**Press Release: Background and Statement on NGO Campaigns in Support of Palestinian Hunger Strikers**

May 8, 2012

NGO Monitor

<http://www.ngo-monitor.org/press-releases/background_and_statement_on_ngo_campaigns_in_support_of_palestinian_hunger_strikers/>

* A hunger strike by Palestinians convicted of murdering dozens of Israeli civilians in suicide bombings and other attacks, as well as a few prisoners held in Israeli administrative detention for suspected terrorist activity, is being publicized by a number of political advocacy NGOs.
* As in the past, NGOs claiming to promote human rights are promoting a one-sided image in which the Palestinians are automatically being portrayed as victims, removing the context of violent attacks that deliberately targets Israeli civilians.
* These campaigns also stand in stark contrast to and represent an immoral deviation from claims made by these same groups for the need to combat “impunity” and to hold perpetrators of “war crimes” accountable.

Jerusalem-based NGO Monitor today released the following statement:

Political advocacy NGOs, under the façade of human rights, are omitting a key fact regarding the prisoners – they have been convicted by courts of law for murder and other crimes or have been held in detention after appearing before a judge because of suspected involvement in terrorist activity. Some of the prisoners in question have been involved in incidents such as the infamous “Passover massacre” in Netanya and similar attacks that have left hundreds dead and wounded.

Indeed, in rejecting the appeal yesterday to free two of the Palestinian detainees, Bilal Diab and Tha’er Halahlah, the Israeli High Court of Justice cited continued ties to terrorist funding and activities and the security risk these detainees continue to pose to Israeli citizens. Furthermore, the Israel Prison Service is either meeting or exceeding all standards required by international law regarding prisoner treatment, but NGOs fail to note this as well. The immoral hijacking of universal human rights principles is part of the NGO campaign to isolate and demonize Israel.

Key Points on Administrative Detention:

* Most NGO statements omit the fact that administrative detention is a common procedure used by democratic and rights-respecting states around the world in security-related cases, including the US and the UK. Israel’s detention law meets and often exceeds the due process standards required by criminal procedure and human rights law.
* Contrary to the claims of NGOs, it is not true that administrative detention is “without charge.” The administrative detention laws require that the detainee be brought before a judge within a short period of time and any detention must be based upon credible evidence. All detainees have the right to challenge their detention to the Israeli Supreme Court sitting as the High Court of Justice.

The following statements from NGOs are examples of one-sided Palestinian claims, and the absence of any mention of Israel’s legitimate concerns regarding the suspected involvement of the detainees with terrorist groups. There is also no recognition of the difficulties faced by democracies, including the United States (at Guantanamo) and UK (in response to mass terror in Northern Ireland), in applying standard legal procedures in such contexts. These one-sided and highly politicized NGO statements have been repeated in a number of media reports, including in the [New York Times,](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/05/08/world/middleeast/israeli-court-rejects-appeal-for-palestinians-release.html?_r=1&ref=todayspaper) [Christian Science Monitor](http://www.csmonitor.com/tags/topic/Human+Rights+Watch), [Chicago Tribune](http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/sns-mct-palestinian-hunger-strikers-in-prison-clinic-20120505,0,1494513.storyhttp:/www.chicagotribune.com/news/sns-mct-palestinian-hunger-strikers-in-prison-clinic-20120505,0,1494513.story), [Fox News](http://www.foxnews.com/world/2012/04/30/hundreds-palestinian-prisoners-on-hunger-strike/), and [Huffington Post](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/john-wight/2000-palestinian-prisoner_b_1462778.html), without independent analysis. The statements also ignore that the overwhelming majority of striking prisoners (all but six) have been convicted of murder for suicide bombings, stabbings, shootings, and other crimes.

[**Human Rights Watch**](http://www.csmonitor.com/tags/topic/Human+Rights+Watch), May 2, 2012:

* “It shouldn’t take the self-starvation of Palestinian prisoners for Israel to realize it is violating their due process rights,” said [Joe Stork](http://www.hrw.org/bios/joe-stork), deputy Middle East director at Human Rights Watch. “Israel should stop holding prisoners for extended periods without charge.” (<http://www.hrw.org/news/2012/05/02/israel-stop-jailing-people-without-charge-or-trial>)
* “Israel should immediately charge or release people jailed without charge or trial under so-called administrative detention, Human Rights Watch said today.” (<http://www.hrw.org/news/2012/05/02/israel-stop-jailing-people-without-charge-or-trial>)

**B’Tselem**, May 4:

* as quoted in the Christian Science Monitor: “Administrative detention is not meant to be used as a substitution for a criminal process,” says Sarit Michaeli, a spokesperson for the Israeli human rights organization, [B’Tselem](http://www.csmonitor.com/tags/topic/B%27Tselem). “All the evidence is secret. It removes the ability of a person to defend themselves.” (<http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Middle-East/2012/0504/Hunger-intifada-Palestinian-prisoners-wield-new-old-tool-against-Israel/%28page%29/2>)

**Amnesty International,**March 23:

* “Amnesty International has repeatedly called on the Israeli authorities to release Hana Shalabi and other Palestinians held in administrative detention, unless they are promptly charged with internationally recognizable criminal offences and tried in accordance with international fair trial standards.” (<http://www.amnesty.org/en/news/israel-must-release-or-try-palestinian-detainee-hunger-strike-2012-03-23>)

**Addameer**, May 4:

* as quoted in the [Christian Science Monitor](http://www.csmonitor.com/tags/topic/Human+Rights+Watch): “Sahar Francis, a lawyer and director from the prisoner support group Adameer, calls Adnan’s case a victory and says that reviewing Israel’s reaction so far to the mass hunger strike shows Israel sees the tactic as a threat. ‘It puts pressure on the prison system,’ says Ms. Francis.” ([http://www.csmonitor.com/World/MiddleEast/2012/0504/Hunger-intifada-Palestinian-prisoners-wield-new-old-tool-against-Israel/%28page%29/2](http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Middle-East/2012/0504/Hunger-intifada-Palestinian-prisoners-wield-new-old-tool-against-Israel/%28page%29/2))

**Addameer/PHR-I**, May 6:

* “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. In spite of their rapidly deteriorating health, the Israeli Prison Service (IPS) is still denying regular access to them by independent Physicians for Human Rights-Israel (PHR-Israel) — Addameer and PHR-Israel are outraged by the blatant breach of medical ethics committed by the IPS in regards to these most urgent cases and by the negligence of the Israeli High Court judges who have yet to make a decision regarding their petition.” (<http://www.phr.org.il/default.asp?PageID=116&ItemID=1469>)

**PCHR**, May 2:

* “The Palestinian Centre for Human Rights (PCHR) is deeply concerned over the lives of two administrative detainees, Bilal Diab and Tha’er Halahla, who have been on hunger strike for 64 days.  PCHR holds the Israeli occupation authorities fully responsible for the two detainees’ lives.  PCHR calls upon the international community to exert pressure on Israeli occupation authorities to immediately release Diab and Halahla, as they have been placed under administrative detention.” (<http://www.pchrgaza.org/portal/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=8386:pchr-calls-upon-the-international-community-to-intervene-to-save-lives-of-bilal-diab-and-thaer-halahla-who-have-been-on-hunger-strike-&catid=36:pchrpressreleases&Item>)