

May 7, 2012

His Excellency Ban Ki-Moon
Secretary-General of the United Nations
New York

Dear Mr. Secretary-General,

We, Palestinians for Dignity, represent a network of movements and individuals united in the struggle to achieve equality, justice and freedom for the Palestinian people wherever they reside. In your capacity as the United Nations Secretary General and in support of the rule of International law, we are writing to urge you to take urgent action to stop Israel's continued violations of the rights of the over 4,600 Palestinians currently held in Israeli jails.

Over 1,600 Palestinian prisoners initiated on April 17th an open-ended hunger strike to protest abuse at the hands of the Israeli Prison Service and to demand that their basic rights be respected. Hundreds more joined the hunger strike since then, bringing the number of hunger strikers up to an estimated 2,500 prisoners. Their plight has become even more urgent with the deteriorating health condition of eight prisoners, five of whom are held under the illegal practice of administrative detention, and some of whom have been on hunger strike for over two months.

Physicians for Human Rights-Israel said yesterday that "Bilal Diab and Thaer Halahleh are at risk of death as they enter their 69th day of hunger strike in protest of their administrative detention", and demanded that Israel transfer them to a civilian hospital, without moving them back and forth to the prison. Israel has thus far refused to do so, highlighting Israel's disregard for the lives of Palestinians. The cruel, inhuman and degrading practices that Palestinian prisoners are subjected to include denial of access to medical care, torture, solitary confinement, limits to family visitation, violations of children's rights and bans on education, not to mention hundreds of them were never charged or given legal due process and are being held in administrative detention.

We note with disappointment your silence ever since this protest movement began in December 2011 with Khader Adnan's arbitrary arrest and subsequent hunger strikes. This stands in stark contrast to your vocal and persistent remarks in support of formerly incarcerated Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit. Though Shalit has been released, Palestinian prisoners are still suffering under the so-called "Shalit Law", which imposed harsher measures on their conditions of detention.

We remind you of your responsibilities as Secretary-General of the UN. We invoke the norms of international law that guarantee basic rights to Palestinian prisoners, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Third and Fourth Geneva Conventions, the UN Convention Against Torture and the World Medical Association Malta Declaration on Hunger Strikers.

We urge you to take a firm and vocal position in opposition to Israel's abuse and violation of Palestinian prisoners' rights and encourage, through UN mechanisms at your disposal, measures of accountability for these violations. We urge you to take an official position *in line* with the Palestinian prisoners' demands and to encourage member states to stand against these gross human rights' violations. We await your urgent response.

Sincerely,

Palestinians For Dignity

Copied:

Navanethem Pillay UN Commissioner for Human Rights
Robert Serry, UN Special Coordinator of the Middle East Peace Process