



Gaza's Prisoners

A cross-referenced and updated analytical reading, drawing on reliable United Nations, press, and human rights sources.

(October 2023 to June 2026)

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up to June 2026

- **Documentation scope:** October 2023 to June 2026
- **Methodology:** A cross-referenced and updated analytical reading, drawing on reliable United Nations, press, and human rights sources.

Introduction and Framework of the Human Rights Documentation

Since the war began on October 8, 2023, the occupation has carried out more than 21,000 arrests across the West Bank and Jerusalem alone. That count leaves out thousands more seized in Gaza and inside the territories occupied in 1948, held in a separate military system built on enforced disappearance and stripped of any protection under international law.

The war has made daily life in the Strip unbearable. A close look at the detention system through June 2026 shows a structural escalation without precedent: arbitrary detention turned into a tool of social engineering and collective punishment against the Palestinian people.



First: The Growth in Numbers and the Demographic and Legal Makeup of the Prisoners' Movement

Official Palestinian prisoner institutions and the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights put the **total prisoner population at a record 9,400 to 9,500 for the stretch from late 2025 to mid-2026, the highest ever recorded.**

It includes roughly 90 women and 360 children. Administrative detainees make up 3,324.

Gaza's own figures break down as follows:

Among Gaza's Palestinians seized since October 7, 2023, Israel classified 1,316 as unlawful combatants by early June 2026. Its own November 2025 acknowledgment put the number at 1,468, an imprecise figure that folds in prisoners already released and martyrs. The full tally kept by the Detainees' Affairs Commission reaches 2,249. A further group, held in the Rakevet section of Ramla prison and labeled elite prisoners, has never been counted or named.

The second phase of the Flood of the Free exchange deal, from January 19, 2025 to February 27, 2026, freed 1,024 prisoners. A single batch on October 13, 2025 freed 1,700 more in the third phase. After the deal's phases ended, another 414 were released through June 25, 2026, a total drawn from those registered at Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital and imprecise as a result. Others were freed during the war with no record at all, never processed through hospitals or the Red Cross, and their number is unknown.

So far, 52 Gaza prisoner martyrs have been identified. One body has been returned: Ismail Abdel-Bari Rajab Khader, on May 2, 2024. After the deal's phases ended, 360 more bodies were handed back with no identification lists, and most were buried unidentified. An unknown number of prisoner martyrs' bodies remain withheld under enforced disappearance.

Some 80 Gaza prisoners were sentenced before the genocide. More than 38 have completed their sentences and remain held.

These counts leave out many detainees held in army camps. The overall prisoner totals also take in Arabs from Lebanon and Syria.



Second: The Legal Machinery of Arbitrary Detention and Enforced Disappearance

Israel rests its detention of Gaza prisoners on a single statute: the Unlawful Combatants Law. It is the state's main tool for wrapping enforced disappearance and prolonged arbitrary detention in a cover of domestic legality. The Knesset keeps extending the law's exceptional provisions, the latest renewal running through the end of December 2025. Under it, Israel can hold prisoners with no time limit, sealed off from the world.

The ICRC database describes the statute as one that lets the state hold anyone it labels an unlawful combatant, built on the logic of stopping a return to the fighting. Detention can stretch for long periods, with no end date set in the order itself.

A batch of amendments issued as "Emergency Regulations" rewrote the whole procedure and stripped detainees of even the minimum safeguards. Three changes carry the weight:

1- Expanding detention powers: Officers of major-general rank and below can now sign an initial detention order, and the window to produce the formal order grew from seven days to 21.

2- Delaying sham judicial review: A detention order now faces mandatory review at 30 days rather than 14. The hearings run behind closed doors at the Beersheba District Court, last under two minutes, and proceed with no real legal representation.

3- Institutionalizing the denial of access to lawyers. The ban on seeing a lawyer now runs 28 days from arrest instead of 10, and military judges can stretch it to 45 straight days, up from 21.

The result is plain. The occupation can hold Gaza detainees in full enforced disappearance for months, at temporary military sites, their names kept off any register. The Israeli prosecution conceded the point before the Supreme Court: the army had freed some 1,950 Palestinian detainees from Gaza without once bringing them before a judge.

This is detention answerable to no court, run at the discretion of the military and security establishment.



Third: The Targeting of Medical and Professional Elites and the Dismantling of the Civilian Sector

At least 1,701 medical workers in Gaza had been killed by the end of 2025. Among the dead were 157 doctors and 366 nurses. Also killed: 103 pharmacists and 254 medical assistants. The figures come from Gaza's Ministry of Health and Government Media Office. During its raids on hospitals, the army seized another 362 medical workers, most of them disappeared and tortured, their fate still unknown.

This is not incidental. The occupation has gone after Gaza's doctors, academics and professionals to hollow out civilian life, collapse the health system, and leave the Strip unable to endure or recover.

UN experts trace the same pattern. In June 2025 they reported that more than 250 health workers had been seized since October 2023. By the middle of 2026, about 150 were still in custody, and still being abused. Several cases stand out.



Dr. Hussam Abu Safiya

director of Kamal Adwan Hospital

The Supreme Court threw out Abu Safiya's appeal against the extension of his detention without charge. It grounded the ruling in the Unlawful Combatants Law, a statute that breaks international law and the Geneva Conventions.

Abu Safiya's family was driven from Ashkelon and settled in Jabalia camp. He studied medicine in Kazakhstan. In February 2024 he took over Kamal Adwan Hospital in northern Gaza, after the army arrested the previous director, Dr. Ahmed al-Kahlout. He refused repeated military orders to evacuate. His position was simple: treat the patients and the children, whatever the cost.

The cost was severe. A drone killed his son Ibrahim in the hospital yard. A second drone tried to kill Abu Safiya himself.

The army stormed the hospital on December 27, 2024, and arrested him. They took him to Sde Teiman camp, then to Ofer prison.

A show trial under the Unlawful Combatants Law extended his detention twice, by six months on March 25, 2025, and again by six months on October 16, 2025. He was held in harsh conditions, with no medical care.

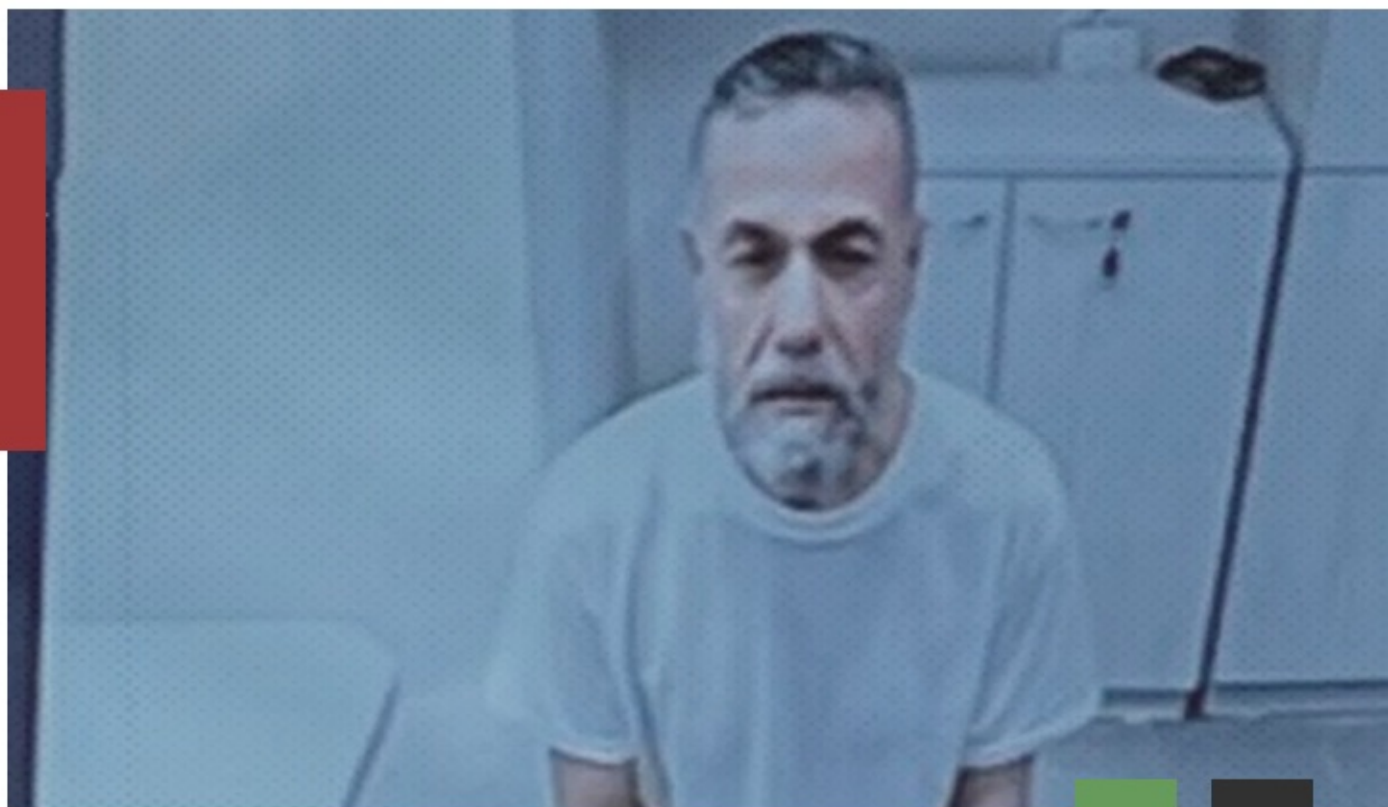
Medical records through May 2026 show what that meant. Guards beat him and ran electric current through his body.

They broke his ribs. He lost 40 kilograms. He developed severe skin disease and a dangerous heart arrhythmia. On June 3, 2026, the prison service moved him from Naqab prison to solitary confinement in Nafha, deep in the desert, and cut him off from his medicines, in reprisal for the appeal he had filed against his own detention.

Abu Safiya appeared in public on June 10, 2026, for the first time since his arrest 16 months earlier. He faced the Supreme Court by video from his solitary cell in Nafha, handcuffed and shackled at the ankles.

The hearing had been called on a petition his defense team, led by lawyer Nasser Abu Odeh, filed against his continued arbitrary detention. He spoke straight to the judges: "I carried out my work in accordance with international law and humanitarian standards.

My detention is unjust and arbitrary. I demand that the court release me immediately." His appearance drew condemnation abroad and inside the Knesset. Lawmakers and doctors, among them Knesset member Dr. Ahmad Tibi, demanded his immediate and unconditional release.





Dr. Adnan al-Bursh

martyr of the prisoners' movement

Al-Bursh was one of Palestine's leading orthopedic surgeons, head of the orthopedic department at Al-Shifa Medical Complex and holder of a British fellowship in complex fractures. Israeli forces arrested him in December 2023 at Al-Awda Hospital

in northern Gaza, where he was still working. They tortured him in cold blood. He was martyred inside Ofer prison on April 19, 2024. The occupation still holds his body and refuses to return it.



Dr. Ziad Muhammad al-Dalou

martyr of the prisoners' movement

Al-Dalou, an internal medicine specialist at Al-Shifa Medical Complex in Gaza City, was seized during the raid on the complex on March 18, 2024, while on duty. Interrogators at military centers tortured him to death within three days, on March 21, 2024.

He was the third doctor to die under such violent detention. His killing was not announced until September 2024.



Paramedic Hatem Ismail Rayyan

martyr of the prisoners' movement

Rayyan, a 59-year-old field paramedic from Jabalia, kept working through a stroke he suffered shortly before his arrest. Israeli forces took him from Kamal Adwan Hospital on December 27, 2024, along with his wounded son, Moaz.

He was martyred inside Naqab desert prison on February 12, 2026, after deliberate medical neglect and torture.

The campaign reached past doctors and paramedics to the academics. Israeli forces arrested Dr. Youssef Farwana, assistant professor and dean of the college of human medicine at the Islamic University in Gaza. Others they killed outright. An airstrike in November 2024 hit Dr. Raafat Lubbad, who ran the internal medicine hospital at Al-Shifa and the Sheikh Hamad Hospital for Rehabilitation and Prosthetics. The pattern points to a deliberate Israeli strategy: to destroy the leadership of health care and medical education in Gaza for good.



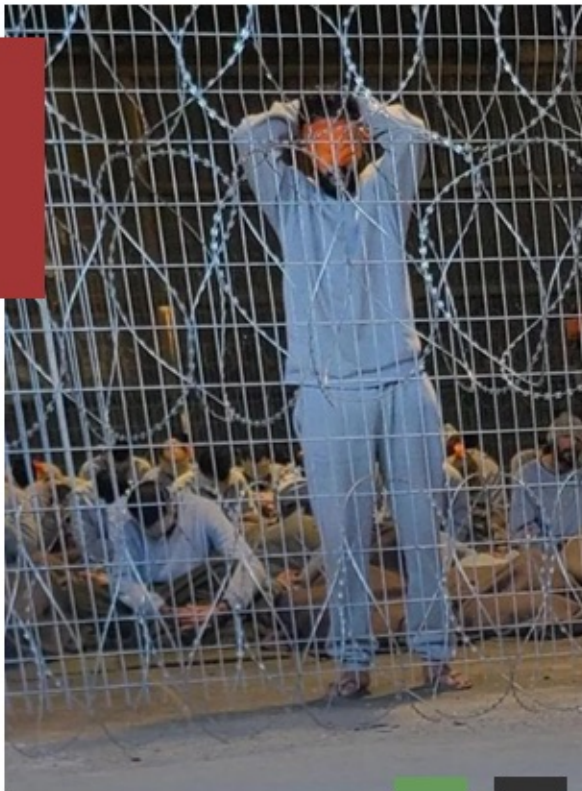
Fourth: The Geography of Torture and the Military

Slaughterhouses, with Sde Teiman as the Model

Israel's army camps are built for torture beyond the reach of international humanitarian law. Sde Teiman, in the Negev near Beersheba, is the model. Ofer and Anatot in the West Bank run on the same design.

Inside Sde Teiman, the layout gives away the purpose. Detainees are held in mass pens built like animal cages, beside a field hospital that meets none of the basic standards of medical ethics and a building set aside for violent interrogation.

Testimonies from released detainees and their lawyers, chief among them the attorney Khaled Mahajna, describe three kinds of torture.



The first is direct physical torture

and shabeh: Guards beat detainees with rifles, sticks and military boots, and run electric current through their limbs and genitals. Prisoners are forced into shabeh: cuffed and blindfolded, suspended by the arms or legs, held in agonizing positions for months. The practice has rotted tissue so badly that doctors have amputated limbs without anesthetic.



The second is sexual torture.

Israeli forces have used sexual assault and mass forced stripping to break prisoners. Documented cases include groping of the genitals, threats of rape, and rape itself, at Sde Teiman and the Beersheba military base. In July 2024, Israeli soldiers assaulted a detainee: the camp's own surveillance cameras recorded it, and the footage leaked to Israel's Channel 12 that August. The footage stands as proof that sexual violence has become an official military instrument, not an aberration.

The third is psychological torture and sensory deprivation.

Prisoners are kept from sleep and starved on a single piece of bread a day. They are locked in isolation cells, in dark tents, in metal containers left to bake in the heat. They are forced to listen, for hours, to fellow prisoners screaming under torture.



Fifth: The Martyrs Among Gaza's Prisoners and the Record of Systematic Killing

More than 100 prisoners have died in Israeli custody since the war began, 52 of them from Gaza. Israel's prisons and camps have become mass graves. Torture, starvation and deliberate medical neglect have killed them, along with skin diseases and infections left to spread as a slow means of execution.

Official figures through the first quarter of 2026 confirm the toll. The identities of 90 of the dead have been released. All 52 Gaza prisoners died from torture, severe neglect, and inhuman conditions inside facilities tied to the war, including Sde Teiman, Ofer, and Naqab. In 2025 alone, 32 Palestinian prisoners died in brutal detention under unexplained circumstances.

The medical picture points to a policy of slow, deliberate killing. Untreated chronic illness and cancer kill directly, as they did for the martyr Mahmoud Talal Abdullah. The denial of hygiene supplies, disinfectant, and basic provisions drove a severe scabies outbreak through Naqab, Ofer, and the other southern prisons. For prisoners already living with chronic vascular disease and diabetes, that outbreak turned fatal. It did for the martyr Ahmad Khudeirat. The remains of Gaza prisoners returned under the ceasefire agreements tell the rest: fractures and deep wounds that confirm field executions, or death under direct, sadistic physical torture.

Sixth: The Supreme Court Ruling on Red Cross Visits and Its Practical Effect

On the evening of Wednesday, June 4, 2026, Israel's Supreme Court struck down the ban on Red Cross visits to Palestinian prisoners. The court unanimously accepted a joint petition from several rights organizations, led by the Association for Civil Rights in Israel. In force since the war began in October 2023, the blanket government policy had completely barred the International Committee of the Red Cross from visiting prisoners in prisons and military detention centers. The court ordered the ban lifted immediately. It told the Israel Prison Service and the military to let Red Cross teams resume their visits and to hand the Committee full information on the prisoners, without conditions. The ban, it found, had no adequate basis in domestic law and directly conflicted with the international humanitarian obligations binding on Israel under the Fourth Geneva Convention.



The Red Cross said it stood ready to resume monitoring immediately and keep it going, to ensure humane treatment, protect prisoners' contact with their families, and prevent disappearances.

Rights groups and prisoner-affairs specialists are not convinced. They doubt the ruling will change much on the ground, and they point to three structural and legal reasons:

1. The function of Israel's judicial system:

Observers and rights advocates say the court did not act out of humanitarian concern. They read the ruling as a defensive move to shield the occupation's leaders from mounting international prosecution. The ruling came as Tel Aviv faces active International Criminal Court arrest warrants against Netanyahu and former Defense Minister Yoav Gallant for war crimes and crimes against humanity. The International Court of Justice is investigating acts of genocide. By putting the independence and power of its own courts on display, Israel can claim it already has effective internal oversight, and from there move to strip the international courts of jurisdiction.

2. A record of non-enforcement and administrative evasion:

Israel's security, military, and judicial branches have long worked as a single system to legitimize abuses. Rights groups fear the Prison Service will impose complex administrative obstacles, delaying visit permits or revoking them on flimsy security pretexts. There is precedent. The Supreme Court had already ordered better food rations for prisoners once the starvation policy was proven. Yet the prisoners kept reporting food shortages for months on end, with no oversight and no one held to account.

3. Legalizing abuses beyond Prison Service facilities:

The ruling guarantees nothing past the Prison Service's own walls. It does not reach the military's secret camps, nor the detainees kept off the official records under the amended "Unlawful Combatants Law." Hundreds of Gaza detainees held under that system remain exposed to disappearance and torture, out of the Red Cross's sight. That stays true even if the order is honored inside the Prison Service's central prisons.

Seventh: Prisoner Testimonies

(Grave Violations and Deliberate Killing)

Prisoners released to Gaza describe grave violations in detention that often ended in death or disability.

1. Direct physical torture

Beating with implements: Guards stripped prisoners and clubbed them with batons. One prisoner was struck on the head with a sharp object. The wound took 119 metal stitches and left his scalp infected.

Scalding with hot water: After guards moved one prisoner to Naqab prison, they poured hot water over his body.

Attacks by police dogs: Guards set a police dog on one detainee, and it mauled his foot.

2. Sexual torture and humiliation

Full stripping: Guards stripped prisoners naked at a camp near Jerusalem, at Naqab prison, and along the Gaza perimeter.

Forced alcohol: At Naqab prison and the camp near Jerusalem, guards forced naked prisoners to drink alcohol, a degrading act meant to coerce and violate the body.

3. Pharmacological torture (Anatot detention center and interrogation centers)

Forced hallucinogenic pills: Video testimonies from Anatot and other centers confirm that guards forced prisoners to swallow pills they could not identify during interrogation. The pills left them hallucinating, unconscious, and asleep for long stretches.

4. Psychological torture

The false claim of the family's martyrdom: An interrogator told one detainee that his entire family had been killed. In acute distress, the detainee tried to take his own life in his cell. Only later did he learn the report was a lie and his family unharmed.

Solitary confinement: Guards held one prisoner in solitary for four months in the cells of the Muskobiyya.

5. Harsh detention conditions as a form of torture

Suffocating overcrowding: In the tent section at Naqab prison, 30 to 40 detainees are now packed into a single tent of 50 square meters, under brutal conditions.

Deliberate starvation: The food is unfit to eat, so prisoners pool their meals into one in the evening and fast for the rest of the day.

Denial of treatment and hygiene: Scabies has spread among the prisoners and worsened under a policy of withholding treatment. Inside, they have no way to stay clean or guard against infection.

6. Rakevet section at Ramla prison: Gaza Strip prisoners (detailed data)

Basic data: Detailed records exist for 33 of them. Their ages range from 28 to 41. They are held on charges connected to the events of October 7 and face a real threat of execution.

Health and physical condition: The men are severely emaciated, weighing between 52 and 58 kilograms. Deliberate blows have broken thighs, shoulders, jaws, and spines. Some have eye injuries. One carries a bullet still lodged in his chest. They also suffer heart and lung disease and failing hearing and sight.

Mental and skin health: Prisoners have suffered nervous breakdowns. Some have scratched themselves so raw that the skin splits and the flesh peels away. Skin disease is nearly universal: scabies, boils, and fungal infections.

Eighth: Future Prospects

Gaza's prisoners are no longer a separate legal matter. The file now shapes how the war is run and how political and humanitarian pressure bears down on the Strip. Three interlocking layers define where it is heading.

The legal layer: exceptional legislation. Amending domestic law and reaching for extraordinary tools like the "unlawful combatant law" is an attempt to build a detention system that sits outside international law.

The goal is to strip the international conventions, above all the Fourth Geneva Convention, of any practical force. It also shields army officers and interrogators behind local judicial immunity, holding off charges of torture and enforced disappearance. This legal engineering will likely keep Gaza's detainees suffering for years, held as leverage even if a temporary military truce is reached.

The functional layer: dismantling the foundations of recovery. The systematic targeting of medical, professional, and academic cadres reveals a deliberate strategy. The occupation is engineering a medical and professional annihilation inside Gaza. By killing prominent doctors and detaining and disfiguring medical directors such as Dr. Hussam Abu Safiya, it aims to strip Gazan society of any capacity to heal on its own. This blocks reconstruction and any revival of the health, education, and service sectors. The effect is to weaken Gaza's ability to endure and turn it into a place unfit for human life, even after the fighting stops.

The humanitarian layer: political bargaining. The stalling of second-phase negotiations under the Sharm el-Sheikh peace agreement shows that Israel treats the prisoners' file as a central pillar of its negotiating strategy. It will not readily give up thousands of Gazan detainees. They serve as a bargaining chip for imposing its security and political conditions on how the Strip is governed in future. So the Palestinian prisoners' movement keeps circling the same closed loop of arrest, exchange, and systematic violations.

That will not change without real international enforcement: mechanisms that go past theoretical condemnation to impose harsh economic, political, and legal sanctions, forcing the occupation to dismantle its exceptional detention camps, guarantee full humanitarian access and transparency, and release detainees held without sufficient legal basis.

