

# FOR THE LOVE OF PALESTINE

## STORIES OF WOMEN, IMPRISONMENT AND RESISTANCE



Drawing by Laura Whitehorn, former U.S. political prisoner, in the DC jail in 1989.

# For the Love of Palestine

## Stories of Women, Imprisonment and Resistance

Edited by  
Diana Block and Anna Henry

Produced in partnership with:  
Addameer Prisoner Support and Human Rights Association



Samidoun Palestinian Prisoner Solidarity Network



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The stories in this pamphlet are drawn primarily from materials on the Addameer and Samidoun websites - with deep appreciation for their tireless work on behalf of Palestinian prisoners. An electronic version of the pamphlet can be found at [www.freedomarchives.org/Pal/womenprisoners.pdf](http://www.freedomarchives.org/Pal/womenprisoners.pdf).

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# **INTRODUCTION: CULTIVATING SOLIDARITY WITH PALESTINIAN WOMEN PRISONERS**

By Diana Block & Anna Henry

This pamphlet grew out of a delegation to Palestine in March 2016. The delegation was convened by Dr. Rabab Abdulhadi, professor at San Francisco State University, and was the first from the U.S. to focus specifically on political imprisonment and solidarity between Palestinian and U.S. prisoners. The idea for the delegation had been sparked in 2013 when prisoners at Pelican Bay in California undertook an historic hunger strike to protest long term solitary confinement at the same time as Palestinian prisoners were on hunger strike against Israel's illegal policies of administrative detention. Khader Adnan, a former Palestinian political prisoner who had waged a hunger strike in Israeli prisons for 66 days, sent a message of solidarity to the California hunger strikers.

A few years later, we were able to further this exchange by bringing together a group of U.S. activists and academics who were engaged in the movement against imprisonment, including four former prisoners. One of the former prisoners was Laura Whitehorn who served 14 years for her actions against the U.S. government. Inspired by the first Palestinian intifada uprising that occurred while she was in prison, in 1989 Laura drew the picture that is on the cover of this pamphlet of a woman quietly sewing a Palestinian flag.



Delegation members Rachel Herzing (Left) and Diana Block (Right) meet with former prisoner Maysoon Ahmed Abu Sheh (Center).

Those of us on the delegation who work with women and transgender prisoners in the United States were particularly interested in meeting with Palestinian women to understand how they had been impacted by imprisonment. We knew that Israel and the U.S. have worked closely together to develop

coordinated strategies for repression and imprisonment of the Palestinian, Black and Brown populations they need to control. We



Suha Abu Khdeir, mother of a son who was killed by settlers, former prisoners and family members of prisoners speak with delegation leader Dr. Rabab Abdulhadi in Jericho.

wanted to learn how Palestinian women had sustained resistance to these strategies that were intended to crush their struggle. And we wanted to be able to share lessons from their resistance with people struggling to dismantle the prison industrial complex in the U.S., including those inside women’s prisons and jails.

Until we got to Palestine, we didn’t realize the all-encompassing effect imprisonment has had on women’s lives, starting with their involvement as mothers, sisters, daughters, wives and loved ones of prisoners and extending to their direct experience of incarceration. 800,000 Palestinians have been imprisoned since 1967 and 40% of all Palestinian men today have been in prison. While women only make up 1% of those imprisoned, they deal constantly with the incarceration of their family members across generations.

Shortly after we arrived in Palestine, we met with four women who had been in prison in the past. Now, they explained, they were visiting their children in prison. “Palestinian mothers bring their children up to be steadfast,” one of the women commented and went on to describe how she taught her son not to betray the movement if he were arrested. “The Palestinian mother loves her children very much, but you cannot believe how much she loves her homeland,” one of the other women declared.

The women described the arduous challenge of visiting their children in prison, traveling for 10-15 hours each way, passing through multiple checkpoints and enduring several humiliating full body searches at the prison itself. If no arbitrary circumstance prevented the visit from

happening, they were finally able to see their child for half an hour through a plexiglass window. Recently the International Red Cross which is the agency responsible for coordinating family visits for Palestinian prisoners, reduced the number of visits it would support from 2 to 1 per month. Family members have been outraged and have initiated a widespread campaign to restore the second visit.

Another woman we met with was Rula Abu Dhou, a former prisoner and current faculty member at Birzeit University's Institute of Women Studies. Rula told us a story about her experience organizing inside prison. In the 1990's when prisoner exchanges were being arranged as part of the Oslo Accords, women were not released. The women prisoners began to organize themselves inside, and on the outside their mothers formed a committee to advocate for their freedom. In 1996, the Israeli government announced that all the women who were being held in HaSharon prison would be released, except for five. The women took a vote and decided that either all forty of them would be freed together or none of them would leave. The prison threatened to forcibly release them if necessary, so the women locked themselves into two cells, blocking the Israeli guards from entering.

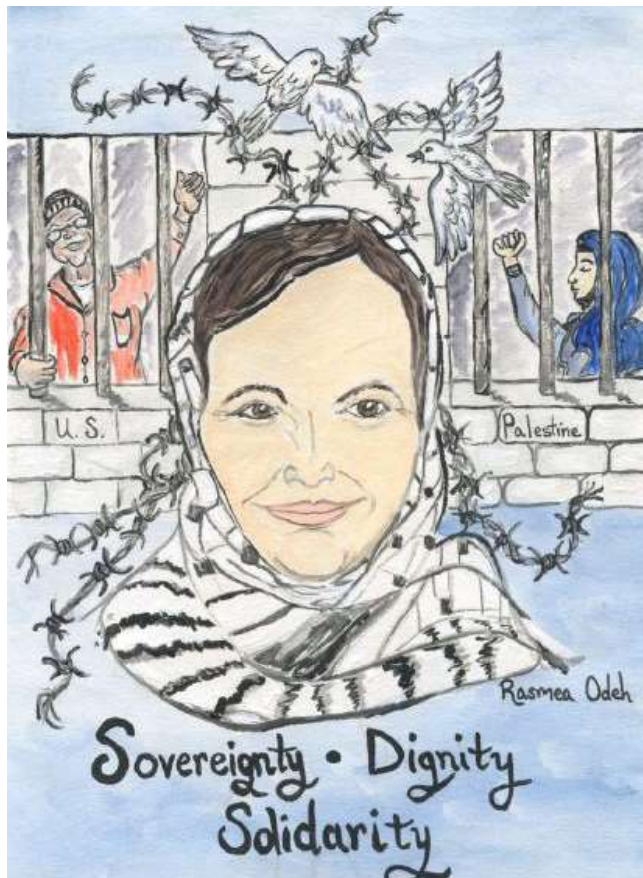
Several days later all of them were released. "We won our collective freedom through collective struggle", Rula concluded. The U.S. media depicts Palestinian women as subservient and without rights, driven to terrorist actions devoid of politics or humanity by an extremist patriarchal society. By highlighting some stories of women prisoners,



Delegation members meet with staff, faculty and students of Birzeit University at a conference organized by the Institute of Women's Studies.

this pamphlet offers an alternative view. Their stories exemplify the practice of sumud, a concept rooted in the Palestinian anti-colonial struggle, which can be best translated as steadfast resistance or standing one's ground with dignity.

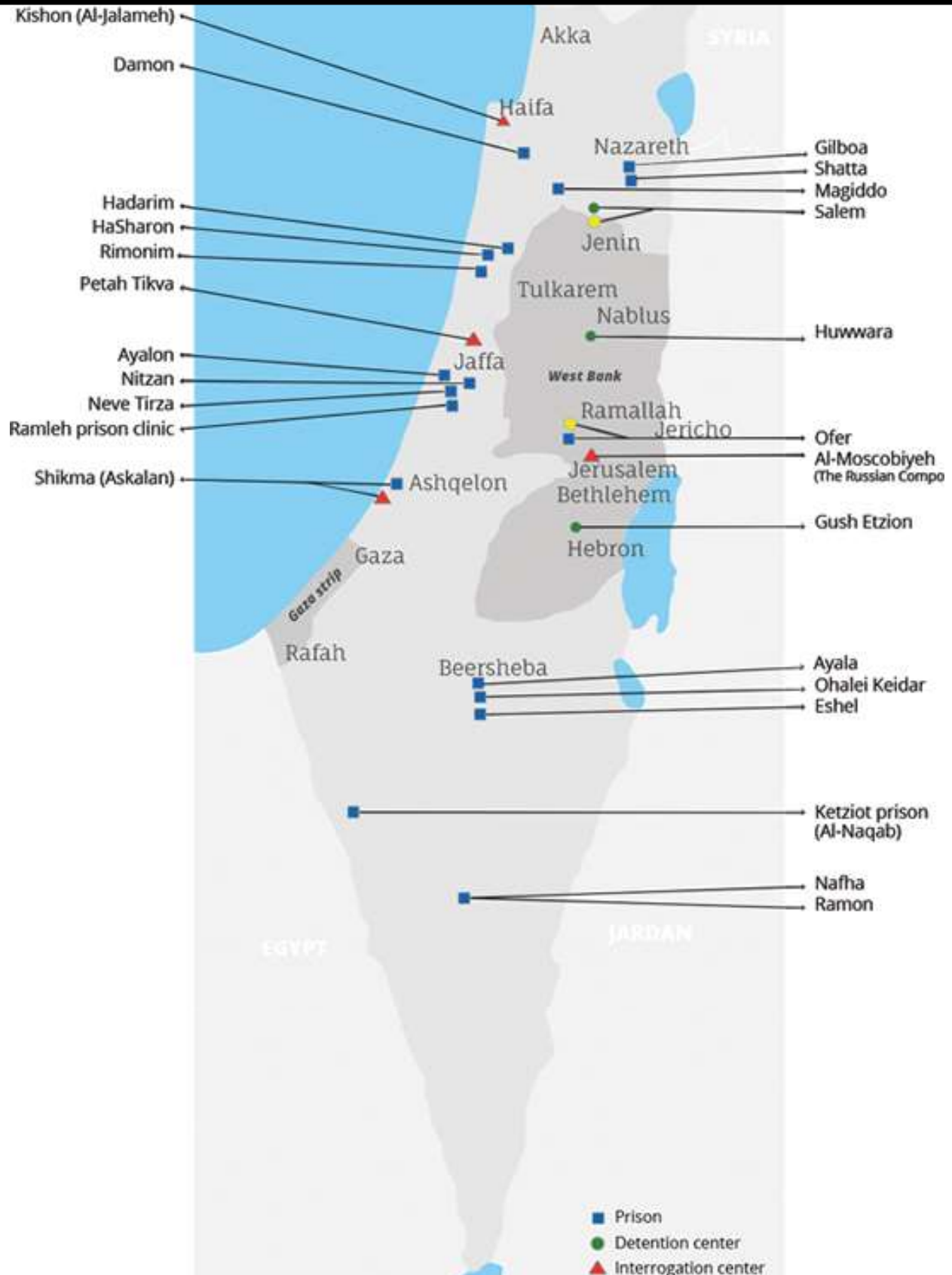
The women featured range from Khalida Jarrar, a human rights lawyer and a member of the Palestinian Legislative Council, to Dima Al-Wawi who at 12 years old became the youngest Palestinian girl ever imprisoned. Rasmea Odeh, a 69 year old Palestinian American, was tortured and raped in an Israeli prison in 1969. Rasmea's current prosecution by the U.S. government on trumped-up immigration charges reveals the direct collusion between Israel and the United States in criminalizing Palestinian liberation activists.



Artist: Marius Mason, formerly Marie Mason, a long-time activist in the environmental and labor movements. and current U.S. transgender political prisoner.

Palestinian women challenge imprisonment in multiple ways every day when they participate in rallies and protests about administrative detention, when they cross countless checkpoints in order to visit their loved ones in prison, when they support prisoners who are on hunger strikes, when they demand that prisoners have access to medical care. Cultivating solidarity with Palestine involves support for the thousands who are in prison and those who are at risk of going to prison every day. It means learning from the resistance strategies that have enabled Palestinian women and men to sustain their struggle in the face of overwhelming odds. We hope that For the Love of Palestine contributes to these goals.

# PRISONS & DETENTION CENTERS IN PALESTINE



Source: Addameer Prisoner Support and Human Rights Association  
[www.addameer.org/prisons-and-detention-centers](http://www.addameer.org/prisons-and-detention-centers)



# GLOSSARY

**Administrative detention:** A procedure that allows the Israeli military to hold prisoners indefinitely on secret information without charging them or allowing them to stand trial. The Israeli military commander bases his decision on secret information, which cannot be accessed by the detainee nor his lawyer. These procedures constitute a violation of Article 9(2) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights that recognizes the right of an individual who is arrested to “be informed, at the time of arrest, of the reasons for his arrest and shall be promptly informed of any charges against him.” The frequency of the use of administrative detention has been steadily rising since the outbreak of the second intifada in September 2000. In fall 2016 there are approximately 700 Palestinians in administrative detention. Administrative detainees have repeatedly gone on hunger strike in order to demand an end to their detention without charge or trial.

**Collective Punishment:** The Israeli military strategy of enacting punitive measures against a group of Palestinians, usually a family or community, in retribution for the actions of an individual. For instance, if one prisoner goes on hunger strike, the prison authorities may collectively punish all prisoners by not allowing family visits.

# PROTEST TO DEMAND ICRC RESTORE FAMILY VISITS DEMAND FREEDOM FOR HUNGER STRIKERS

WWW.INMINDS.COM



**Family Visits:** Family visits take place for 30-45 minutes behind plexiglass windows. Palestinian prisoners are only allowed visits by first-degree relatives (children, spouses, parents, siblings, and grandparents). No physical contact is allowed for visitors over 8 years old, and communication takes place through telephone lines or holes in the glass. Family members over 16 years old must receive a permit from Israeli authorities in order to visit their loved one in prison. Often, men between 16-35 are not granted permits to visit, meaning visitors are usually the old and the young. Due to the permit system, Palestinians must visit on special International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) buses on prolonged journeys and many prisoners never receive family visits. In June 2007, Israel suspended the ICRC Family Visit Programme in the Gaza Strip entirely. In July 2016, the ICRC cut visits from twice a month to once a month.

**G4S:** G4S is the largest security company in the world, with operations in 125 countries. In 2007, G4S Israel signed a contract with the Israeli Prison Authority to provide security systems and services to all of the major Israeli prisons and detention centers. The international Stop G4S Campaign has cost the company contracts worth millions of dollars and compelled the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to sell its shares in G4S. International pressure must continue to make sure that G4S ends all aspects of its support for Israel's crimes.

**Hunger Strike:** Hunger strikes have been used as a crucial form of resistance by Palestinian prisoners since the 1960's, collectively and individually, to achieve a variety of demands regarding prison conditions and release. Recently multiple hunger strikers have focused on the illegal practice of administrative detention. In 2016 Bilal Kayed's 71 day hunger strike against his illegal administrative detention was supported with protests, vigils and sit-ins across Palestine and solidarity

demonstrations around the world. As a result of the pressure, the Israeli government finally came to an agreement with Bilal Kayed and will release him in December 2016.

**Isolation:** The practice of the Israel Prison Service to place prisoners in an empty cell or with one other prisoner for 23 hours per day as a preventative measure. Prisoners in isolation are allowed one walk per day, mostly with their hands and feet shackled. Prisoners in isolation are not allowed to speak with family or friends over the phone, and must deal with restrictions on receiving letters or books.

**Military Court:** The Israeli military court system prosecutes all Palestinians who are arrested by the Israeli military and charged with crimes defined by military orders, including “security violations”. Defendants are all Palestinian – no Israeli settlers in the West Bank are tried in military court. Israeli military courts do not guarantee right to fair trial or comply with international legal standards. Military courts hand down discriminatory sentences that are much longer than sentences given in civilian court for the same convictions. For Israelis the minimum age for trial as an adult is 18 but Palestinian children as young as 12 years old are tried in military courts.

**Solitary Confinement:** Palestinian prisoners are subject to solitary confinement in an empty cell with only a mattress and a blanket for up to 24 hours a day often during interrogation and as a disciplinary measure for indefinite periods of time.

**Sumud:** Sumud or steadfastness, developed as a political strategy in the 1960’s as part of the anti-colonial struggle. It signifies the strong determination to stay in the country and on the land despite occupation and oppression. Sumud has also been used as a mental strategy for resisting torture and imprisonment.



**ON THIS DAY,**

**we affirm that we are Palestinian prisoners of struggle, and part of the Palestinian women's movement, and that the national and social struggle goes on constantly and continuously until we win our freedom from occupation, and our freedom as women from all forms of injustice, oppression, violence and discrimination against women....We stand as part of a global struggle with all the world's women freedom fighters: against injustice, exploitation and oppression.**

**– Khalida Jarrar and Lina Jarbouni**

## **INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY STATEMENT FROM INSIDE HASHARON PRISON MARCH 8, 2016**

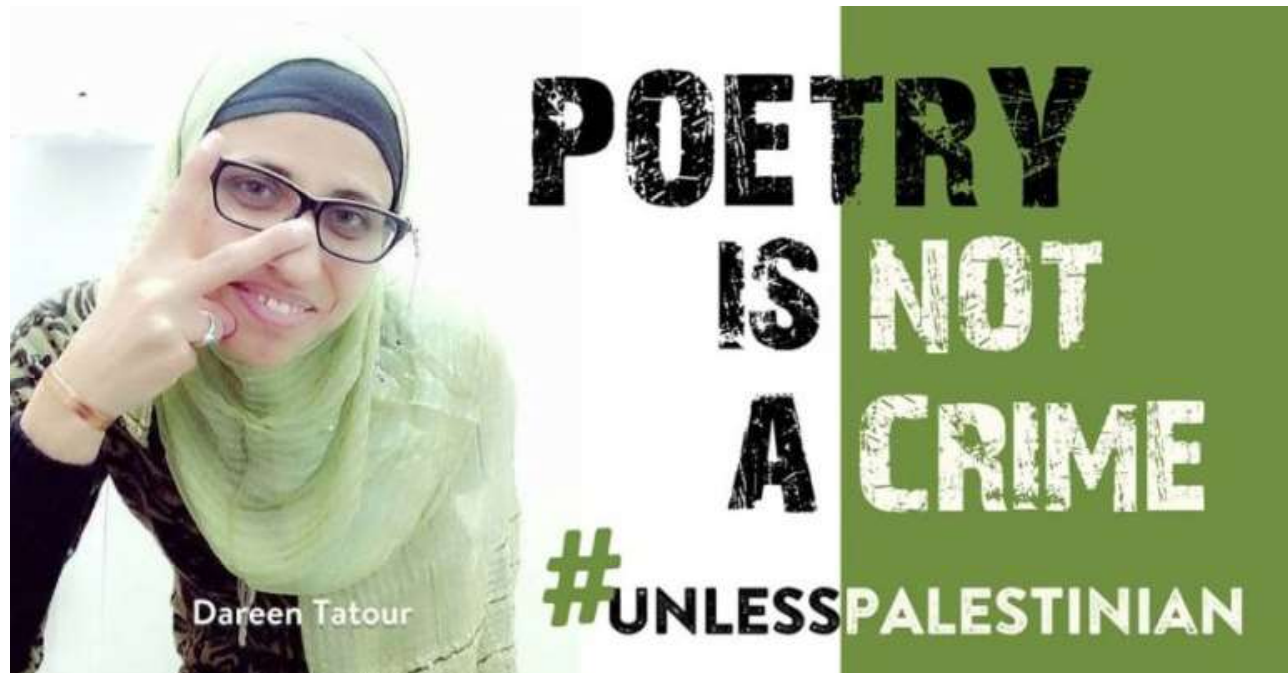
# STORIES OF WOMEN'S IMPRISONMENT IN PALESTINE

There are approximately 70 Palestinian women and girls imprisoned by Israel in the fall of 2016. The stories featured in this pamphlet represent a range of experiences of those who are currently in prison or have recently been released. They highlight some of the key reasons for their imprisonment, the conditions that women and their families endure, and their persistent struggle for freedom and the liberation of Palestine in the face of escalating repression by the Israeli state.



# RESIST, MY PEOPLE, RESIST THEM

*The truth in your heart is stronger,  
As long as you resist in a land  
That has lived through raids and victory.*



## DAREEN TATOUR

Dareen Tatour, a Palestinian poet, was arrested on October 11, 2015 at her family home in Nazareth for her social media posts. On October 3 and 4, 2015, Tatour posted a video to her YouTube and Facebook accounts with audio of her poem “Resist, My People, Resist Them” set to images of Palestinians resisting Israeli security forces. She was indicted on charges of incitement to violence and supporting a terrorist organization and faces eight years in prison. Dareen was placed under house arrest pending trial. She is not allowed to exit or use the internet at any time. Writers from around the world, including PEN International, have called upon Israel to drop the case against Dareen unconditionally.



NYC protesters outside of the offices of Facebook, Sept. 30, 2016 demanding that Facebook cancel its agreements with the Israeli governments to censor users' accounts.

## Policing Social Media

Since October 2015, hundreds of Palestinians have been arrested by Israel and accused of “incitement” for social media posts, primarily on Facebook. The evidence presented against those arrested includes how many “likes” and “shares” a post receives.

## A POET BEHIND BARS (EXCERPT)

By Dareen Tatour & Translated by Tariq al Haydar

*The charge has worn my body,  
from my toes to the top of my head,  
for I am a poet in prison,  
a poet in the land of art.  
I am accused of words,  
my pen the instrument.  
Ink— blood of the heart— bears witness  
and reads the charges.  
Listen, my destiny, my life,  
to what the judge said:  
A poem stands accused,  
my poem morphs into a crime.  
In the land of freedom,  
the artist's fate is prison.*

Written on November 2, 2015, the day Dareen Tatour received the indictment, at JelemeH Prison.



## **KHALIDA JARRAR**

**Khalida Jarrar has been an elected representative on the Palestinian Legislative Council since 2006. She is the former executive director of Addameer Prisoner Support & Human Rights Association, a feminist, a human rights activist and a lawyer. Jarrar led the movement to bring the Israeli government to the International Criminal Court and represents Palestine on the Council of Europe. She has repeatedly faced persecution by the Israeli state for political activities. Jarrar was arrested for the first time simply for being present at an International Women’s Day protest at Birzeit University in 1989. A month later, Jarrar emerged from jail an advocate for prisoners’ rights.**

**In August 2014, Jarrar was served with an Israeli military expulsion order displacing her from her home because she was considered a “security threat.” She rejected the order, stating “it is the occupation who must leave our homeland.” Such orders violate the Fourth Geneva Convention, which prohibits forced transfer of people under occupation from one area of occupied territory to another. Jarrar undertook a month-long sit in outside the Palestinian Legislative Council office where thousands of Palestinian and international delegations visited her and helped her succeed in defeating the expulsion order.**



**During her trial, she stated “I represent a people and my people are under occupation and it is my right to protest.” The military judge ordered her to be placed in solitary confinement for saying this.**

A few months after this victory, Jarrar was arrested in a violent dawn raid by Israeli occupation forces who invaded her home. Jarrar was held in administrative detention for several months before being convicted in the military courts on twelve charges, all related to her public political work. She was charged with participation in events that supported Palestinian prisoners, visiting released prisoners, and representing the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine in the Palestinian Legislative Council. Most major Palestinian political parties are considered hostile and prohibited by the Israeli military occupation.

During her trial, she stated “I represent a people and my people are under occupation and it is my right to protest.” The Israeli prison service threatened to place her in isolation after she spoke to the press in the courtroom, but the other prisoners protested so much that she was never placed in isolation. (Erakat, Noura. “Interview with Khalida Jarrar, Prominent Palestinian Activist and Parliamentary Member, After her Release from Prison.” *Jadaliyya* Aug 8, 2016.)

While in prison, Jarrar helped to organize a school for the younger women, which for several months included 12-year-old Dima al-Wawi, thought to be the youngest Palestinian girl ever held in an Israeli prison (see Dima’s story on p. 18). Jarrar was released on June 3, 2016, a month early, due to overcrowding in HaSharon women’s prison. In an interview with Al-Jazeera following her release, Jarrar explained “I feel that I was arrested because they wanted to send a message, maybe for other women, maybe for other lawmakers, to keep us silent.” She made it clear that she has no intentions of backing down from her political commitments which includes work with various women’s organizations. “If Israel wants to arrest me for this work, they can come and arrest me.”

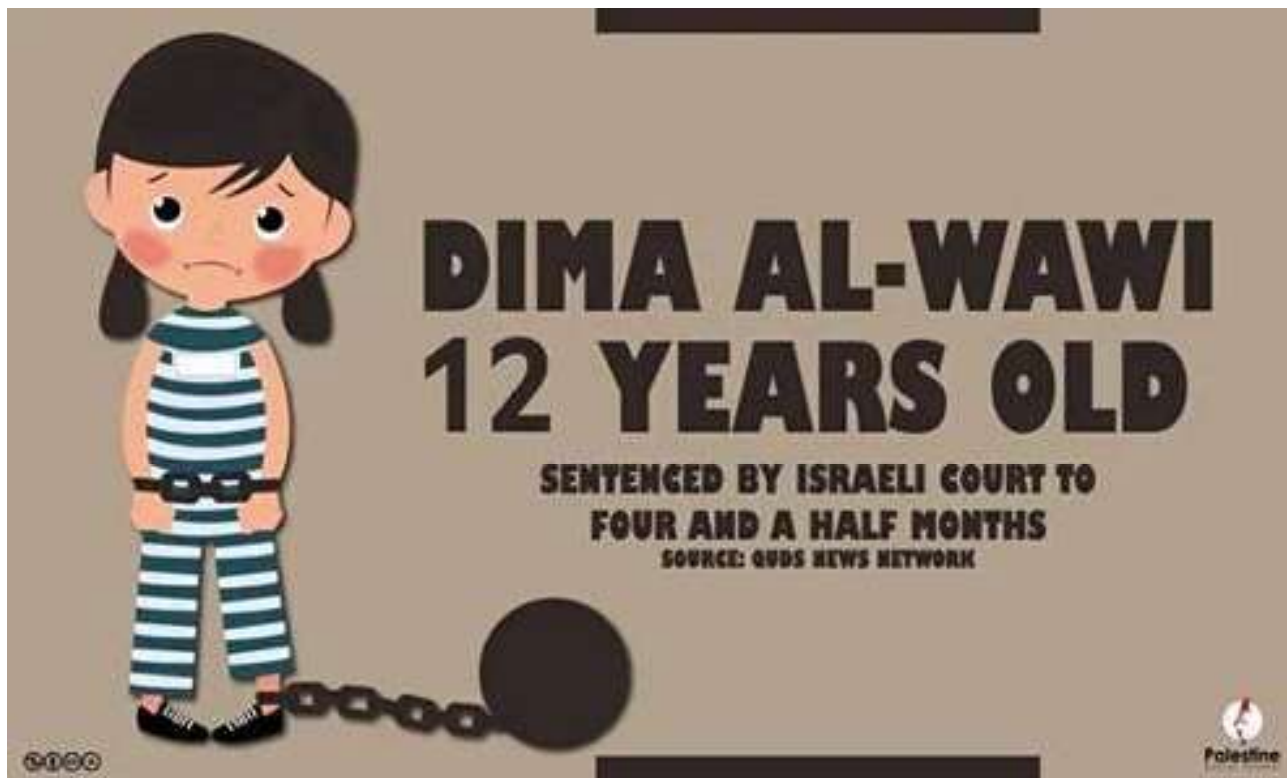
# **Military Order 101 – “Order Regarding Prohibition of Incitement and Hostile Propaganda”**

Military Order 101 was issued in August 1967, only two months after the beginning of Israel’s occupation of the Palestinian territory. This order criminalizes civic activities including: organizing and participating in protests; taking part in assemblies or vigils; waving flags and other political symbols; printing and distributing political material. Under the heading “support to a hostile organization”, the order further prohibits any activity that demonstrates sympathy for an organization deemed illegal under military orders, be it chanting slogans or waving a flag or other political symbols.

Military Order 101, which is still in force in the occupied West Bank and often provides the basis for the arrest of human rights and political activists, has been further amended by Order 718 (22 July 1977), Order 938 (5 October 1981), Order 1079 (14 October 1983) and Order 1423 (26 January 1995).

Source:

[www.addameer.org/israeli\\_military\\_judicial\\_system/military\\_orders](http://www.addameer.org/israeli_military_judicial_system/military_orders)



## **DIMA AL-WAWI**

Dima Al-Wawi, 12 years old, was sentenced by an Israeli military court on February 18, 2016 to 4.5 months in prison and an 8,000 NIS fine after she allegedly approached the Israeli settlement of Karmeit Zur in the southern occupied West Bank with a knife. Just three days before being detained, Dima had attended the funeral of 14-year-old Haitham al-Baw, another youth from her village of Halhul, who was shot dead in a field at the side of a road by Israeli forces. At twelve, Dima was the youngest Palestinian girl ever sentenced to prison.

After her arrest, Dima was interrogated without her parents or a lawyer present. She said she had been yelled at during her interrogation and attended six court sessions with her feet in shackles, causing her to develop a limp. Dima's mother had to apply for permits to enter Israel to visit her daughter in prison, and then could only communicate with her through a plastic barrier, using telephones. Dima's parent mounted a public campaign to end their daughters' detention which violated both Israeli and international law regarding the detention of children.

While in prison, Dima took classes in Arabic, Palestinian embroidery and other topics led by Lina Jarbouni, Khalida Jarrar and others who were in the same prison with her. “I am very grateful to the other Palestinian women who were in the prison with Dima for taking care of her,” Dima’s mother says. In response to pressure from the popular campaign, Dima was released six weeks early to the joy of her family, her village and the entire Palestinian movement. After her release, Dima spoke of the other girls who were with her in prison, “I wish all the friends I made could be freed, I wish all the children were allowed to come out of the prison with me.” (Khalel, Sheren. “Celebrations as Israel frees ‘youngest female Palestinian prisoner’.” *Middle East Eye* April 26, 2016.)

**W**hile Israeli law does not allow prison sentences for children under the age of 14, Israeli military law, which applies to Palestinians living under military occupation in the West Bank, **allows for children as young as 12 to be charged** for “nationalistic-motivated” violent offenses. According to Defense for Children International–Palestine (DCIP), **no other country in the world systematically prosecutes hundreds of children in military courts each year.** The number of Palestinian minors imprisoned for security-related offenses rose from 170 in September 2015 to 438 in February 2016.

# LINA JARBOUNI

Lina Jarbouni has been in prison since 2002, longer than any other Palestinian woman currently imprisoned. Jarbouni is from Akka, has Israeli citizenship, and had a job in sewing workshops before her arrest. Lina comes from a family known for its contribution to the Palestinian resistance: her grandfather Haj Ali was one of the resistance fighters during the revolution of 1936, as well as through the Nakba of 1948, her father was imprisoned several times by Israel for his political stands, and her uncle Omar was killed in Lebanon fighting Israeli occupation soldiers when they invaded Lebanon in 1982.



Jarbouni was arrested in 2002 at the age of 26 and interrogated, tortured and abused for thirty days. She was sentenced to 17 years for “aiding the enemy,” being actively involved in Palestinian resistance. In 2012, Lina joined thousands of other Palestinian prisoners in a mass hunger strike demanding an end to administrative detention and solitary confinement and the right to family visits for prisoners from the Gaza Strip. The Israeli prison authorities tried to break her strike first by harassing her and then by moving her to solitary confinement.

Lina suffers from a number of medical conditions and has been subject to medical neglect and mistreatment. She was denied essential surgery until other women prisoners launched a hunger strike on her behalf. She has applied for compassionate release due to her medical situation but this has been consistently refused. In 2011, when other women Palestinian political prisoners were released in the Gilad Shalit prisoner exchange, the Israeli state refused to release her, saying that as an Israeli citizen, she was not eligible. She serves as a spokeswoman for other women prisoners at HaSharon prison and has played a critical role in advocating for the educational rights of imprisoned Palestinian girls.

# MONA QA'ADAN

Mona Qa'adan has been imprisoned multiple times in the past 17 years. Qa'adan was first arrested in December 1999 and subjected to torture for 28 days. Several techniques were used against her, including the “shabbih” which involves tying the detainee’s arms and legs to a chair and completely blocking the person’s vision with a mask. Very loud music is played, causing sensory disorientation. Most interrogations occurred during the night, and her windowless isolation cell was brightly illuminated around the clock, interrupting her natural sleep patterns. She was often deprived of showers and forbidden to change her clothes. Qa'adan was physically beaten once. In protest of these conditions, Mona undertook a hunger strike for 30 days until she was released.

In May 2011, Qa'adan was arrested and held in solitary confinement. She won her demand to be put in a communal cell after 16 days of a hunger strike. Two months later, she learned of her mother’s death while in prison. Qa'adan was released as part of the prisoner exchange deal in December 2011 but then was rearrested in November 2012 on the same charges. Qa'adan was denied family visits for 2.5 years and her trial was postponed over 20 times.

In March 2016, immediately after her release, Qa'adan urged attention to imprisoned Palestinian girls who are often denied access to their parents during interrogation.

“

She took me in, shaken and distraught, without even asking my name. She took me in, ensuring I had the necessities, a toothbrush, a towel, some soap and utensils for breakfast the next morning. As I cleaned up, she took it upon herself to prepare my bunk, with new sheets and pillow covers and waited as I sat quietly in a corner trying to understand what was happening.

”

-Mariam Barghouti, a Palestinian American journalist, describing Mona Qa'adan in prison in 2014.



## **IHSAN DABABSEH**

**Ihsan Dababseh was freed from HaSharon prison on July 10, 2016. She had been in prison since October 2014 on charges of membership in the Islamic Jihad movement which is prohibited by the Israeli government.**

**Ihsan had previously spent from 2007-2009 in prison on similar charges. During that arrest, Israeli soldiers blindfolded Ihsan and made a video of themselves dancing around her as she was standing against the wall. When the video was re-broadcast by Al-Jazeera in 2010, to her horror, Ihsan recognized herself as the blindfolded woman. The next day she and her family contacted the Palestinian Prisoners' Club to file charges against the Israeli army.**

**Upon her release in July 2016, Ihsan described some of the constant violations that women prisoners face. She described transport in the "Bosta", a metal vehicle in which prisoners are shackled during lengthy and arduous trips with little ventilation and extreme temperature variations. She also stated that her sentence was extended by 2 months and she was fined 2000 NIS (approximately \$500) after being accused of assaulting a prison warden.**

**Ihsan also noted that she and five other Palestinian women had been denied family visits for a month after they raised the Palestinian flag on the anniversary of the Nakba (the catastrophe), which Israel celebrates as its independence day. The denial of family visits is a form of collective punishment, preventing mothers, fathers, spouses and children from accessing their loved ones and family members.**



# NATALIE SHOKHA

*My greetings to all of the generous people of my beloved village, Rammun. My greetings to the council of the village and to everyone who supports its development.*

*Mother, I am in now in prison a member of the cultural committee. I have also become a member of the magazine. I discuss novels and I am the fourth in reading. Thank God at any rate.*

*Mom, Dad, everyone here is proud of your raising of me. Have your head held high. And I am living in the room with six other girls. We are the twelve flowers (security prisoners who are minor girls). We live together through bad and good times. Mom, please say hello to all and tell them I miss them so much and that I am sorry if I forgot anyone. May God bring us together, united, soon. God, bring us freedom now!*

*They will not imprison the scent of jasmine in a flower!*

**This letter was written by Natalie Shokha, 15, in HaSharon prison. Shokha, accused of seeking to stab Israeli occupation soldiers, was shot in her back and chest before being arrested in April 2016.**



# LINA KHATTAB

Lina Khattab was a first year student at Birzeit University and a dancer in the prominent El-Funoun Palestinian Popular Dance Troupe when she was arrested by Israeli troops in December 2014. She, along with other students, had been participating in a protest on behalf of Palestinian political prisoners, in celebration of the 47<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine.

Khattab was refused bail, even though she had never been arrested before, and was held in Israel's Ofer prison. Her mother reported that when she visited Lina, she had lost a lot of weight and was enduring harsh conditions and interrogation methods. Lina told her mother that she had been subject to "extreme beatings" by Israeli soldiers but had not confessed to anything.

In Ofer prison, Khattab was forced to stand against a wall in the rain and cold. When she was moved to HaSharon prison, she was subjected to further torture. From December 13<sup>th</sup> to February 16<sup>th</sup>, Khattab was taken before Israeli military court 10 times, sometimes in closed-door sessions. Her case was typically heard in late afternoon, yet, on days in which she was to appear before the Ofer military court, soldiers would wake her up in the middle of the night in order to keep her sleep deprived. In the middle of a frigid winter, they would proceed to turn on cold air in the vehicles that transported her, and place her in a cold room with the air conditioning blasting when she arrived.

**Lina was charged with "throwing stones" and "participating in an unlawful demonstration" which are frequently used arbitrary charges brought against Palestinians. Palestinian students can face more than a year in prison just for being members of student organizations.**



Birzeit University students marched on campus calling for the release of Lina Khattab and other imprisoned Palestinian students in December. (Photo: Progressive Democratic Student Pole at Birzeit)

Lina was charged with “throwing stones” and “participating in an unlawful demonstration” which are frequently used arbitrary charges brought against Palestinians. Palestinian students can face more than a year in prison just for being members of student organizations. According to Sahar Francis, Director of Addameer “In the last couple of years, it was not so common to arrest women for throwing stones, but we believe this case is part of increasing attacks on peaceful resistance activities.” (Kates, Charlotte. “Young dancer jailed by Israel for taking part in protest.” *The Electronic Intifada* February 13, 2015)

Samira Shaladeh, Lina’s mother, explained, “Lina represents an entire people uprooted from their land by force of arms. Every day the occupation strikes and kills and demolishes, arrests, desecrates holy places, takes away farmers’ land and builds settlements. ... The truth is that the Palestinian people want to recover their homeland and achieve freedom for their people, and Lina is a part of this truth, rejecting steadfastly all of this violence against our people.”

Khattab was sentenced to six months in prison, three years on

probation, and a 6,000 NIS (\$1,500 USD) fine. Lina described the reception given her by the women in HaSharon prison, wing 2. “They gave me a warm welcome, as well as clothes instead of the torn ones I was wearing. They made food and gave me the confidence and strength I needed.” She described the routine of her days in prison, “We spend most of the time talking to each other, learning silk bead embroidery or reading some of the limited [available] books.” At the end of each month, there was one day where the women prisoners perform for each other and Lina would perform the traditional dabke dance which inspired other women to learn it as well.

Lina was released from prison on June 11, 2015, welcomed by her family and hundreds of other people. Upon her release, she changed her major at Birzeit University from journalism to law. Having experienced directly the harsh conditions and abuse endured by Palestinian political prisoners in violation of international law, she wanted to dedicate herself to defending and advocating for them in the future. In an interview with Al-Monitor she said, “The most important achievement of my life will be to have the chance to shout out to the world even the voice of one Palestinian child who is suffering under the occupation.” (Melhem, Ahmad. “The Palestinian dancer who was locked away.” *Al Monitor* July 19, 2015.)



Lina Khattab after her release from prison.



Badia Shalabi, mother of Palestinian prisoner Hana Shalabi, holds her daughter's portrait at a protest in the West Bank City of Burqin on 28 February 2012. (Photo: AFP - Saif Dahlah)

# HANA SHALABI

In 2012, Hana undertook a 47 day hunger strike demanding her freedom after repeatedly being held in administrative detention. Shalabi had been re-arrested only a few months after she was released in a prisoner exchange. Shalabi went on hunger strike as the only means of protesting another term of captivity without a charge, trial or sentence.

Shalabi's family is originally from Haifa but was exiled by the Israeli occupation to Burquin in the West Bank. When she was 8 years old a boy from her village was shot to death right in front of her by the Israeli army. After that, Shalabi began collecting rocks for the boys in the village to confront the Israeli soldiers who would raid Burquin daily. In 2009, Hana was arrested and accused of plotting an attack on Israel. She was interrogated and subjected to physical and psychological torture. When the Israeli military failed to get any information from her, they put her in administrative detention which was renewed several times without any official charges ever being filed. Consequently, when she was arrested in 2012 again without any charges, forcibly stripped searched by a male Israeli soldier and then placed in solitary confinement, she resolved to go on hunger strike.

Dozens of other Palestinian prisoners went on hunger strike in solidarity with Shalabi as she came close to dying, losing over 35 pounds. She became the focus of an international solidarity campaign for her

freedom which included fasts by university students in the United States and Europe. On International Women's Day, March 8, 2012, her mother, Badiya Shalabi, appealed to the international community to save her daughter. "I demand that the world stands by her now. My daughter is dying in prison. We are also dying here. This is my appeal to the world." ("Shalabi's mother: My daughter is dying in prison." *Ma'an News Agency* March 8, 2012.)

Hana ended her hunger strike through a questionable agreement in which the Israeli's allowed her release only if she were deported to the Gaza Strip, far from her family home in the West Bank, a violation of international law which forbids forced deportation or involuntary transfer of people in an occupied territory. The agreement stated that Hana was to be repatriated to the West Bank in three years but this has not happened. Hana described her perspective, "Resistance is insisting on living and thriving, despite the pain." (Baroud, Ramzy. "Hungry Warrior: The Untold Story of Hana Shalabi." *Counterpunch* December 17, 2015.)

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## **CULTIVATE HOPE (EXCERPT)**

*Our Spring in Palestine is born in a prison cell  
Our Spring in Palestine is born shackled to a hospital bed  
Our Spring in Palestine is born with an administrative  
detention order against it.  
But, it blossoms even in hunger!  
I pray you strength  
I pray you justice  
I pray you freedom  
Hana', I pray your heart muscle, holding all of us tonight  
holds on a day stronger - a sunrise longer - a day longer -  
a sunrise stronger*

A poem for Hana Shalabi on the 40<sup>th</sup> day of her hunger strike by Rafeef Ziadah, Palestinian Canadian spoken word artist

# RASMEA ODEH



Rasmea Odeh, a 69 year old Palestinian American, was tortured and raped in an Israeli prison for 45 days in 1969, forcing her to confess to a bombing that she denies committing. She spent ten years in an Israeli prison before being released as part of a prisoner exchange in 1979. Upon her release she testified about her torture at a hearing of a UN special committee in Geneva, Switzerland.

Rasmea became a U.S. citizen in 2004 and has been a leading member of Chicago's Palestinian, Arab, and Muslim communities. She has been an organizer with the Arab American Action Network (AAAN) since 2004 where she coordinates its Arab Women's Committee and leads the organization's work in the areas of defending civil liberties and immigrants' rights.

In 2013 Rasmea was arrested on charges of immigration fraud.

**Rasmea's continued persecution by the U.S. government on these trumped-up charges reveals the direct collusion between Israel and the United States in criminalizing and prosecuting Palestinian liberation activists.**

The U.S. government claimed that Rasma failed to disclose on her citizenship application that she had been convicted of a crime in Israel. Rasma, who suffers from PTSD as a result of her torture and rape, explains that she did not understand the question on the immigration form and thought it only referred to convictions in the United States. In a 2015 railroad trial, where Judge Drain refused to allow defense attorneys to present evidence that Rasma suffers from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Rasma was convicted of immigration fraud and given an eighteen month sentence followed by deportation.

In February 2016, a 3-judge appeals panel determined that Judge Drain wrongfully barred expert torture witness, Dr. Mary Fabri, from testifying at the trial and remanded the case back to Drain for a determination as to the admissibility of the expert testimony. In response Drain ruled that Rasma would have to submit to up to 18 hours of a government expert's examination of her mental state even though it is a known fact that Rasma is a survivor of vicious physical, sexual and psychological torture at the hands of the Israeli military. The international work to demand Justice 4 Rasma will continue until she is free!

**“Of course resisting imprisonment is the task of all revolutionary movements today... We join the call to free Mumia Abu Jamal, the MOVE 9 and all of the revolutionary prisoners. This is a link between the struggles of revolutionary prisoners from the United States to Ireland to France to the Basque country to the Philippines and elsewhere: today Bilal Kayed represents all of these struggles. He must be freed.”**

Leila Khaled message to the international solidarity movement supporting Palestinian prisoner Bilal Kayed on the 56th day of his hunger strike against administrative detention, August 9, 2016.



Leila Khaled mural painted on the Apartheid Wall in Bethlehem.





Former U.S. prisoners and political prisoners Claude Marks, Laura Whitehorn, Manuel LaFontaine, and Hank Jones at the Addameer office in Palestine.

## **Reflections from the Prison, Labor & Academic Delegation to Palestine by Laura Whitehorn**

A trip to Palestine in 2016 on a prison, labor, and academic delegation left me with indelible impressions of the depth of Palestinian resistance and the role political prisoners play in that resistance. Everywhere we went, from the West Bank to the '48 (the Palestinian land seized and renamed “Israel” by the Zionists in 1948), images and names of current and former political prisoners adorned walls. Over a ten-day visit, we met with nearly 100 people and found that almost every one had been, at some point, a political prisoner. As a former US-held political prisoner, I was embraced with special warmth. No one had to ask what a US political prisoner is. No one wondered what might make someone who grew up in the US take actions that could result in a long prison sentence. No one questioned what “solidarity” means in the scope of resistance against imperialism and white supremacy.

The parallels between the white settler colony called Israel and the

white settler colony called the United States were clear, and the students, parents, workers, artists, and social justice advocates we met all shared that view with us.

As we spoke with one after another courageous, deep-hearted woman and man who had served years as a political prisoner under Zionist rule, we witnessed what one man described as the role of political prisoners: “we prevent the Zionist state from succeeding in occupying the minds of the people as well as their land. Political prisoners face the occupation forces head on, and in our resistance we preserve the political consciousness of a people.”

We saw the results of this everywhere: Brightly colored Arabic words on a ceiling in the Ibdaa community center in Deheisheh refugee camp—the names of some of the 500-plus villages destroyed when Israel seized and occupied Palestinian land in the Nakba (disaster) of 1948, establishing the Zionist state of Israel, a



Ceiling at Ibdaa community center in Deheisheh refugee camp.

state only for Jews. Land Day rallies in the Naqab, where a yellow Caterpillar bulldozer waited to uproot another Palestinian village and replace it with yet another illegal Israeli settlement, and at the gate of the Ofer military court, where Palestinian youth are punished for challenging the occupiers. A family in Sheikh Jarrah, East Jerusalem, fighting for their home, forced to live in just one part of their house because Israel had confiscated the other half and installed Jewish settlers there. Tarps stretched over stalls and streets in Hebron’s Old City to protect Palestinian shoppers and shop keepers from the human waste thrown down on them by settlers occupying apartments above.

And we saw it in the depth of solidarity and love as former political prisoners greeted the former US-held political prisoners in our delegation. We saw it as each Palestinian woman and man we met insisted on being seen not as an individual but as part of a collective. Resistance is not an individual act but rather a gathering of strength

from a common struggle for national liberation and freedom.

We met with many women who had been political prisoners. Some had also seen other family members, including children, serve time for resistance. Men and women alike offered, as a stunning example of the collectivity that confers strength on a struggle, a story of the resistance of women political prisoners who refused to be released unless every other woman political prisoner was released as well which is referred to in the introduction to this pamphlet.



Mariam Shakhsher, former prisoner and scholar-activist, speaks to the delegation at An-Najah National University in Nablus.

I recognized the story as it was told, although I'd never heard it before. It is an emblem of what it means to stand together, and it stirred memories of my years inside, when US political prisoners, along with our other incarcerated sisters and brothers, fought together for our own dignity and for the freedom of other political prisoners. In particular in those years, we united from prison to prison across the country to do what we could to stop the state from executing Mumia Abu-Jamal, and to prevent the government from killing the late political prisoner Alan Berkman through medical neglect when he had cancer.



Laura Whitehorn and the mother of former political prisoner Mukhels Burgal.

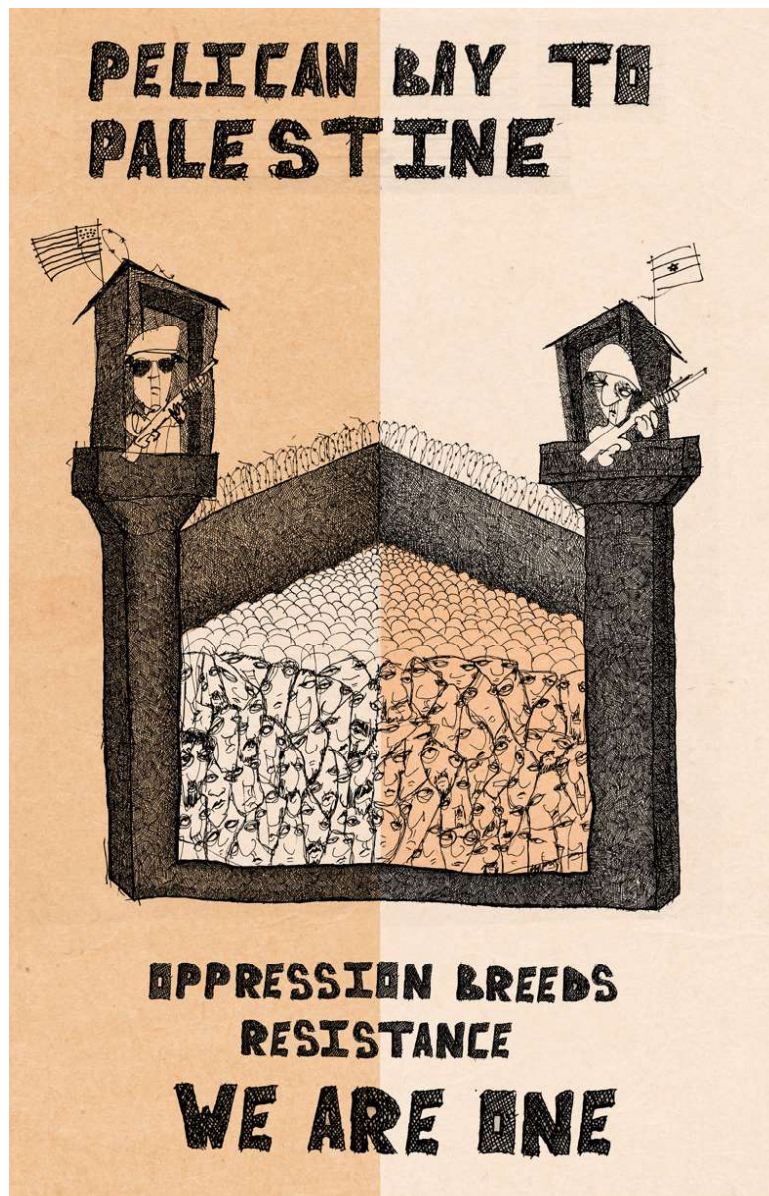
The story of the unity of the Palestinian women political prisoners also stirred a sharp, aching memory. It was a feeling I had tried to express in a drawing I made, in D.C. Jail in 1989, when the fierce longing for freedom that sparked the first Intifada ignited in me an emotion of solidarity, a yearning for an end to oppression so that

we could all be free and whole together. I saw a photo of a Palestinian woman patiently and determinedly sewing a flag, and I tried to reproduce it with colored pens.

Throughout our trip to Palestine I was also painfully aware of how

dangerous, how brutal, how devastating the current attacks by the Israelis on the Palestinian people are. No matter how many articles I had read from my desk in New York City—and how many protest rallies I had attended—there is no way I could have comprehended the utter cruelty of the Zionist state, the gross daily implementation of genocidal strategies and tactics at every level of life, the military prisons, the arrogance of the settlers, the apartheid that characterizes every corner of every neighborhood. Those are the things that give rise to the constant stream of political prisoners into the prisons of Israel, and that provoke such ongoing resistance.

This also stirred me to realize once again that to be a US political prisoner—or a US activist—means fighting consistently here, in the stronghold of Zionist propaganda, for a free Palestine, an end not only to the occupation begun in 1967 but to the occupation begun in 1948. Every time we say *free all political prisoners in the US*, we will say, too, *free all Palestinian political prisoners*. We will say, *Free Palestine!*



Drawing by Nidal El-Khairiy

## **FROM THE USA TO PALESTINE: MESSAGES OF SOLIDARITY ACROSS PRISON WALLS**

Prisoners held in the U.S. have long found inspiration in the struggles of Palestinian prisoners, dating back to George Jackson. Current political prisoners, Herman Bell, Jalil Muntaqim and David Gilbert wrote the messages on the next pages to recognize the particular importance of Palestinian women prisoners in the movement.

## **To the Palestinian Women from Herman Bell - 2016**

**I heartily support your struggle to sustain your traditional way of life as you fight to rid Israeli occupation of your land. Translated as steadfast resistance or standing one's ground with dignity, the Palestinian concept of "Sumud," seems most fitting to any age or any time wherein a people find a common foe camped at their doorstep. For the most part women watch over their people's culture and its traditions. They are to be loved, cherished and respected. They are mothers.**



**And during times of war, times of great hardship and affliction, children seem to grow up too fast, or succumb too readily to forces that slowly waste away their young lives. The loss of innocence in a state of innocence. Most mothers know another mother's heart. And no mother wants to see her child in harm's way. Yet, as the fierce winds of Israeli and Palestinian war rages on, it is said that Palestinian women almost instinctively instruct their sons and daughters not to betray the movement if ever they are captured or arrested.**

**So how do mothers cope under these circumstances: feed their children, provide some semblance of normalcy often in patchwork shelter after bombs stop falling out of the sky, comfort them in their fitful slumber as they dream of choking dust flung in the air by booming explosions that crumble buildings and tremble the earth?**

**All this pressure on Palestinian women who find themselves having to hold everything together while other family members are away or are otherwise engaged digging people out of rubble, seeking food, fighting for the land. Pressure requiring that they be many things: plumber, teacher, doctor, care giver, visitor, provider, center of gravity and family supporter, a comforter to grieving neighbors. Tomorrow, they face interminable check points on the way to visit husbands, sons, daughters, and wives in Israeli prisons.**

Despite the seeming prevalence of the dark side of human nature, the sky still will be blue and some days will rain. As this Israeli occupation plays out in your life and everywhere else in the hearts and mind of people who support you, your exemplary resolve, poise and steadfastness in this fight inspires the resolve of people who fight along with you against oppression and domination. I heartily support you.

In solidarity  
Political Prisoner

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Herman". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "H" and a long horizontal stroke at the end.

For more information about  
political prisoner Herman Bell, see  
[www.freehermanbell.org](http://www.freehermanbell.org).

**As Salaam Alaikum  
Sisters in Islam and Struggle:**

**As many of you know, the first martyr in Islam was a woman, a standing bearer of fortitude and sacrifice. It is this example of courage and determination that each of you emulate as you struggle against the Apartheid of Zionist occupation. Here in the U.S., we have a long history of women engaged in the struggle for liberation and freedom, including Harriet Tubman, the General of the Underground Railroad, our late BPP/BLA comrade Sister Safiya Bukhari, our late revolutionary anti-imperialist comrade Marilyn Buck and Assata Shakur, our formidable exiled BPP/BLA revolutionary nationalist. We recognize that women have always been a substantial, committed part of our struggle and we honor them. It is in this spirit that I send this message because it is extremely important for today's generation of activists to recognize your present sacrifices and struggles in Palestine. By making these connections, we strengthen the resolve of each of us going forward. For as long as the U.S. continues to support Zionist Apartheid and oppression of the Palestinian people, we will support your freedom as we fight for our own.**

**Ma'Salaam – Revolutionary Love  
Jalil Abdul Muntaqim**



**For more information about political prisoner Jalil Muntaqim, see [www.freejalil.com](http://www.freejalil.com) or his latest book *Escaping the Prism....Fade to Black*.**





### **From David Gilbert, Anti-Imperialist US-held Political Prisoner - September 26, 2016**

Wide scale imprisonment – whether of Palestinians or Black people in the U.S. – is not accidental but rather a cruel strategy to incapacitate entire nations who have fought valiantly against colonialism and oppression. The damage done goes way beyond the pain of those held and mistreated behind bars because family members, breadwinners, and mentors are ripped out of the fabric of the community. Most crucially, children are grievously harmed when they have a parent in prison. Women, although only a small percentage of prisoners, usually bear the brunt of the damage done with greatly intensified burdens of earning a living, raising children, supporting prisoners, keeping communities together. And now the number of women in prison, where they're often subjected to anguishing abuse, has been growing at a rapid rate.

These accounts of Palestinian women prisoners are of crucial importance. First, they are another window into the brutality of the Israeli colonial project seeking to obliterate Palestine. **Second, these women provide inspiring examples of real world steadfastness, a courage and determination based on love.**

For more information about political prisoner David Gilbert, see [www.kersplebedeb.com/mystuff/profiles/gilbert.html](http://www.kersplebedeb.com/mystuff/profiles/gilbert.html) or his most recent book *Love and Struggle*.

# RESOURCES

## Books

Abdo, Nahla. *Captive Revolution: Palestinian women's Anti-Colonial Struggle Within the Israeli Prison System*. Pluto Press, 2014.

## Films

*3000 Nights*. Dir. Mai Masri. Les Films d'Ici, Nour Productions, Orjouane Productions, Philistine Films. 2015.

*Tell Your Tale, Little Bird*. Dir: Arab Loutfi. Cinema Ma. 2007.

*Women in Struggle*. Dir: Buthina Canaan Khoury. 2004.

## Organizations & News Sources

Addameer Prisoner Support & Human Rights Association  
[addameer.org](http://addameer.org)

Boycott, Divestment & Sanctions  
[bdsmovement.net](http://bdsmovement.net)

Defense for Children International (DCI) Palestine  
[dci-palestine.org](http://dci-palestine.org)

Electronic Intifada  
[electronicintifada.net](http://electronicintifada.net)

Mondoweiss  
[mondoweiss.net](http://mondoweiss.net)

Samidoun Palestine Prisoner Solidarity  
[samidoun.net](http://samidoun.net)



Mural on the Apartheid Wall - Bethlehem