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**Human rights situation in Palestine and other
occupied Arab territories**

Written statement* submitted by Khiam Rehabilitation Center for Victims of Torture, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[31 January 2021]

* Issued as received, in the language(s) of submission only.



2020 is the hardest year for Palestinian prisoners

The Israeli occupation uses the arrest policy as a weapon and a tool of oppression with which it fights Palestinian presence with the aim of subdue and intimidate them, and it is a means of collective punishment in order to drain their power and break their will, the bitterness of detention has experienced nearly a million Palestinians, in all its categories and classes.

During the year 2020, the occupation authorities continued the arrests. They were carried out against the Palestinian people, which affected all segments of society, including children, women, the freed prisoners, patients, disabled people, elderly, human rights activists, media professionals, fishermen, Legislative Council representatives, party leaders and others.

4700 arrests were recorded during this year

In fact, this year, another aspect of the suffering of the prisoners was added after the prevalence of the Coronavirus, which threatens their lives, especially since the occupation has opened the door wide for that virus to easily stealth and penetrate into their emaciated bodies without mercy. Where the prisoners live in a state of extreme anxiety, tension and anticipation, and they feel an increased state of danger as the Corona pandemic approaches more and more to their sections and rooms, in light of the lack of medical care, means of protection, or attention from the occupation authorities.

The arrest of minor children

The arrests of minors under the age of eighteen reached 550, among them 52 children under the age of fourteen. The youngest of them was the child "M.A.A.S." (7 years) from Jayyus village, east of Qalqilya.

Despite the calls and appeals issued by many international organisations, including the United Nations, for the need to release children because they are at risk in light of the current exceptional circumstance of continuing the spread of the Coronavirus, however the occupation continued during the year 2020 to target minors, under the age of 18, with arrest summons and interrogations with harsh conditions, and the imposition of unjust judgments and heavy financial fines.

The occupation arrested "A.M.N." (16 years old), a resident of Jalazoun camp, while he was passing through a checkpoint, where the soldiers tied him and beat him severely during the arrest process, despite his suffering from a rare disease called myasthenia gravis. He was also tortured and abused during his interrogation in the Muscobia.

Also, the child "M.M.M." (16 years old) from Al-Aroub camp in Hebron was exposed to brutal assault with severe beatings with butt guns when he was arrested, which resulted in fractures in the jaw and face and general bruises in the body and his face was smashed, and he was transferred to Hadassah Hospital in Jerusalem, and underwent surgery to treat fractures of the jaw and face.

The occupation also arrested the child "Y.A." (12 years old) from the Al-Bireh city, knowing that he has special needs.

The child, "A.M.", was also infected with the Coronavirus, and was transferred to Ramla Hospital. He has been sentenced to 9 and a half years, and has been detained 5 years ago.

The occupation did not hesitate to shoot Palestinian children before their arrest and interrogation, before providing them with treatment. Rather, they blackmail them in order to provide confessions in exchange for the necessary treatment and medical care, as 10 of the boys were arrested after they were shot, some of them seriously wounded.

During the year 2020, the military courts of the occupation continued to impose exorbitant financial fines on child prisoners, as part of a programmed and deliberate policy, as the financial fines imposed on children in the Ofer court only during the year 2020 amounted to 350,000 shekels, equivalent to 102,000 United States of America dollars.

Conditions of child prisoners

Until the end of the year 2020, 170 children are in the occupation prisons, distributed in three central prisons, namely (Megiddo, Ofer, and Damon), in addition to the presence of a number of them in detention and investigation centers, exposed to harsh detention conditions, violent torture methods, and a violation of their rights.

All those arrested were severely beaten at the time of arrest, and were thrown into harsh conditions, as all forms of abuse, torture, and psychological and physical stress are practiced against them in the detention and investigation centers. The occupation deals with children as terrorists, and insulting and threatening them continuously. Meanwhile, the occupation prisons administration deliberately continues to deprive children of the simplest necessities of life, and commits arbitrary practices against them, most notably the raids and inspections of their rooms and departments, while the occupation deprives dozens of children from visiting their families or their lawyer, in addition to the continued mistreatment of the jailers, where there is an attempt to impose fateful changes on the reality of children, by trying to deprive them of the supervision of adult prisoners over their lives.

To confirm the legalization of violations against children, the occupation authorities recently introduced amendments to Military Order No. 1651, with the aim of lifting protection for children in the age group between 12 to 14 years, and thus allowing the ceiling of their detention to be raised, as the maximum limit imposed on this group before the amendment did not exceed six actual months or suspended, and after the new amendment, there is no longer protection or a time limit for the punishment that may be imposed on children who are subjected in the military courts of occupation and may reach tens of years or life.

Corona and the prisoners

The year 2020 was marked by adding a new form to the suffering of thousands of prisoners in the occupation prisons, which is the Corona pandemic, which entered the occupation prisons as a result of the occupation's negligence to the lives of the prisoners and the failure to apply protection and prevention measures or provide means of cleaning and disinfecting for prisoners.

The occupation policy that it followed in dealing with the pandemic of facilitated the entry of the virus to prisons and infecting dozens: prisoners with the infectious disease, which was represented in:

- Not conduct tests for employees in the prison administration when they come from vacations, and many of them were carrying the virus;
- Not conduct tests for new prisoners or putting them in isolated places until it is confirmed that they are free of the virus;
- The close proximity between the investigators and the prisoners during the investigation period without taking into account the possibility that they were infected with the virus, and this transmitted the disease to many prisoners;
- Overcrowding in rooms and departments and the inability to make spacing;
- Not to provide prisoners with medical masks to use them to protect themselves, especially when transferring and movement;
- Delay in test prisoners who showed symptoms similar to those of Corona;
- Prisons are not completely sterilized, and disinfectors and cleaning tools are not provided;
- Not to provide any real medical care to infected prisoners after they are quarantined in special departments;
- Refusing to provide special food to prisoners who are infected or those in contact with them in order to raise their level of immunity to protect them from the symptoms of disease.

Since the prevalence of the Corona pandemic in February, there have been many international appeals to the occupation, including the United Nations, for the release of women, children, the sick and the elderly. The occupation did not respond to these appeals, and refused to release any Palestinian prisoners, even though hundreds of Israeli criminals were released, this is indicating of the racism of the occupation in dealing with the prisoners.

In addition to the occupation's refusal to release them, he continued to disregard for the lives of the prisoners by not taking any of the safety and preventive measures for two full months, and even the prison administration deprived the prisoners of dozens of items that were available in the prison's containers, including cleaning supplies and soap.

While the danger still exists to a large extent on the prisoners, in the fact that prisons are considered fertile places for the spread of diseases and epidemics, because they are overcrowded and do not meet the minimum protection conditions as a result of not applying all preventive and safety measures to protect prisoners, and that the cases of infection between prisoners and jailers that are announced from time to time, it makes the prisoners live in a state of anxiety and fear while they await an unknown fate that may come at any moment.

Until the end of 2020, the number of prisoners who were infected of the Coronavirus reached 141 prisoners, most of them in Gilbua Prison. Among them was the child "A.S.M.", 17 years old from Jerusalem city, who is serving a 9-year prison sentence, and he was arrested 5 years ago and was 12 years old at the time.

International solidarity with prisoners- Tadamon, an NGO(s) without consultative status, also shares the views expressed in this statement.