

HUMAN RIGHTS  
'מרחלר אנטר אלהא (ISRAEL)

PHYSICIANS FOR  
לונדניומ אדם לחقوق الإنسان  
רופאים أطباء

POSITION PAPER

# DEATHS OF PALESTINIANS IN ISRAELI CUSTODY:

ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES,  
SYSTEMATIC KILLINGS AND COVER-UPS

NOVEMBER 2025

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## Introduction

This report exposes a deeply concerning pattern of systematic human rights violations committed against Palestinians detained by Israel and classified as "security prisoners",<sup>1</sup> carried out as part of an official policy implemented by Israeli authorities since October 2023.<sup>2</sup> Testimonies, official records, and extensive evidence collected by Physicians for Human Rights–Israel (PHRI) and other organizations indicate that, alongside Israel's perpetration of genocide in Gaza, authorities have also waged an unprecedented assault on detained Palestinians.

Over the past two years, nearly one hundred Palestinians have died in Israeli custody, both in the hands of the military and the Israel Prison Authority (IPS), including the young and elderly, the healthy and the sick alike. The information presented in this report and its appendix reflects only the cases currently known to PHRI and other human rights organizations. The fate of hundreds of Palestinians from Gaza detained by the Israeli military remains unknown to this day, suggesting that the true number of deaths is likely significantly higher than those documented here.

This report examines three central aspects of Israeli incarceration policy toward Palestinians held in its custody. First, it analyzes the policy of enforced disappearance pursued and maintained by the Israeli military. Second, it documents the systematic killing of Palestinians in military detention facilities and IPS prisons.<sup>3</sup> Third, it exposes the authorities' efforts to cover up the circumstances of these deaths, including the

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<sup>1</sup> According to an internal definition of the Israel Prison Service (IPS), the term "security prisoner" refers to individuals suspected or convicted of committing offenses deemed security-related against the State of Israel. This classification applies primarily to Palestinians, whether detained, tried, held in administrative detention, or classified as "unlawful combatants." Palestinians accused of non-security-related criminal offenses are designated as "criminal prisoners." For the purposes of this report, the term "detained Palestinians" is used to encompass all Palestinians held in Israeli custody and defined by Israeli authorities as "security prisoners."

<sup>2</sup> See: PHRI, ["Systematic Violation of Human Rights: The Incarceration Conditions of Palestinians in Israel Since October 7"](#), February 2024, and PHRI, ["Shut Down the Sde Teiman Facility Now"](#), April 2024.

<sup>3</sup> The distinction between military detention facilities and those operated by the IPS is elaborated on in the chapter "Systematic Killings in Israeli Custody".

suppression of investigations and the absence of accountability within Israel's legal and law enforcement systems.

Taken together, these findings indicate the existence of an official policy by Israeli incarceration authorities targeting detained Palestinians, in grave violation of Israel's obligations under domestic and international law and leading to an unprecedented number of deaths among Palestinians in custody.

To substantiate the findings presented in this report, particularly those in the second chapter addressing the systematic killing of detained Palestinians, the authors cross-referenced all available information obtained by PHRI through Freedom of Information (FOI) requests, testimonies from detained Palestinians, and cases in which PHRI was directly involved in filing medical complaints prior to the individuals' death, alongside information published by other human rights organizations. The dates of death and the detention facilities in which the deaths occurred served as the primary basis for this cross-referencing process.

For example, official data obtained by PHRI through an FOI request indicated that 43 Palestinians died in Israeli military custody between the outbreak of the war and the end of May 2024. Cross-referencing this figure with data from other organizations confirmed the identities of 25 of those who died, while the identities of the remaining 18 remain unknown. The same verification method was applied to all recorded deaths occurring in IPS custody.

By cross-referencing all official data obtained through FOI requests and individual inquiries to locate detained persons, correlated by date of death and place of detention, this report compiles and reveals, for the first time, information on the deaths of at least 94 Palestinians in Israeli detention facilities. Of these, 68 were from the Gaza Strip and 26 were from the occupied West Bank or held Israeli citizenship. The findings also substantiate grave concerns that the actual number of Palestinians who have died in Israeli custody is significantly higher, particularly among those detained from Gaza. In addition, the report

examines the authorities' consistent failure to hold those responsible for these deaths to account.

Finally, the analysis in this report distinguishes between Palestinians who died in the custody of the IPS and those who died in military detention. This distinction reflects the differing patterns of incarceration applied to detained Palestinians, as well as PHRI's engagement with Israel's various state bodies to uncover relevant information. It also serves to assist in identifying the authorities and officials responsible for these deaths.

# 1. Enforced Disappearances

## 1.1. Israeli Military Policy of Enforced Disappearance, October 2023 – May 2024

Informing a detained person's relatives of their detention and location constitutes a fundamental safeguard against any attempt by the authorities to isolate them.<sup>4</sup> Article 2 of the *International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance* defines enforced disappearance as:

"The arrest, detention, abduction or any other form of deprivation of liberty by agents of the State or by persons or groups of persons acting with the authorization, support or acquiescence of the State, followed by a refusal to acknowledge the deprivation of liberty or by concealment of the fate or whereabouts of the disappeared person, which place such a person outside the protection of the law".<sup>5</sup>

The Convention prohibits states from withholding information about the fate or whereabouts of a missing person, including in times of war or public emergency. Article 5 of the Convention further establishes that widespread or systematic practice of enforced disappearance constitutes crime against humanity. Similarly, Article 7(1)(i) of the *Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court* defines enforced disappearance as a crime against humanity subject to prosecution before the International Criminal Court (ICC).<sup>6</sup>

Prior to October 2023, Israel regularly provided the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) with lists of detained Palestinians, and ICRC representatives conducted periodic visits to Israeli detention facilities. In doing so, Israel acted in accordance with its obligations as a State Party to the Geneva Conventions. These obligations to share information and permit ICRC access are particularly vital during armed conflict, when the risk of violations against detained persons belonging to the population against which the state is fighting is significantly heightened.

<sup>4</sup> Abeer Baker, "[The Role of the Israeli Supreme Court in Exacerbating the Crime of Enforced Disappearance](#)," Institute for Palestine Studies, Winter 2025.

<sup>5</sup> United Nations, [International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance](#), A/RES/61/177 (20 December 2006).

<sup>6</sup> United Nations, [Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court](#), A/CONF.183/9 (17 July 1998).

Despite these obligations, in the early days of the war, Israeli authorities informed the ICRC that they would no longer provide information on Palestinians in custody and simultaneously barred all access to detention facilities—in direct breach of both international and domestic law.<sup>7</sup> This decision coincided with the suspension of family visitation rights and the mass arrest of thousands of Palestinians from the Gaza Strip who had entered Israel legally prior to October 7 under work or medical care permits.<sup>8</sup> Shortly thereafter, following Israel's ground invasion of Gaza, thousands more Palestinians from within Gaza were arrested and detained.<sup>9</sup>

Israel has blocked other channels previously used to gain information on detained Palestinians. For the past thirty years, the human rights organization HaMoked has operated a hotline for Palestinian families from the occupied West Bank and the Gaza Strip seeking to locate detained relatives. This service is based on an arrangement with Israeli authorities whereby information regarding a detained person's whereabouts must be provided to families, through the organization, within 24 hours of submitting a request to Israel's military or prison authorities. In practice, this hotline serves as the sole mechanism available to Palestinians for locating relatives held in Israeli custody.

Understanding this declared policy of withholding information and the enforced disappearance of Palestinians from Gaza is essential to fully grasping the scale of deaths among detained Palestinians. It also underscores that the data presented in this report is far from

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<sup>7</sup> Arutz Sheva, "[ICRC requests access to detainees; IPS: Allow access to hostages](#)", Oct 31, 2023. Several human rights organizations later petitioned the Israeli High Court against the decision to suspend ICRC visits to detention facilities. Yet, more than a year and a half on, the petition remains unresolved, with the Court having granted the state 20 postponements without holding a hearing on this clear violation of international law. By repeatedly approving these delays, the Court has effectively served as a fig leaf and enabler of ongoing violations of human rights and international law. See: Haaretz, "[Justice Amit to IPS: Global Media Is Comparing Israeli Prisons to Guantánamo, and You're Forcing the Court Into It](#)," August 19, 2025 [Hebrew].

<sup>8</sup> According to the Palestinian Ministry of Labor, approximately 10,300 Palestinians from Gaza held work permits and were employed in Israel prior to October 2023. Of these, 3,200 were returned through the Kerem Shalom crossing in November 2023, some still with plastic restraints on their wrists. Around 6,441 were deported to the West Bank, and many remain missing. See: Addammer, "[On International Workers' Day, The Occupation Has Arrested Thousands of Palestinian Workers after the 7th of October](#)," May 1, 2024.

<sup>9</sup> The Guardian, "[Israeli military database indicates only a quarter of Gaza detainees are fighters](#)," Sep 4, 2025.

exhaustive, and that the actual number of Palestinians who have died in Israeli custody is likely considerably higher.

However, while Israeli authorities have continued to respond to HaMoked's requests concerning detained Palestinians from the occupied West Bank, since the onset of the war, they have refused to provide any information regarding Palestinians detained from the Gaza Strip. This refusal constitutes a breach of Israel's obligation to update the ICRC or to establish an alternative information mechanism capable of providing families in Gaza with reliable updates about their detained relatives.<sup>10</sup>

For several months following October 2023, requests by human rights organizations to locate detained Palestinians from Gaza went unanswered. Already in the early weeks of the war, these organizations filed multiple petitions to Israel's Supreme Court on behalf of families seeking to locate relatives who, according to reports and testimonies, had been taken into custody by Israeli forces. The court's repeated dismissal of these petitions, while even imposing costs on the petitioners, effectively legitimized the authorities' withholding of information about the detained persons' fate. These dismissals rested on procedural and technical grounds, disregarding that the petitions concerned grave violations of fundamental human rights and international law. The Court failed to give due weight to the substantive issues at stake, instead focusing narrowly on procedural matters related to the filing of the petitions. In most cases, petitions were summarily rejected without hearing, denying petitioners the opportunity to present arguments.<sup>11</sup>

In one such petition filed on October 11, 2023, seeking to locate two Palestinian journalists from the Gaza Strip, the State Attorney declined to respond, arguing that Israel had no legal obligation to do so given Gaza's legal status, which, it claimed, exempted Israel from the application of international humanitarian law.<sup>12</sup> The Supreme Court accepted this position and dismissed the petition without convening an *inter partes* hearing.

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<sup>10</sup> HaMoked, "[Unaccounted For – Disappearance of Gaza Palestinians After They Were in the Custody of Israeli Security Forces](#)," November 2024.

<sup>11</sup> For a review of the court petitions, see: Abeer Baker, "[The Role of the Israeli Supreme Court in Exacerbating the Crime of Enforced Disappearance](#)," Institute for Palestine Studies, Winter 2025.

<sup>12</sup> HJC No. 7439/23 (decision issued on October 31, 2023).

On October 22, 2023, human rights organizations filed another petition with the Supreme Court on behalf of ten additional Gaza residents, requesting that the Court compel the Israeli military and prison authorities to disclose their places of detention, as well as those of thousands of other Palestinians from Gaza who had been lawfully present in Israel or the occupied West Bank and disappeared after October 7. The petition followed responses from the security authorities stating that "no information was available" regarding these cases. In its ruling, the Court reaffirmed the state's position that it bore no legal obligation to disclose information concerning Palestinians detained from Gaza and further imposed costs of NIS 3,000 on the petitioners.<sup>13</sup>

It was not until late April 2024—six months after the start of the war and following numerous petitions submitted on behalf of hundreds of detained Gaza residents—that the Court convened its first *inter partes* hearing on the matter. Two days before the scheduled hearing, the State Attorney's Office informed the Court that an email address had been established through which inquiries could be made regarding missing detained Palestinians from Gaza and to coordinate legal visits.<sup>14</sup>

This policy of systematic discrimination and the withholding of all information from the ICRC, human rights organizations, and the relatives of Palestinians detained from Gaza has resulted in the effective disappearance of thousands of individuals for more than six months. To this day, the fate and whereabouts of hundreds of Palestinians from Gaza who were taken by the Israeli military between October 2023, and April 2024 remain unknown.

## **1.2. Failures and Lack of Transparency by Military Authorities Since May 2024 as a Continuation of the Policy of Enforced Disappearance**

The Israeli military's so-called "solution" for addressing the disappearance of thousands of Palestinians from Gaza by creating an

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<sup>13</sup> HJC No. 7637/23, M. Kashta et al. v. Israel Defense Forces et al. (decision issued on June 11, 2023).

<sup>14</sup> Abeer Baker, "[The Role of the Israeli Supreme Court in Exacerbating the Crime of Enforced Disappearance](#)," Institute for Palestine Studies, Winter 2025.

email address for inquiries and coordination of visits revealed a range of failures and rights violations. After the State Attorney's Office shared the email address in its response to the Court, lawyers seeking to coordinate visits with detained persons encountered numerous obstacles. When visits were scheduled, they were often set for dates months in advance. More commonly, however, the response provided to lawyers was that "there is no indication of the individual's arrest or detention." Such replies were issued even in cases where clear evidence existed that the military had detained the person in question.

According to HaMoked, this type of response was received in approximately 400 of the requests submitted between May and October 2024.<sup>15</sup> One notable example is that of Dr. Hussam Abu Safiya, director of Kamal Adwan Hospital in the Gaza Strip. In January 2025, PHRI submitted a demand to disclose his place of detention following his arrest, which, unlike the vast majority of thousands of other arrests, was widely documented and generated significant international outcry. Nevertheless, in his case as well, the military initially responded that "an examination conducted found no indication of the arrest or detention of the individual concerned."<sup>16</sup> Only after several days and following intense media scrutiny did the military acknowledge that it was indeed holding Dr. Abu Safiya in custody.

These failures and violations that emerged after May 2024 perpetuated the declared policy of enforced disappearance initiated after October 7, 2023. They continue to obstruct access to information about the fate of many Palestinians taken by the Israeli military in Gaza. It is likely that many of these individuals are no longer alive.

Another case is that of Mounir and Yassin Alfaqawi, a father and son aged 41 and 18, who were arrested by Israeli military forces at their home in Khan Younis in March 2024. For months, their relatives made repeated attempts to learn their whereabouts. Yet, in response to HaMoked's inquiry, the military stated that it had "no indication of the

<sup>15</sup> HaMoked, ["Unaccounted For – Disappearance of Gaza Palestinians After They Were in the Custody of Israeli Security Forces,"](#) November 2024.

<sup>16</sup> Haaretz, ["IDF Announced Gaza Hospital Director's Arrest, Then Claimed It Had 'No Indication' He Was Detained,"](#) January 2025. [Hebrew]

arrest or detention" of either individual. This statement came although military forces had entered the family home, interrogated both men in front of their relatives, and, at the conclusion of the interrogation, arrested them, telling the family that "there is no point in asking where they are being taken."<sup>17</sup> Only in October 2024, after seven months during which the Israeli military repeatedly claimed to have "no indication" of their arrest, and only following HaMoked's petition to the High Court, was it revealed that Mounir and Yassin Alfaqawi had died in Israeli military custody. HaMoked's petition included testimony from a Gaza resident who reported encountering the two on the day of their arrest. According to his account, Israeli soldiers had used him, Mounir, and Yassin as human shields. While the witness was released a few hours later, Mounir and his son remained in custody.<sup>18</sup>

Israel's policy of enforced disappearance in the seven months following October 2023—including the arrest of thousands of Palestinians from Gaza, the complete denial of information about their whereabouts and conditions, and the continued failures and lack of transparency since May 2024 regarding hundreds of Gazans detained by the Israeli military—provides substantial grounds to fear that many are no longer alive. These grave violations of international law have rendered any effort to determine the full scope of Israel's policy of killing detained Palestinians, or to trace the fate of the many Palestinians taken into custody, extremely difficult, if not impossible.

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<sup>17</sup> Haaretz, ["Father and Son Arrested in Gaza Died in Military Custody; Family Discovered Only After Petitioning the High Court,"](#) November 2024. [Hebrew]

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, footnote 14.

## 2. Systematic Killings in Israeli Custody

While this document covers information collected between October 7, 2023, and August 31, 2025, new reports of additional deaths in custody continue to surface regularly. Therefore, the data presented here should be understood as accurate only up to the time of writing. Furthermore, while there have been seven documented cases since October 2023 involving Palestinians who died while held by military forces shortly after being shot, these incidents are not included in this report, which focuses exclusively on deaths that occurred within Israeli detention facilities. Finally, as previously noted, the report is based solely on information obtained by PHRI and does not reflect the full scope of Palestinians who have died in Israeli custody during the reporting period. Given that hundreds of Palestinians from Gaza remain missing to this day, it is reasonable to assume that the actual number of deaths is significantly higher.

The data presented below draw on multiple sources: Media reports regarding ten post-mortems attended by doctors on behalf of the families of deceased; four responses to FOI requests submitted to the IPS, the Israeli military, and the Ministry of Health; testimonies from Palestinian medical personnel from Gaza who were held in Israeli detention facilities and witnessed several of the deaths firsthand;<sup>19</sup> as well as eyewitness reports and documentation from other organizations, including the Addameer Prisoner Support and Human Rights Association and the Palestinian Authority's Ministry of Detainees. Based on these sources, PHRI verified the deaths of at least 94 Palestinians in Israeli detention facilities between October 7, 2023, and August 31, 2025. By comparison, in the ten years preceding October 2023, fewer than 30 Palestinians died in Israeli custody.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> For more on the arrests of Palestinian medical personnel, see: PHRI, ["Torture of Medical Staff from Gaza in Israel - Report and Testimonies,"](#) February 2025.

<sup>20</sup> Commission of Detainees and Ex-Detainees Affairs, ["List of Martyrs of the National Prisoner Movement in Israeli Prisons and Detention Centers,"](#) December 21, 2022. [Arabic]

Of the 94 Palestinians who have died since October 2023:

- **42 died in IPS custody, including Palestinians from the Gaza Strip, the occupied West Bank, and Palestinians who held Israeli citizenship.** The identities of 39 of them are known, as detailed in the appendix. PHRI was unable to verify the identities of three individuals but was able to identify the detention facilities in which they died, as well as confirm that one of them had been arrested in the Gaza Strip.
- **52 Palestinians from the Gaza Strip died in Israeli military custody.** The identities of 34 of them are known, as detailed in the appendix. PHRI was unable to verify the identities of 18 individuals but succeeded in determining the detention facilities where they died and the dates of their deaths.

## 2.1. Deaths in IPS Custody

Operating 33 incarceration facilities, the IPS serves as the primary authority responsible for holding convicted and detained persons in Israel. Approximately one-third of these facilities are designated for Palestinians classified by Israeli authorities as "security prisoners." Under Israeli law, the IPS is obligated to ensure that all individuals in its custody are held in safe and humane conditions, with their dignity preserved and their basic needs met throughout their detention.<sup>21</sup> Despite these legal obligations, since late 2022, with the formation of the current Israeli government, Itamar Ben-Gvir, appointed as Minister of National Security and responsible for incarceration policy, took steps to deliberately worsen the conditions of Palestinians in Israeli prisons. His policies reflected an ideological approach that instrumentalized detention conditions as a form of additional punishment beyond the deprivation of liberty.<sup>22</sup>

After October 2023, under Ben-Gvir's directives and with the cooperation of senior IPS officials, incarceration facilities holding Palestinians were effectively transformed into sites of torture and abuse, where fundamental human rights were routinely denied. These violations included the revocation of family visitation rights, denial of access to medical

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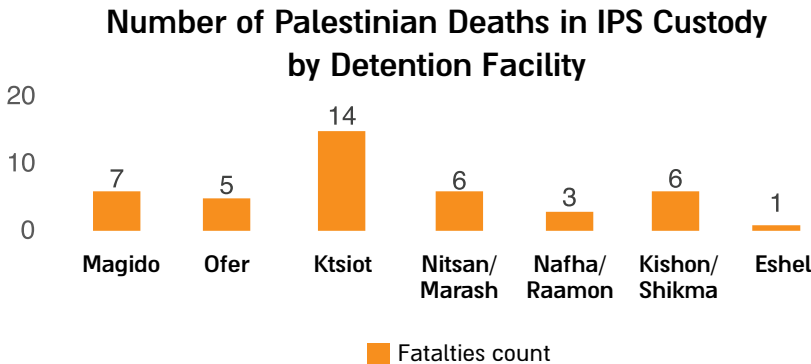
<sup>21</sup> [IPS Website](#), July 2020.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid*, footnote 2, pp. 3–4.

care, and the widespread use of daily physical violence by IPS guards.<sup>23</sup> This policy of rights deprivation and systematic torture has resulted in the deaths of dozens of Palestinians in IPS custody over the past two years.

As documented in the appendix, PHRI gathered information on **24** Palestinians who died while in IPS custody through a range of sources, including responses to FOI requests; Information that were published after a doctor participated behalf the families in post-mortem autopsies; medical files provided by the IPS; correspondence between PHRI and the IPS prior to the detained persons' deaths; testimonies from other detained individuals; and reports in the Israeli media. The names of an additional 15 Palestinians who died in IPS custody were obtained through Addameer and the Palestinian Authority, following their efforts to locate the individuals, which led to official notifications from Israeli authorities confirming their deaths. Three additional Palestinians are known to have died in IPS facilities, though PHRI was unable to verify their identities; these cases are detailed in the appendix concerning IPS interrogation sites. In total, **42** Palestinians have died in IPS custody as of August 31, 2025.

The data obtained by PHRI, disaggregated by facility, shows the following distribution of deaths since the outbreak of the war: **seven** at Megiddo Prison, **five** at Ofer Prison, **14** at Ktzi'ot Prison, **six** at Nitzan Prison/IPS Medical Center,<sup>24</sup> **three** at Nafha/Ramon Prison, **one** at Eshel Prison, and **six** in the Kishon and Shikma interrogation centers.



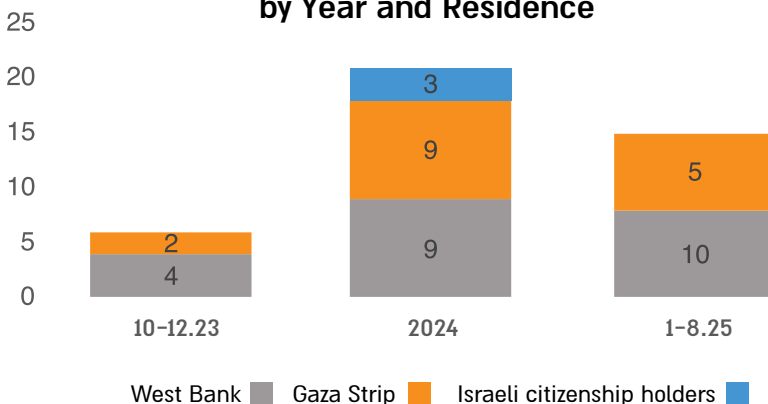
<sup>23</sup> PHRI, [“Systematic Violation of Human Rights: The Incarceration Conditions of Palestinians in Israel Since October 7,”](#) B’TSELEM, [“Welcome to Hell,”](#) August 2024.

<sup>24</sup> The IPS Medical Center, located within the Nitzan Prison complex, serves as the central facility for medical services under the Israel Prison Service.

The data also demonstrates that the killing of Palestinians in IPS custody has not been confined to the early months of the war, but has continued as part of a sustained policy over the past 22 months:

- **October–December 2023:** Six Palestinians died in IPS facilities—four from the West Bank (**two** in Megiddo, **one** in Ofer, and **one** in Ktzi’ot), and **two** from Gaza (both in the Shikma detention facility).
- **January–December 2024:** Twenty-one Palestinians died in IPS custody – **nine** from the West Bank (**one** in Megiddo, **one** in Ofer, **one** in Ktzi’ot, **two** in the IPS Medical Center, **one** in Nafha, **one** in Ramon, and **two** in the Kishon detention facility); **nine** from Gaza (**two** in Ofer, **four** in Ktzi’ot, **two** in the IPS Medical Center, and **one** in Shikma); and **three** who held Israeli citizenship (**one** in the IPS Medical Center, **one** in Eshel, and **one** in Kishon).
- **January–August 2025:** Fifteen Palestinians died in IPS custody – **ten** from the West Bank (**four** in Megiddo, **one** in Ofer, **four** in Ktzi’ot, and **one** in Ramon) and **five** from Gaza (**four** in Ktzi’ot and **one** in the IPS Medical Center).

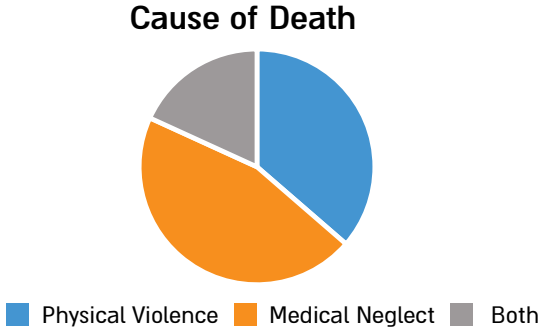
**Number of Palestinian Deaths in IPS Custody  
by Year and Residence**



The data presented above, together with additional information in the appendix, shows that on average, two Palestinians died every month in IPS detention facilities, with the number of deaths steadily increasing over time, among detained Palestinians from both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. The occurrence of deaths across nearly all IPS facilities where Palestinians are held further underscores the systematic and ongoing nature of these killings in Israeli custody.

A review of the information that were published about the ten post-mortem examinations of Palestinians who died in custody revealed deeply concerning patterns of physical violence and medical neglect. The information, which was published shows that In five cases, signs of physical assault were evident, and in two of those, bruising consistent with beatings and the use of restraints was clearly identified. Findings included multiple rib fractures, hemorrhages on the skin and near internal organs, and lacerations of intra-abdominal organs. In another case, an intracranial hemorrhage resulting from a head injury, apparently sustained during arrest, was documented. In several instances, physical violence combined with serious pre-existing illnesses contributed jointly to fatal outcomes.

Medical neglect was evident in six of the ten cases examined. At least three deaths were found to have resulted directly from neglect, including one case of severe malnutrition, one of untreated hematological malignancy, and one of diabetes left untreated due to the withholding of insulin. Other cases involved untreated severe infections or failure to monitor and care for chronic conditions. In each instance, timely medical intervention, proper nutrition, and access to essential medication could have prevented death.



While this report focuses on detained Palestinians classified by Israel as "security prisoners," it should be noted that PHRI obtained official information indicating that between October 2023 and the end of September 2024, 25 individuals classified as "criminal prisoners" died in IPS custody, nine of whom were Palestinians.

## **2.2. Deaths in Military Custody**

Over the past two years, the Israeli military has detained thousands of Palestinians. Due to insufficient capacity within IPS facilities, Palestinians from Gaza were held for prolonged periods in military camps rather than being transferred to IPS custody. Whereas the IPS previously served as Israel's primary incarceration authority, these military bases effectively became additional detention sites for Palestinians from Gaza classified by Israel as "Unlawful Combatants."<sup>25</sup>

Extensive information gathered by PHRI over the past two years indicates that these military facilities were not equipped to hold people in custody, particularly not for prolonged detention. Testimonies from Palestinians detained in these camps, along with accounts from Israeli physicians who had access to Sde Teiman—which served as the central military detention camp—reveal that these facilities were used as sites of systematic torture and abuse, where dozens of Palestinians from Gaza died while in military custody.<sup>26</sup>

Through responses to FOI requests, PHRI was able to confirm the deaths of **43** Palestinians from Gaza in Israeli military custody between October 2023 and May 2024. In addition, as detailed in the appendix, firsthand testimonies and official responses to individual information requests submitted by the Palestinian Authority revealed that nine additional Palestinians from Gaza died in military custody after May 2024. In total, at least **52** Palestinians have died in military custody between October 7, 2023, and August 31, 2025.

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<sup>25</sup> For further analysis of the classification of "Unlawful Combatants" and the resulting human rights violations, see HaMoked and B'Tselem, ["Without Trial: Administrative Detention of Palestinians by Israel and the Incarceration of Unlawful Combatants Law,"](#) October 2009; and the Committee Against Torture, ["Incarceration of Unlawful Combatants Law \(Amendment 4 and Temporary Provision – Iron Swords\), 2023,"](#) February 2024.

<sup>26</sup> CNN, ["Strapped down, blindfolded, held in diapers: Israeli whistleblowers detail abuse of Palestinians in shadowy detention center,"](#) May 2024.

Due to Israel's policy of enforced disappearance, as outlined in the first chapter of this report, PHRI does not possess official information regarding the identities or circumstances of death of the **43** Palestinians from Gaza who died in military custody during the first eight months of the war. Nevertheless, testimonies collected by lawyers on behalf of PHRI from Palestinians detained at Sde Teiman for varying periods indicate that several of the deaths occurred due to physical violence inflicted by Israeli soldiers at the facility. In other cases, deaths occurred following the denial of essential medical treatment, despite repeated complaints by the detained persons in the days preceding the deaths.

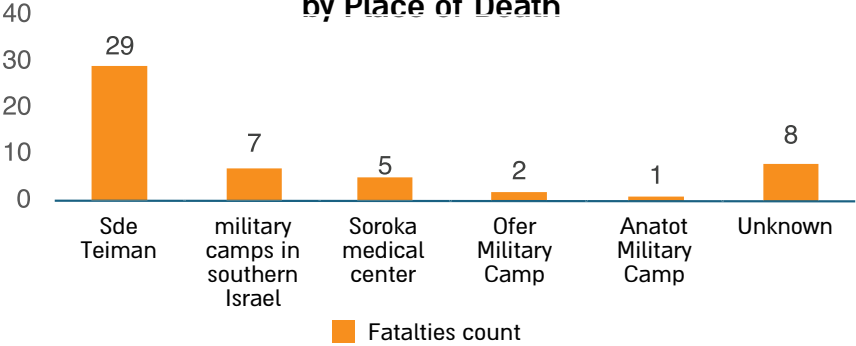
Regarding the identification of those who died in Israeli military custody, a physician representing the family participated in the autopsy of one Palestinian from Gaza who died in military custody in December 2023.<sup>27</sup> In addition, as detailed in the appendix, testimonies collected by PHRI from detained medical personnel allowed for the identification of five Palestinians who died before the end of May 2024. As previously noted, beginning in May 2024, the Israeli military started providing case-by-case responses concerning the whereabouts of Palestinians detained from Gaza. This development allowed Addameer, the Palestinian Authority's Ministry of Detainees, and other organizations to obtain official confirmation of the identities of 19 additional detained Palestinians from the Gaza Strip who died before the end of May 2024.

The data indicates that from the onset of the war until the end of August 2025, **29** detained Palestinians from Gaza died at Sde Teiman; seven died in other military camps in southern Israel; and five died at Soroka Medical Center in Be'er Sheva after being transferred there from various military camps. In addition, two deaths occurred at Ofer Military Camp and one at Anatot Military Camp. The locations of the deaths of eight other detained Palestinians remain unknown.

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<sup>27</sup> As detailed in Chapter 3, in the cases of detained Gazans who died in military or IPS custody, family-appointed physicians were unable to attend post-mortem examinations because neither the families nor the ICRC were notified of the deaths. In many instances, notification of a detained Gazan's death was provided only months later, and only after an official representative submitted a specific request for information.

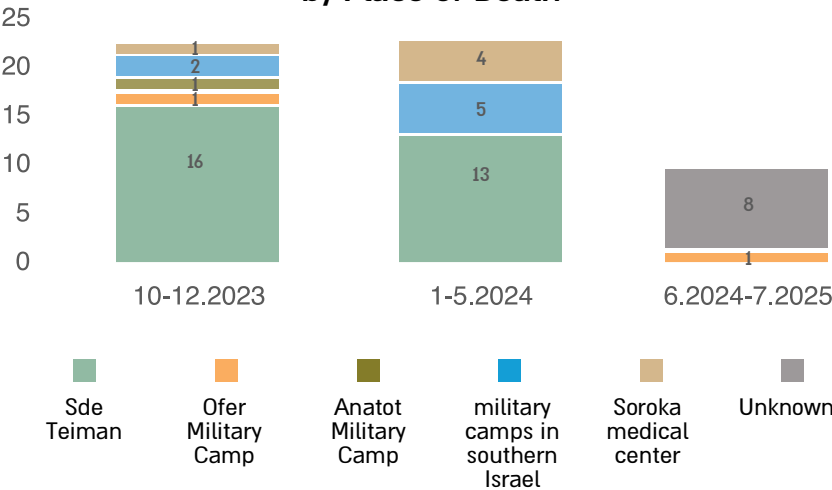
### Number of Palestinian Deaths in Military Custody by Place of Death



#### Breakdown by Period:

- October–December 2023:** 21 Palestinians from Gaza died in military custody - 16 at Sde Teiman, one at Ofer, one at Anatot, two in other southern military bases, and one at Soroka Medical Center.
- January–May 2024:** 22 Palestinians died in military custody - 13 at Sde Teiman, five in other southern military bases, and four at Soroka Medical Center.
- June 2024–August 2025:** Nine Palestinians died in military custody - one at Ofer, and eight whose locations of death remain unknown.

### Number of Palestinian Deaths in Military Custody by Place of Death



The Israeli military has refused to provide updated or comprehensive information regarding deaths in its custody since May 2024. It is therefore highly likely that the actual number of deaths is higher than those presented in this report.

The data demonstrates that during the first eight months following October 2023, while the Israeli military systematically withheld information regarding the whereabouts and conditions of Palestinians taken from Gaza, dozens of detained Palestinians died in its custody. The high number of deaths at Sde Teiman, which during this period served as the central military detention center, supports findings by several human rights organizations that the facility effectively functioned as a site of torture, and as can be inferred from PHRI's data, a place where the deaths of detained Palestinians became a routine occurrence. Moreover, data collected by PHRI since June 2024 indicates that even after the grave conditions at Sde Teiman were exposed publicly,<sup>28</sup> deaths in military custody persisted.

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<sup>28</sup> PHRI, "[Shut Down the Sde Teiman Facility Now](#)", April 2024.

### 3. Cover-Ups

Under Israel's *Investigation of Causes of Death Law* (1958), when a person dies in custody, the authority responsible for the detention facility is legally obligated to notify the police of the death immediately.<sup>29</sup> Failure to do so constitutes a criminal offense punishable by up to three months' imprisonment. The law further stipulates that in every case of death in custody, the police, the Attorney General, or the family or legal representative of the deceased may petition a magistrate's court to initiate an investigation into the "cause of death".<sup>30</sup>

Since October 2023, Israel's incarceration authorities, namely the IPS and the military, have systematically violated these legal obligations regarding deaths occurring in their custody. In numerous cases, the families of the deceased were never notified of the deaths of their relatives and therefore were unable to request an investigation or post-mortem examination. In other instances, the bodies were never transferred for examination, and in yet others, examinations were conducted without the presence of a physician representing the family, despite explicit requests for such participation. This conduct by the detention authorities has served as a key tool for covering up and concealing the cause of death of dozens of Palestinians since October 2023, thereby preventing those responsible for the systematic killings described in the previous chapter from being brought to justice and for shielding those responsible for these systematic killings from any form of accountability.

#### 3.1. Failure to Notify Families of Deaths in Custody

The *Investigation of Causes of Death Law* provides that when a person dies in custody, their family has the legal right to petition the court to initiate an investigation into the cause of death, including the performance of a post-mortem examination. To enable families to exercise this right, they must be formally notified of the death of their relative. However, as part of the Israeli military's policy of enforced disappearance since October 2023, families of detained Palestinians

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<sup>29</sup> Article 22, *Investigation of Causes of Death Law* (1958).

<sup>30</sup> Article 19, *Investigation of Causes of Death Law* (1958).

from Gaza have not received any official notification regarding the deaths of their relatives in custody.

As documented in the appendix to this report, in several cases families only learned of the deaths of their loved ones through reports in the Israeli media. Death notifications are not transmitted to ICRC immediately after death, as the organization remains barred from visiting detained Palestinians in Israeli incarceration facilities. The Palestinian Authority is likewise denied access to such information, contrary to the procedures that existed prior to October 2023. Through this practice, the Israeli military and other authorities have effectively denied families their fundamental right to know the circumstances of their relatives' deaths. As a result of this unlawful policy, even after 22 months of war, the identities of at least 18 Palestinians from the Gaza Strip who died in Israeli custody remain unknown, and their families have not been informed of their deaths—preventing them from exercising their right to demand an investigation into the causes and circumstances of those deaths.

In the cases of detained Palestinians from Gaza who died in military custody and whose identities have been confirmed, their names and confirmation of death were obtained only months after their deaths, and only in response to individual requests submitted to locate them. In some cases, even more than a year later, families still had not received any update regarding the death, where it happened, the circumstances in which it occurred, or even the whereabouts and condition of the body.

Israel's policy of enforced disappearance and cover-up was applied primarily in relation to Palestinians from Gaza, though not exclusively. For detained Palestinians from the occupied West Bank, Israeli authorities had previously informed the Palestinian Authority of such deaths, which in turn notified the families. However, in several instances, this obligation was not upheld. One such case is that of Samih Alawi, 61, from Nablus, who died on October 6, 2024, after being transferred to a hospital. His partner and sons were informed of his death only ten days later, and only after the Palestinian Authority submitted an inquiry to determine his whereabouts.

### 3.2. Failure to Transfer Bodies from Military Detention Facilities for Investigation and Post-Mortem Examination

According to a response received by PHRI to an FOI request submitted to the Israeli Ministry of Health and the National Institute of Forensic Medicine, the Israeli military did not transfer a single body for post-mortem examination between October 2023 and March 2024—a period during which 35 Palestinians were confirmed to have died in military custody. In a statement cited by *Haaretz* on March 7, 2024, the military spokesperson's office claimed that "the military police investigate every case of death."<sup>31</sup> Yet it remains unclear how such investigations could be conducted without transferring the bodies of the deceased to the National Institute of Forensic Medicine, the only institution in Israel authorized and equipped to perform forensic post-mortem examinations.

A notable example of Israeli military cover-ups through its refusal to transfer bodies for forensic examination is the case of Hamdan Abu Anaba, a 43-year-old resident of Gaza who was arrested in November 2023. Abu Anaba died on December 2, 2023, just one day after being transferred to the Sde Teiman military camp. His family was informed of his death only nearly twelve months later, in October 2024. Upon receiving notice, a legal representative acting on behalf of the family submitted a formal request to initiate an investigation into the cause of death and to conduct a post-mortem examination in the presence of a physician representing the family. It was subsequently revealed that Abu Anaba's body had been kept frozen for the entire period and was transferred to the National Institute of Forensic Medicine only after the request was submitted.

Another case is that of A.M., 42, from Gaza, who died at Shamir Medical Center, southeast of Tel Aviv, in December 2024. He had been transferred to the hospital from Ktzi'ot Prison following medical complications. His body was kept frozen for a full month before being transferred to the National Institute of Forensic Medicine. Due to the prolonged freezing and the failure to transfer the body immediately after death, the Institute determined that a post-mortem examination would be of no evidentiary value, as determining the cause of death was no longer possible.

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<sup>31</sup> Haaretz, "[27 Gazans Died in Israeli Military Detention Facilities Since the Start of the War.](#)" March 7, 2024.

Even in cases where examinations were performed, the bodies of Palestinians who died in Israeli custody have not been returned to their families for burial. Israel continues to withhold all bodies of Palestinians who have died in its custody since October 2023.<sup>32</sup> This practice extends a long-standing state policy predating the current war. A 2017 Israeli cabinet decision authorized the retention of the bodies of Palestinians who died in custody as potential bargaining chips in future prisoner exchanges, subject to specific criteria. Since October 2023, these criteria have been expanded, enabling Israel to withhold the bodies of Palestinians who would not have met the earlier conditions.

This policy not only constitutes a grave violation of the dignity of the deceased and the families' right to lay their loved ones to rest but also serves as a deliberate means of concealing the causes of death and obstructing families from uncovering the truth about the circumstances in which their relatives died.

### **3.3. Conducting Post-Mortems Without a Family-Appointed Physician Present**

According to the directives of the Israel Police Investigations and Intelligence Division, when the police and court authorize the transfer of a deceased person's body to the National Institute of Forensic Medicine, the family has the right to request that a physician representing them be present during the post-mortem examination. This right is intended to guarantee transparency and independent oversight of the procedure.<sup>33</sup>

Relying on this directive, physicians participated behalf the families in ten post-mortem examinations of Palestinians who died in custody. However, in other cases, this right was denied despite formal requests submitted to the court. In four cases in which PHRI and the families' legal representatives requested the presence of a family-appointed physician, the police failed to notify the families of the scheduled date of the examination. As a result, the examinations were carried out without the participation of a physician on behalf of the families.

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<sup>32</sup> Haaretz, ["5 Months After Death of 17-Year-Old Who Arrived Malnourished in Prison, Israel Refuses to Release Body,"](#) August 31, 2025.

<sup>33</sup> Israel Police Investigations and Intelligence Division Directive No. 300.01.258

In the case of **Khaled al-Shawish**,<sup>34</sup> 53, from al-Far'a refugee camp in the occupied West Bank, whose death was announced on February 21, 2024, an attorney representing his family submitted a formal request to the court for a physician appointed by the family to be present during the post-mortem examination. Nevertheless, it was later discovered, on February 28, that the examination had already been conducted without notifying the family and without any opportunity to arrange for their physician's attendance. A subsequent inquiry by PHRI with the National Institute of Forensic Medicine revealed that police investigators had presented the Institute with a court order authorizing the post-mortem examination, but did not inform them of the family's request.

In the case of **Musab Adili**, 20, from the town of Hawara, south of Nablus, after the family requested that a physician representing them be present during the post-mortem examination, it was revealed that the police had already ordered the procedure without notifying the family. As a result, the autopsy was carried out without giving the family any opportunity to coordinate the presence of their appointed physician.

In the case of **Nasser Radaideh**, 49, from Bethlehem, on April 22, 2025, the court ordered an external examination of the body to be conducted in the presence of a physician representing the family (the family objected to a full autopsy for religious reasons). However, an inquiry with the National Institute of Forensic Medicine on the same day revealed that the external examination had already been performed without notifying the family or allowing them to coordinate the attendance of their physician, as the police had not informed the Institute of the family's request.

In the case of **Louay Faisal Nasrallah**, 22, from Jenin, although an attorney representing the family submitted a request for their physician to be present, the post-mortem examination was conducted without notifying them. This occurred because the police presented the National Institute of Forensic Medicine with a court order authorizing the examination, yet failed to inform the Institute of the family's request.

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<sup>34</sup> Additional details regarding Khaled al-Shawish's medical condition prior to his death can be found in the appendix to this report.

Even when a physician representing the deceased's family is present, the report they are able to provide is only preliminary and, in many cases, insufficient to establish the precise cause of death. The full examination process requires the analysis of multiple tissue samples from various organs, along with the results of blood and fluid tests. Therefore, the findings of these additional tests and the final conclusions of the physicians at the National Institute of Forensic Medicine must be made available to ensure a complete and accurate determination of the cause of death. For instance, in cases of sudden death, the full autopsy process, including tissue examination and microscopic analysis, yields definitive conclusions in only about 60 percent of cases.<sup>35</sup>

### 3.4. Systematic Delays in Conducting Post-Mortems

International standards require that post-mortem examinations be conducted as soon as possible following death in order to minimize tissue decomposition and maximize the likelihood of accurately determining the cause of death. Most forensic guidelines recommend performing post-mortem examinations within 48 hours of the body being received.<sup>36</sup> While refrigeration or freezing can slow post-mortem changes, they do not prevent them. Biological and cellular breakdown continue to occur, which can significantly undermine the reliability of pathological findings. When bodies are kept at a temperature of 2–4 degrees Celsius, decomposition may be delayed by roughly one week but will inevitably progress thereafter.<sup>37</sup>

According to the data collected regarding autopsies in which a family physician participated the average delay between the death of a detained Palestinian and the performance of a post-mortem

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<sup>35</sup> Sanchez O, Campuzano O, Fernández-Falgueras A, Sarquella-Brugada G, Cesar S, et al. (2017) Correction: '[Natural and Undetermined Sudden Death: Value of Post-Mortem Genetic Investigation](#)'. PLOS ONE 12(2): e0171893.

<sup>36</sup> [Coroners' Guidance](#) – Ministry of Justice / Royal College of Pathologists. July 2025

<sup>37</sup> Davis, G. J. (2020) '[Spitz and fisher's medicolegal investigation of death: Guidelines for the application of pathology to crime investigation](#), 5th ed: W.U. Spitz and F.J. Diaz, eds. Charles C Thomas, Springfield, IL, ISBN: 978-0-398-09312-9', Canadian Society of Forensic Science Journal, 53(4), pp. 210–211.

examination was 14 days. In all documented cases, the examinations were conducted at least a week after death. In two cases, those of **Hamdan Abu Anaba** and **Mustafa Abu Ara**, the post-mortems took place more than a month later. Such extensive delays severely compromise the diagnostic accuracy of the examinations due to advanced tissue decomposition. In the case of **A.M.**, whose body was kept frozen for a month, forensic pathologists ultimately decided not to perform the post-mortem, concluding that the degree of decomposition rendered it scientifically meaningless.

### **3.5. Failure to Prosecute and Suppression of Investigation Findings**

In all ten post-mortem examinations attended by physicians on behalf of the deceaseds' families, the participation of the physicians was passive—that is, they observed the examination but did not take an active role in its conduct. Following each examination, the physicians provided the families' legal representatives with a preliminary summary of their observations and findings. Several of these examinations were conducted in the final months of 2023 and throughout 2024, with the most recent one involving a family-appointed physician taking place in August 2025.

To PHRI's knowledge, including based on updates received from attorneys representing the families, no final findings have been issued determining the causes of death in any of these cases. Furthermore, no legal proceedings have been initiated against any soldier, prison guard, IPS physician, or other official implicated in these deaths. These examinations thus serve merely as a fig leaf enabling Israeli authorities to maintain the appearance of functioning investigative and accountability mechanisms. In reality, even in cases where physicians of the families preliminary reports identified clear evidence of physical violence, torture, severe medical neglect, or starvation, no member of the IPS or military has been prosecuted—despite more than a year and a half having passed since some of the deaths and post-mortem examinations were conducted.

## Conclusions

The Israeli military's formal policy of enforced disappearance, in effect since October 7, 2023, continues to obstruct efforts to determine the total number of detained Palestinians who have died in Israeli custody over the past two years and to uncover the true circumstances of their deaths.

The extensive data and findings presented in this report, together with Israel's broader policies of mass unlawful arrests, torture, denial of medical care, and the deliberate deterioration of incarceration conditions, as documented in previous PHRI reports,<sup>38</sup> leave little doubt that the deaths of many detained Palestinians were the result of systematic actions by soldiers and prison guards, carried out with the encouragement, or at the very least the tacit approval, of their superiors. The sharp rise in the number of Palestinians who have died in Israeli incarceration facilities since October 7, 2023, compared to previous years, demonstrates that the killing of Palestinians in custody has become an additional instrument of state against Palestinians oppression since the onset of the war.

Furthermore, the systematic concealment of investigations into the causes of these deaths by Israeli judicial and law enforcement authorities, combined with the consistent failure to prosecute those responsible or for decision-makers to express any public condemnation, strongly indicates that the killing of Palestinians in custody has become a normalized practice, directly derived from official state policy.

Given the grave conditions faced by Palestinians in Israeli incarceration facilities, and in light of Israel's policies of enforced disappearance, systematic killing, and institutionalized cover-ups, PHRI calls for an independent international investigation into the deaths of Palestinians in Israeli custody. Such an investigation is essential to uncover the causes of these deaths and to ensure that those responsible are held to account.

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<sup>38</sup> See: PHRI, ["Systematic Violation of Human Rights: The Incarceration Conditions of Palestinians in Israel Since October 7,"](#) February 2024; PHRI, ["Shut Down the Sde Teiman Facility Now,"](#) April 2024; and PHRI, ["Torture of Medical Staff from Gaza in Israel - Report and Testimonies,"](#) February 2025.