an average of 200 a month, with some as young as 12.

"The Israeli police or military typically break into homes in the middle of the night or take youth right off the streets without telling them what they are charged with or informing their parents, as required by the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights," said Ihsan Adel, legal advisor for Euro-Mid. "How is that different from the kidnapping of the Israeli students? And yet it is occurring every day, every year. Where is the international outrage?" The Euro-Mid report states that rarely are youth informed why they are being arrested – at least, not until they are interrogated, without counsel from parents or attorneys – often while shackled to chairs and deprived of sleep. Yet article 37 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (of which Israel is a signatory) states that youth and their parents must be informed of the reasons behind their detention, as well as allowed legal assistance.

UNICEF, the World Health Organization and the U.N. Commission on Human Rights each have found that Israel bases its punishments on confessions that its interrogators coerce from children who are not represented by lawyers. Is it surprising that an estimated 95 percent of these children "confess"?

Children are not pawns, pieces to be used in a game for purposes of publicity or leverage. That is true for Palestinians and doubly so for Israelis, who operate from a position of unequal power – that of occupier. [...]

### 1 • Hunger Strike Continues

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Solidarity strikers stopped their strikes due to their deteriorating health conditions and the Israeli Prison Service's (IPS) refusal to negotiate with the hunger strikers. Addameer Prisoners Support and Human Rights Association is deeply concerned about the deteriorating health conditions of the hunger strikers, especially in light of the degrading and inhumane treatment they are subjected to in Israeli prisons and hospitals.

#### Humiliating Daily Suffering

Signed affidavits from several detainees have confirmed the continued policy of shackling the hunger strikers in hospital 24 hours a day with their legs tied to the bed continuously and one hand shackled to the bed for 12 hours (from 7PM to 7AM) every night. Prisoners have also described the horrific and degrading conditions they are subjected to in order to use the restroom or shower. The intentionally humiliating process has been described by a hunger striker in Barzilai Medical Center:

"When one of us needs to use the bathroom, he is taken to the bathroom (a few meters away from the bed) with his hands and legs shackled. When they reach the bathroom door, the guards unshackle his hands and keep the bathroom door open... If a detainee needs to use the bathroom while another is using it, he has to wait for the whole process to end... The process of showering is very complicated and humiliating. The detainee's bed shackles are removed and then his hands and legs are shackled until he reaches the bathroom. The hand shackles are removed so he can take off his shirt and then they are shackled again. Then his leg shackles are removed so he can take off his pants and undergarments while his hands remain shackled... The door is kept open while the detainee showers, and there is no shower curtain. The guard allows the detainee to choose if he prefers his hands or legs to be shackled during the shower, but in both circumstances, the bathing process is very difficult and humiliating."

The hunger strikers have also complained they are under video surveillance 24 hours a day, as well as the lack of privacy and the continuous threats and harassment the IPS subjects them to. Their degrading treatment violates basic principles of international human rights and standards, and Addameer maintains that the detainees should be released immediately without condition, or held in humane conditions as stipulated by international law

throughout the duration of their hunger strike.

#### Health Conditions

The visited detainees have all lost a significant amount of weight, and are dealing with low blood pressure, low pulse, and kidney problems, which doctors have warned could possibly be permanent. Detainees are also experiencing extreme dizziness, causing them to lose consciousness even in the middle of conversations or medical examinations.

One detainee who suffers from several pre-existing health conditions, such as diabetes and high blood pressure, has seen these problems intensify since the start of his hunger strike. Now he faces internal tissue damage, as well as numbness in his legs, severe shortage of breath and vitamin deficiency. His life is in critical danger if he continues his hunger strike.

The detainees have been approached by the prison hospital staff to determine their wishes in case they lose consciousness. They have maintained that the doctors should act professionally and according to medical ethics standards.

The drastically deteriorating health conditions of the detainees coincides with the proposed force feeding law currently being brought before the Knesset that will allow for the force-feeding of Palestinian hunger strikers. If this bill is to pass, it will sanction Israeli torture of Palestinian hunger strikers in a systematic and widespread way.

#### Determination to Escalate the Strike

The administrative detainees, steadfast in their position to end the policy of administrative detention, have promised to escalate their strike if their treatment continues or worsens. This promise comes in the midst of the current arrest campaigns since the disappearance of three illegal settlers, in which 147 new administrative detention orders have been issued, raising the total number of people currently being held in administrative detention to 343, the highest number held since August 2009.

From their hospital beds the hunger strikers remain steadfast in their cause: "Administrative detention contradicts democratic and humane values, especially in the arbitrary way that Israel uses it, as there is no justification. There should be strong resistance by everyone in prison or outside against this policy because it greatly harms people, their dignity, family and children."

## Hunger Strike Demands End to Indefinite Detention Without Charges

*Nora Barrows-Friedman, June 19, 2014*

*(We reprint below a radio interview by Nora Barrows-Friedman with Gavan Kelly of the Palestinian prisoner support organization Addameer.)*

\* \* \*

**Nora Barrows-Friedman:** Give us an update on the situation right now; it's been about sixty days since the mass hunger

strike began. How many Palestinian prisoners are still on hunger strike in Israeli jails, and can you talk about the general medical conditions for them right now?

**Gavan Kelly:** At the moment, we're on the [55th] day of the hunger strike [now 70 days]. The hunger strike began on April 24 of this year, when about ninety or a hundred Palestinian

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## SUPPORT HUNGER STRIKERS

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administrative detainees joined the mass hunger strike in protest of their continued administrative detention. The situation inside the prisons is pretty, pretty bad in terms of their medical situation. They're suffering from a range of different ailments, including dizziness, loss of consciousness, liver problems, internal bleeding, obviously loss of weight, etcetera. So it's really — we've really reached a very critical moment on the 55th day.

**NBF:** Gavan, can you talk about Israel's force-feeding bill; Netanyahu actually pointed to the U.S. treatment of hunger striking detainees in Guantánamo to justify his plan to force feed prisoners in Israeli jails. What are the ethical and medical concerns Addameer has here, with this force-feeding plan? Has it already started?

**GK:** This is probably the most worrying development of the current hunger strikes. If you look at the hunger strikes that have been going on for the last couple of years, since the second half of 2011, not one day has passed where there has not been at least one Palestinian on hunger strike. And the Israelis have failed to deal with the hunger strikes. We consider that their way to deal with the hunger strikes is through introducing force-feeding.

Now, if they introduce force-feeding, and it is quite likely that this is going to happen, it is going to have serious implications for the health of the current hunger strikers but also future hunger strikers. Force-feeding is never medically acceptable, it is torture. It is considered torture by the World Medical Association as per the Malta Declaration and the Tokyo Declaration. And it is also considered torture by the Israeli Medical Association, who has in fact instructed their members not to partake in force-feeding. But Netanyahu has turned around and basically said "we will find the physicians. So whatever the Israeli Medical Association has said, we will find the physicians." And I have no doubt that this will happen.

So if you consider that 125 — we have documented 125 people on hunger strike, but in actual fact, we think the figures are a lot higher, it almost could be 250, 300 people [...] In terms of the force-feeding, we are very very worried about what is going to happen in the next few weeks.

The other option by the Israelis — the first option is the introduction of force-feeding. This is one possible scenario. The other

scenario is that the Israelis will let the prisoners die.

We think there's a strong possibility that this will happen, given the recent media reports and the Israeli media, where the head of the Shin Bet [secret service] has advised Prime Minister Netanyahu and said basically it was a mistake to negotiate with the hunger strikers in 2012, and advised him not to negotiate with the hunger strikers. He feels that the reaction, should a hunger striker or a number of hunger strikers die, he feels that the reaction is that they will be able to manage it. The mass protests in the West Bank and the rockets that will come from Gaza — they are basically playing a game of Russian roulette, but they feel they are able to deal with it. [...]

**NBF:** Gavan, you mentioned the disappearance of the three Israeli settlers in the West Bank earlier this week. The Israeli military has done massive sweeping arrest campaigns, they have arrested approximately 200 Palestinians across the West Bank in just the past few days, including eight members of the Palestinian Legislative Council. A twenty-year-old young man was shot in Jalazone refugee camp on Monday, on June 16, Palestinians were injured at Qalandiya checkpoint near Ramallah, including a seventeen-year-old boy. What is Addameer's response to the closures and sweeping arrest campaigns, including the arrest of Palestinian politicians?

**GK:** We condemn this wholeheartedly. This is a clear example of collective punishment against the Palestinian people. The disappearance of the three Israeli settlers has led to another attempt by the Israelis to crush Hamas, when you consider that we have had 200 arrests since Thursday, 80 percent of these are Hamas related, and they are also taking it a lot further. Israeli officials have come out in the last 48 hours and said this is basically the beginning — we are going to crush Hamas. And they are using it as a pretext to do exactly that. It is very convenient that it comes so close after the reconciliation, and five or six months before the Palestinian elections, and obviously Israel does not want Hamas to play a role, and this is its response.

Nobody's surprised [by] this response, and in fact we think it is going to be a lot worse. But yet, again, Israel will do whatever it wants, free in the knowledge that it can do so without any repercussions or response from anybody apart from the lame statements that we continuously get from the European Union, the United States of America and the United Nations. So things are going to get worse. The next week is going to be quite difficult — already, things are difficult, and they are also talking about putting pressure on the prisoners as well, as a means to pressure Hamas. They are also talking about placing the 200 people that have been arrested over the last four days in administrative detention.

So within a few days, if this does happen, we are going to have the administrative detainees go from approximately 200 to 400. They are also talking about transferring the Hamas hunger strikers at the moment, to Gaza. This is the Israeli response. And this is just the beginning. So you can imagine what the future holds. [Note: Mass arrests of Palestinians and holding them without charge or trial is continuing and arrests now number more than 640, including elected representatives of the Palestine Legislative Council and another 170 in indefinite detention — VOR Ed. note]

INTERVIEW WITH THE SON OF A STRIKER

# Hunger Strikers Show True Meaning of Justice and Love

*(We reprint below a radio interview by Nora Barrows-Friedman with Basil Farraj, the son of one of the hunger strikers. Subheads by VOR.)*

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**Basil Farraj:** My father, Abdul Razzaq Farraj, is the administrative and financial director of the Union of Agricultural Work Committees. He is 51 years old. He is from al-Jalazone refugee camp, which is a refugee camp in Ramallah city. This refugee camp was established in 1948. My father's family fled from Lydd during the Nakba.

My father is a very — I always describe him as a silent man, but behind that silence there is a lot of determination, a lot of love, a lot of motivation, a lot of devotion for the cause of Palestine and for justice in its purest sense. Some would say that [it is] because he is my father — but I think a lot of people agree in Palestine that he is one of those people in Palestine who have devoted all of their life for Palestine. But actually one of the few ones who has remained true to his principles as things have changed.

I'm not sure how much detail I should go into here, but I think a reflection of that would be the current hunger strike that he is undertaking with the other nearly 125 other Palestinian administrative detainees. My father has entered his 48th day on the hunger strike. It is not the first time he has gone on a hunger strike, but this one in particular is his longest. And every message we get from him — actually, we only got one message — it has been a message of hope and inspiration. We feel like we are the prisoners, not him. But we know at the same time that his body is very weak, that he has lost more than 12 kilograms (about 26 pounds) of weight. We know that he is in a hospital bed and probably shackled to the hospital bed, but still he manages to send us messages of hope and inspiration, even from these circumstances.

He is a fighter for justice, but at the same time, he has an immense love for life that is making him do this. And I think we have never doubted this for a second — that his love for life is why he is doing this right now. And he and other hunger strikers are an inspiration to all of us.

**Nora Barrows-Friedman:** Basil, as you said, this is not the first time your father has been in an Israeli jail; he was jailed for six years in 1985, and was arrested five more times over twenty years from 1994 to this past February; each time he was put in administrative detention. This is also not the first time he went on hunger strike to protest his detention without charge or trial. Can you talk about his most recent arrest last February, what happened when he was arrested and why he is on hunger strike again now?

## Strikers Demand End to Indefinite Detention

**BF:** Yes. So he was arrested on 25 February this year. The Israelis came to our house at 2:30am, a lot of them — a lot of the military

soldiers came into the house. Usually they would take longer, but this time they came to the house, they looked for my dad, and they said, "Come with us." He asked, "Where is the officer in command? I want to see my arrest warrant," and they said, "We don't have one, just come with us."

It is usual. He knew he was going to be put under administrative detention, because that is how he has been arrested, as you have mentioned, for the past five times. But this arrest is different, because, as you have noted, he is on hunger strike and he is doing this now with other hunger strikers. They are demanding an end to administrative detention. This is a policy that reaches every Palestinian. It could place me and any other Palestinian on the street under arrest for an indefinite amount of time, without charge, without trial, based on information that the Israeli commander and the Israeli judge as well, [points] to in the "secret file."

And neither the lawyer nor the prisoner can see the secret file, so they are unable to refute it or to use it to say that these accusations are not correct, because you cannot see them. So in this hunger strike, they are demanding the end to the use of this policy that defies international law. Under international law, this is only allowed under emergency situations, and only when the prisoners are allowed to see why they are being held, and only when they are subject to a definite amount of time. Clearly, Israel is in defiance of all these norms, and this is not unusual for the Israeli state; but for this policy in particular, it is a cornerstone for the Israeli occupation. It has led to the arrest of thousands of Palestinians since 1967, and onwards. Yesterday they arrested 150 people from Hebron and Nablus, and they were put under this policy.

That is why they are doing this hunger strike right now, and I think it is important to know that this hunger strike is not for the prisoners themselves. They are doing it for me and for other Palestinian people, because really this policy can reach any Palestinian, at any time, in any place. This is different from other hunger strikes in the past, because the other ones were — the prisoners would demand, for example, an extra TV channel, or they would demand having an extra book allowed per month. But this one is a political hunger strike, and that is why we are worried as the families of hunger strikers, because we know that the Israeli state is not showing any concern for the lives of these hunger strikers and they are continuously violating their rights.

The reports that we have had, Nora, is that the hunger strikers were shackled to the hospital beds, their right hands with their left legs to not allow movement. And some of the hunger strikers in hospitals — the numbers say that there are seventy hunger strikers in hospitals — some of them have had to drink dirty tap water, which led to a lot of bleeding in their stomachs. We have also had reports that when my father was in isolation, his cell was being raided and he was violently beaten, even though he is on hunger strike. The

lawyer told us that they are not allowed a one-hour walk outside. Usually they get a one-hour walk outside and they are being denied that. So I would assume that they are in their cell or their hospital beds 24 hours a day.

As you know, family visits are denied and were denied the first day of the hunger strike. We have not been able to see my father, or the other hunger strikers for that matter, since the beginning of the hunger strike. The Israeli state — all these measures are punitive measures that the Israeli state is using to pressure the hunger strikers to end their hunger strike. But the hunger strikers are very close to their second month. They are clearly defying these punitive measures.

But on the humanitarian level, Israel is in defiance of international law and international norms. Why are we not permitted to see our loved ones? They are on the verge of death.

A lot of them — we have got reports that they are on their hospital beds, they are bleeding, they are nauseous, some of them might face full-body paralysis, and so we are very concerned about this. And the Israeli state, again, even with their force-feeding bill, they are showing no sign of listening to the hunger strikers and no intention to negotiate with them. And it is very worrying for us, as families of hunger strikers.

### Effort to Repress Families and Resistance

**NBF:** Basil, what kind of impact has the repeated arrest and administrative detention and now this hunger strike [of your father] had on you and your family?

**BF:** This policy in particular, it is very cruel. Again, it is nothing unusual from the Israeli occupation, but in particular, this policy has put us in a continuous state of waiting. We do not know when my father is going to be released, we do not know when we are going to be able to see him again in the house. Our moments of joy have been stolen away from us, because my father has been stolen away from us — during my graduation, my brother's graduation, my cousin's first son, my cousin's wedding — it goes on and on.

Again, this is the daily life of a lot of Palestinians, but this policy in particular — because it is very cruel, it intentionally leaves us in this state. The Israeli state could easily try these prisoners or release them. But they intend to put us in this state, because this policy does not only target the prisoners, but it also targets the families. My family has suffered immensely from this. Because as you have noted, since 1994, my father has been arrested five times, and all of them under this policy.

I remember in 2002, when his second arrest came through, he was arrested for four and a half years under this policy. And I remember clearly waiting next to the phone, all my family would gather. My uncles, my cousins, my brother, all of us — we would gather an hour before his release date, and then we'd get a phone call, sometimes one minute before, from my father saying that "I'm



sorry, I have got six more months." I could sense the sadness in his voice. He wanted to tell us, "I'm going to be with you really soon." But then he gets the detention renewal warrant, sometimes seconds before his arrest is over.

I think it has a lot of psychological impact on the family and on the prisoner as well, and the Israelis well intend to do so. It is part of their systematic violations of Palestinians' rights. And I think that is why the hunger strikers are doing this now, because they are fed up with it, and most importantly, as they have told us in their messages, they are doing this for us, for the Palestinian people. Because it is a cornerstone of the Israeli occupation, and it has to end. They are

putting their lives on the frontlines for this, and they should be praised — they are a cause of inspiration for all of us. They are really showing us the true meaning of life, and the true meaning of sacrifice — not for themselves, but for someone else.

### Showing the Meaning of Justice and Love

This reminds me of the Northern Irish hunger strike, the famous Bobby Sands. He said, "Our revenge will be the laughter of our children." And we do not want our loved ones to come back dead. We want our father to come back walking the same way he left and the same way he always leaves the house. He leaves the house as confident as an olive tree in Palestine, but we also believe 100 percent in their determination. It is very worrying that they might come back dead. We do not want to carry them on our shoulders. We want to hug them, we want to kiss them. We want to live whatever moments are left with them. And I imagine Bobby Sands because it is a very similar hunger strike to the one that is happening now — it was a political hunger strike. It is a cause of worry — because Margaret Thatcher's government did the same thing — they gave no concern to the lives of the hunger strikers. That makes us very worried.

But I think an uplifting message from my father was — in his earlier arrest in 2012, he sent us a message when he was on hunger strike — he said, "My determination reaches the furthest point of the sky." And we believe that the determination in all of them is even higher than the furthest point in the sky, we have no doubt in that. It is very hard for all of the families of the hunger strikers at this stage, especially when there is not a lot of attention. [...] One of the things we can do is to keep in mind that what these people are doing is a very inspirational thing that could help us at least find our own ways of fighting.

I would actually go farther and say they are doing this for humanity — because they are teaching us what life really means. The Palestinian prisoners in general are teachers, in that sense. They love life so much that they have given so much of it away just for me and for other Palestinians to live their life. That is the true meaning of justice and love.

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## 1 • All U.S. Troops Home Now!

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cities and territory in Iraq.

While the U.S. emphasizes the actions of particular groups, like Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), also referred to as the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), what it systematically leaves out is the resistance among the Iraqi people to continued U.S. interference in their country. This includes their demand that the U.S. take responsibility for the many massacres of civilians, destruction of civilian infrastructure and poisoning of the environment.

The U.S. also claims to have humanitarian concerns but there is no talk of reparations for U.S. war crimes, no talk of contributing to the health and well being of the Iraqis. The Iraqi people are rightly demanding that reparations be paid and those responsible for U.S. crimes charged and tried.

Obama, speaking June 19, instead threatened more bombing: “We’ve positioned additional U.S. military assets in the region. Because of our increased intelligence resources, we’re developing more information about potential targets associated with ISIL. And going forward, we will be prepared to take targeted and precise military action, if and when we determine that the situation on the ground requires it. If we do, I will consult closely with Congress and leaders in Iraq and in the region.”

It should be noted here that Obama “will consult” with Congress, not seek a Congressional vote on more use of military force against Iraq. He also made clear that the institutionalizing of U.S. interference and aggression that he spoke about at West Point, using partnerships, especially directly with military forces, is going forward. He said, “The United States will continue to increase our support to Iraqi security forces. We’re prepared to create joint operation centers in Baghdad and northern Iraq to share intelligence and coordinate planning to confront the terrorist threat of ISIL. Through our new Counterterrorism Partnership Fund, we’re

prepared to work with Congress to provide additional equipment. We have had advisors in Iraq through our embassy, and we’re prepared to send a small number of additional American military advisors — up to 300 — to assess how we can best train, advise, and support Iraqi security forces going forward.”

In this manner he is indicating that the U.S. will continue to invade and interfere in other countries, using direct military-to-military relations. Small, Special Forces (“advisors”) will be utilized, combined with local forces on the ground mobilized to serve U.S. interests. When needed, “targeted and precise military action,” will also be used. This includes the continued use of drones, which violate sovereignty, are a form of aggression and are illegal by international law.

U.S. occupations in Iraq and Afghanistan have caused untold death and destruction and brought violence, anarchy and chaos to the region. To contribute to peace and stability, what is needed is for the U.S. to bring *All U.S. Troops Home Now!* U.S. aggression in Iraq and worldwide is criminal and must be firmly opposed. Voice of Revolution joins all those across the country demanding an end to U.S. interference in Iraq, Afghanistan and all the Middle East and Africa.



### NATIONAL PRESS CLUB NEWS CONFERENCE CALLS FOR SELF-DETERMINATION FOR IRAQIS

## Iraq Veterans and Military Families Say No Military Intervention in Iraq

*Iraq Veterans Against the War, June 19, 2014*

Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW) members Matt Howard, Ross Caputi, Matt Southworth and Brock McIntosh recently appeared at a news conference held at the National Press Club. Joining them were members of Military Families Speak Out and Veterans for Peace. The group originally planned to hold a press conference on the ongoing VA Crisis, but after the most recent clashes in Iraq, we all agreed that preventing military intervention in Iraq should be our first priority.

We want the government, the media, and the public to know that veterans who have already been to Iraq see no humanitarian purpose for airstrikes or any other form of military action. We believe in self-determination for Iraqis, and that means finding

solutions on their terms and then continuing to fight for their right to heal from war and trauma.

The news conference was attended by journalists from ABC, BBC, NBC, and Stars and Stripes (a publication for active duty military that is delivered to troops all over the world).

### **IVAW’s Official Statement on the Crisis in Iraq**

Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW) – an organization comprised of individuals who served or continue to serve in the US Military following September 11, 2001 – calls on Congress, the President, and his administration to reject the use of violence and militarism in response to the current outbreak of violence in Iraq.



Many of our members deployed to Iraq during the recent US occupation. Those of us who were there know first hand that US military solutions in Iraq do not serve the interests of the Iraqi people. We advocate for the self-determination of all people, in this case the people of Iraq. Any solution to this crisis must come from them.

When the United States invaded and occupied Iraq, the formerly secular country was destabilized. The United States and the Department of Defense intentionally created and agitated sectarian divisions that would not have otherwise existed. The result of this is what we see today, and Iraqi civilians are paying for it.

Iraqis have been paying with their lives for this war since March 2003. After 10 years of US occupation, they were left with little relief. Their economic infrastructure was destroyed and new

work to repair it has been awarded to US corporations and contractors, instead of Iraqis. Iraqi labor unions face frequent retaliation, and an entire generation of children has been born with severe birth defects in places like Haweeja. No one has been held to account. No effort has been made to clean the waste left behind.

When it comes to arming “freedom fighters” the US has a tendency to act as a fair-weather friend; today’s freedom fighter becomes tomorrow’s terrorist and justification to pursue an illegal invasion. Instead of creating more chaos, we should be solving the problems that already exist. Instead of installing another puppet president, The United States should be cleaning up environmental contamination, investigating allegations of torture, and allowing democracy to blossom in both government and labor without US intervention.

## The Arrogance — and Ignorance — of Power

*W.D. Ehrhart, Vietnam Veteran, June 19, 2014*

As I watch events unfolding in Iraq over the last weeks, I find myself wondering if Iraq War veterans are feeling the way I felt in March and April of 1975 when the fiction that was South Vietnam collapsed like a house of cards. Eight years earlier, I had arrived in Vietnam as an 18-year-old Marine, convinced of the rightness of our cause, and eager to save the Vietnamese from the scourge of communism.

I left Vietnam thirteen months later, wounded in body and spirit, struggling to process the reality that our Saigon allies were corrupt and incompetent, their soldiers largely unwilling or unable to fight, while my Viet Cong enemies were dedicated and relentless.

When, seven years after my return, the entire edifice crumbled in a matter of weeks, even after more than twenty years of US support and a decade of massive US military effort, I was neither surprised nor angry nor jubilant. I just felt empty. Utterly empty. Fifty-eight thousand dead Americans, some of them my friends. Millions of Vietnamese and Laotians and Cambodians. And for what?

Years later, Dean Rusk blamed our defeat on the failure of the American people to have the will to soldier on to victory. Peter Braestrep blamed it on the liberal media who, he argued in his book *The Big Story*, made the US victory at Tet 1968 look like a U.S. defeat. The redoubtable Col. Harry Summers, Jr. (Ret.) argued that we never lost a single battle. Others blamed the anti-war movement or the meddling politicians who made the military “fight with one hand tied behind its back.”

It never seems to have occurred to any of these very bright and powerful people that Vietnam was not and never had been ours to win or lose. It never occurred to them that Vietnamese dedication, motivation, and determination—an ancient proclivity to resist the presence of armed foreigners in their midst—might have had something to do with the US defeat. One might reasonably argue: not something, but everything.

Now, once again, we are witnessing the incompetence, corruption, and inability of a government we created and have supported

for over a decade. And once again, according to a June 14, 2014, op-ed piece in the *Washington Post* written by a prominent counterinsurgency expert, “by declining to provide a long-term security assistance force to an Iraq not yet able to handle the fight itself, we pulled defeat from the jaws of victory.”

He goes on to argue, “We are reaping the instability and increased threat to U.S. interests that *we* [emphasis in the original] have sown through the failure of our endgame in Iraq . . . There is a clear lesson here for those contemplating a complete withdrawal of U.S. troops from Afghanistan.”

It does not seem to occur to him or those who agree with him, as it did not occur to the politicians and generals who created and persisted in the disaster that was the Vietnam War, that Iraq was never ours to win or lose. Just as we could not train our Saigon allies to become self-sufficient in spite of massive U.S. aid and intervention, now we seem to have failed to create a viable and self-sufficient government in Baghdad — and it is all our fault because we pulled out too soon instead of having the moxie to stay the course.

It has nothing to do, according to this point of view, with the motivation, composition, determination (or lack of determination) of our allies and their opponents; it is all about us: US. U.S.

The Iraq War is not, of course, the Vietnam War. The differences are myriad. But there are two similarities, and these two trump all the differences: 1) in each case, U.S. policymakers tasked the military with achieving goals that were and are unattainable by force of arms; and 2) when you send scared and heavily armed kids into a hostile environment they have no hope of understanding or navigating, nothing good will result.

Oh, yes, there is one more similarity, and that is the arrogance of bright and powerful people who persist in imagining that American military might can accomplish whatever they desire, and in blaming their failures on anything and anyone but their own ignorance.

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## 1 • Syrian Elections and Imperialist Crisis of Legitimacy

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U.S.-style democracy, with the elections being one part of the on-going struggle of Syrians to resist U.S. imperialism. The election also further revealed the crisis of legitimacy faced by the U.S., whose wars, occupations and unleashing of terrorists cannot stop resistance and the drive of the peoples to affirm their rights.

### Imperial Legitimacy and Popular Legitimacy

According to the Supreme Constitutional Court, the legal body that oversaw the election process, 11,634,412 of the 15,845,575 eligible Syrian voters over the age of 18 voted – a 73.42% turnout. This included large segments of those who had been displaced internally or externally, the number of whom is estimated to account for about one-third of the population. Most of the 7 million displaced are internal refugees. The figures also included Syrian expatriates in countries where voting was not blocked (as occurred in the U.S. and Canada).

The elections were monitored by observers from 32 countries, including the U.S., Canada, Cuba, Bolivia, Ecuador, Nicaragua, Venezuela, India, Iran, Iraq, Pakistan, Russia, South Africa, Uganda, Zimbabwe, and the Democratic Peoples Republic of Korea (DPRK). They issued a joint statement affirming the elections as free, fair and valid.

Incumbent Bashar al-Assad won 88.7% of the vote, while the other two runners – Hassan Annouri and Maher Hajjar – received 4.3% and 3.2% respectively. Another 3.8% of the votes were invalid or blank.

Syrians outside the country got to vote first – at a total of 43 embassies across the world. Voters in neighboring Lebanon – where 1.1 million Syrian refugees live, turned up in huge numbers to take part in the elections. Their sheer number brought traffic on highways leading to the embassy compound in Beirut to a halt. Even the embassy staff were surprised and voting had to be extended. A similar situation was at hand at the Syrian Embassy in Amman, Jordan, where large numbers of Syrian refugees also live. Inside the country, voting was also extended late into the night due to the large turnout.

In many parts of the country people celebrated Election Day with rallies and dancing, but also with gunfire – a ritual common in many countries in the Levant but which has become more widespread since the Syrian crisis began.

Many people also posed for pictures proudly sporting the semi-permanent election ink on a finger or two. Some considered this election significant as it was the first multi-candidate election



since 1953. However, even as one of the candidates put it, people recognized that the election was between Syria and its enemies, not between the candidates.

It can be said that for Western imperialist eyes, the sight of endless lines of voters waiting to cast their ballots in the Syrian elections must have been as unintelligible as mediaeval Indians using palm leaves as ballots to elect members of village assemblies in Tamil Nadu. If ancient Rome and Athens were and remain the model for pre-modern electoral practices, Western and Western-style elections must serve as a model in the present times. A “lineage of democracy” that defies interruption, or so the dominating narrative goes.

### Imperialist Claim of Coercion

Despite the high turn-out, rallies and broad support publicly expressed by the people, U.S. imperialism dismissed the Syrian election as “illegitimate,” a “fraud,” and a “disgrace.” In making this claim, the U.S. is quite true to how it construes the question of legitimacy: not as essentially inherent to the principles of sovereignty and self-determination, but as something the imperialists bestow on those they decide merit it.

This effort to brand the election illegitimate has been three-pronged. Firstly was the claim that the elections were illegitimate because the government tightly controlled them and people were coerced or intimidated into participating in the vote. The outpouring of voters in Lebanon, for instance, did not register with imperialist media outlets, which chose to either ignore the matter altogether or portray the masses lined up to cast their votes as part of a generalized frenzy where an individual’s capacity to vote rationally was somehow prevented. The sheer impossibility of the Syrian state security apparatuses managing to coerce such a large majority of voters inside the country, let alone at the 43 embassies abroad, evidently also did not register.

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## SYRIAN PEOPLE AFFIRM RIGHT TO SELF-DETERMINATION

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That not everyone who voted was an Assad supporter was another aspect ignored. Many who turned up to take part in the elections were among the opposition in the earlier stages of the crisis and who came to reject how the whole affair transformed into an imperialist proxy war against the Syrian people and state in the name of “regime change.” These voted to affirm that they stood for the sovereignty and independence of their country. It mattered more to vote in defiance of the many actions and threats by the U.S. and the violence of the terrorists backed by them, which included the shelling of polling stations.

In other words, people voted for the state against intervention by U.S. imperialism and its reactionary Arab footmen. The elections were branded “illegitimate” despite the large overall turnout of 73.42%. Compare this with figures from the Egyptian presidential election – 47.5%. The Obama regime and U.S. allies markedly applauded Egypt’s election, while dismissing Syria’s. The much prized discourse of democracy and human rights also need not apply where the Egyptian military is concerned.

### Elections During War Time

Another layer of “illegitimacy” was holding the elections while the war raged on, which was echoed by the UN Secretary General himself. However, the 2005 Iraqi general elections and the 2004 Afghani presidential elections were held not only during fighting but also under colonial occupations. The U.S. regarded them as significant “benchmarks” on the road of enabling the natives to take matters into their own hands, to come of age democratically. This is a narrative reminiscent of backward and racist colonialist designations of the colonized as deficient and immature and “requiring” colonization.

In the language of the Obama Doctrine, “Syria had no right to hold elections amidst war” naturally translates into “Syria has no right to be sovereign.” Countries like the U.S., Canada, France, Germany, Belgium, Turkey, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates imposed this dictate by blocking Syrians from voting at Syrian embassies there.

The U.S., which has orchestrated and carried out coups, imposed unlawful and criminal sanctions and embargoes that strangle peoples and economies, denied and undermined African-American voting at home, and funded and backed campaigns to destabilize and fragment countries the world over, is in no position to preach democracy to the world.

### U.S. Effort to Brand Syrian Resistance as Illegitimate

The final aspect of “illegitimacy” is to deny that the Syrian people have stood their ground in the face of imperialist aggression and foiled the many attempts to strip away Syrian sovereignty, including through unleashing terrorists (such as those of the Wahabi type) all under the banner of “regime change” and “humanitarian interventionism.” For the U.S., resistance is “illegitimate,” and so is any

nation-building project that seeks political and economic independence, whether in Africa, Latin America or the Middle East.

At the same time, U.S. actions make clear that funding and training extremists who commit heinous crimes against the people of Syria is “legitimate.” Recruiting “jihadists” from 87 countries to wreck the country is also “legitimate.” Equally “legitimate” is the systematic targeting of hospitals, power plants and substations, highways and infrastructure — all U.S. crimes.

Dismantling more than 10,000 factories in Aleppo, the industrial capital of Syria, and moving them into Turkey, a key member of the NATO military alliance, is “legitimate” too in the eyes of the humanity-loving imperialists. The European Union even partially lifted the sanctions imposed on Syria to enable the re-flow of oil from fields under the control of al-Qaida offshoots. This is a significant source of revenue that is said to have been used to expand and finance the carnage these terrorists have been carrying out in Syria, and now once again in Iraq.

According to current estimates, the Syrian economy has shrunk by more than 45% with unemployment impacting almost half of the population. Close to 8 million Syrians have fallen into poverty with 4.4 million living in conditions of extreme poverty. According to the Syrian Center for Policy Research, the economic impact of the war against the people of Syria has been “tantamount to wholesale de-industrialization.” For the international imperialist oligarchies led by the U.S., all this systemic destruction of a nation is justifiable while resistance or anti-hegemonic projects the people advance are criminalized.

The “right to protect” – a staple in the Obama Doctrine, has aimed at displacing the right to sovereignty, which has been so integral to managing international relations since the end of WWII. Sovereignty and self-determination are internationally recognized collective rights, vested in member states by the UN Charter. Their enshrinement in law arose out of the defeat of Nazism and Fascism in World War II and the demand of the peoples to prevent more wars and expand and modernize democracy.

The imperialists, in their arrogance, are blind to the reality that sovereign and independent states hold elections not as an affair that satisfies others — as a performance for the imperialists — but rather, these states call on their populace to vote as an expression of the right to self-determination and defense of sovereignty. The U.S. is acting to end such defiance, and, as examples worldwide show, does not hesitate to try and decimate peoples using sectarian and ethnic lines, proxy warfare and outright colonization and destruction.

The Syrian people are rejecting Obama’s plans for more chaos, devastation and war. The right to self-determination and the right to sovereignty is the platform of the struggle of the Syrian people today against imperialist intervention and aggression. And casting a ballot in the recent presidential elections was one of the many facets of this on-going struggle.

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