

On Palestinian Children's Day...

The Israeli occupation detains more than 200 Palestinian children in its prisons...

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Every year on April 5th, Palestinian Children's Day is observed, where Palestinian children have historically lived under extremely difficult conditions due to the occupation. Since the early years of the occupation of Palestinian territories until today, the occupation has targeted children through various means and methods directly, without any consideration for agreements guaranteeing their rights. Through its practices against children in the West Bank, Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip, the occupation considers targeting children as one of its main objectives in its war against the Palestinian people.

Recently, with the outbreak of the comprehensive aggression by the occupation against the Palestinian people and the ongoing genocide in the Gaza Strip, the occupation has killed more than 12,000 Palestinian children from Gaza in the past six months, according to the Ministry of Health. It's worth noting that this toll is not final as the aggression continues, with thousands of Palestinians are still missing under the rubble. Additionally, more than 100 child martyrs have been killed by occupation forces since the beginning of the year in the West Bank and occupied Jerusalem.

The occupation is not content only with killing children in Palestinian territories but also systematically arresting and abusing them for decades. Israel is the only state in the world that systematically prosecutes between 500 and 700 Palestinian children annually in military courts, lacking basic rights of fair trial, according to the Defense for Children International-Palestine (DCIP). For decades, the issue of child detention has been one of the most prominent policies pursued by the Israeli occupation, which has worked to establish systematic tools, legislation, and military orders to intensify targeting them through its policy of child detention.

Today, the occupation detains more than 200 Palestinian children in its prisons, including Ofer, Magiddo, and Damon. After October 7th, the Israeli occupation forces have arrested more than 500 Palestinian children. It's worth noting that the number of child prisoners before October 7th did not reach this number, which clearly indicates the occupation's use of punitive and oppressive policies against children during wars and uprisings. This was also evident after the 2015 uprising when the number of detained children in occupation prisons increased.

This period is considered the toughest and harshest on prisoners in general and children in particular. Since the first day of the aggression, the occupation has implemented a series of retaliatory measures targeting various categories of prisoners in all prisons. It began by isolating prisoners from the outside world and separating them from each other inside the prisons. Then, it confiscated all electrical appliances and their belongings from their rooms, withdrew hot water and took their clothes. The prison administration only provided extremely meager and poor-quality meals. In addition to all of this, the occupation forces used various methods of excessive violence and beating against them. Since October 7th, the occupation prison authorities announced the deaths of 14 prisoners inside the prisons due to torture and ill treatment, harsh living conditions and the use of retaliatory methods against them.

Children prisoners were not spared from the retaliatory methods used against prisoners, according to testimonies from recently released child prisoners. From the first day of their detention, the occupation worked to isolate them from other prisoners and sections. Several testimonies reported that they were subjected to severe beatings during their time in prison. Statistics and documented testimonies from child detainees indicate that the majority of detained children have been subjected to one or more forms of physical and psychological torture through a series of systematic and illegal methods, violating international laws, norms, and conventions regarding children's rights.

As part of the occupation's policy of pursuing and continuously targeting released prisoners, the occupation re-arrested 15 previously released prisoners who were freed during the prisoner exchange deal last November. The occupation later released two detainees while keeping 13 released prisoners under arrest, including 5 children. Furthermore, two of the released young prisoners are now subjected to arbitrary administrative detention. These practices are part of the ongoing pursuit by the occupation authorities of released prisoners and the imposition of further suppression and control over the Palestinian people.

The occupation authorities use the policy of arbitrary administrative detention against Palestinians as a tool for suppression and control amidst escalating events and as a punitive measure. Children are not exempt from this policy of arbitrary administrative detention. Currently, the occupation detains more than 3660 administrative detainees in its prisons, including 41 children, most of whom were arrested and had administrative detention orders issued against them after October 7th, without being presented with any charges. They are held under the pretext of having secret files that steal their childhoods in cells that deprive them of their right to education and rob them of their childhood innocence.

On Palestinian Children's Day, Addameer calls upon the international community and concerned international organizations to fulfill their responsibilities and take serious and genuine action to ensure the full protection of the rights of Palestinian children and to stop the crimes committed against them. Addameer urges pressure on the occupation authorities to immediately release the children detained in occupation prisons.