

Press Release for immediate distribution

190 international personalities submit a public petition United Nations Human Rights Council calling on Israel to release Palestinian prisoners due to the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic

At the initiative of Dr Anis Fawzi Kassim and others, a public petition was submitted today to United Nations Human Rights Council calling on Israel to release Palestinian prisoners due to the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

The petition was signed by 190 international personalities of lawyers, academics, parliamentarians and human rights activists worldwide who expressed their deep concern for the well-being of some five thousand (5,000) Palestinian prisoners and detainees incarcerated in Israeli prisons and detention centers.

The petition said: "We are fully aware of the legal duty of Israel towards these detainees where Israel has been the belligerent occupant for the last fifty-two (52) years."

The petition added "Israel has been consistently negligent in shoring up its legal responsibilities under international law. In fact, it has utilized its formal organs, such as the courts, to justify its evasive practices of non-compliance with the law. Such failure has been manifestly evident during this pandemic. It has not taken any meaningful step to protect the Palestinian prisoners against infection."

The petition called the Israeli continued systemic and discriminatory policy towards Palestinian prisoners as "medical apartheid". Israel has released hundreds of Israeli criminal prisoners but refuses to release any Palestinian prisoner. Israel must realise that the infection does not discriminate between human beings.

The signatories called on the United Nations and the international community Israel to release all Palestinian prisoners and detainees especially in these pandemic times. In the alternative they call for the release of the children, women and sick and elderly prisoners and provide those prisoners with all necessary equipment and hygienic material and to observe their internationally recognized right to health.

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