

Jailed Palestinians boycott 'political weapon' of detention without charge

Author:

Sat, 2022-01-01 18:14

AMMAN: Hundreds of Palestinians held without charge in Israeli jails are boycotting court hearings over the practice of administrative detention.

Administrative detention orders can last for a maximum of six months, but are often renewed, effectively keeping prisoners in indefinite detention.

The boycott began after Hisham Abu Hawash, a father of five jailed without charge or trial under administrative detention, reached the 138th day of a hunger strike. His family and friends say that "his life and health are at risk" and that "the Israeli occupation bears full responsibility for his survival."

A statement issued by the prisoners' leadership committee said an agreement was reached to initiate the boycott of Israeli courts from Jan. 1.

Hind Shraydeh, whose husband Obay Aboudi was detained two years ago, told Arab News of the pain of raising three children without their father.

"Administrative detention has nothing to do with law or justice. Your family, your life, your children and your work are affected by the mood of the Israeli military commander who signs the administrative detention order," she said.

Shraydeh supports the boycott, saying that it "is the only option left."

She added: "Prisoners have tried hunger strikes, which changed nothing. There is no other option left with the prisoners and their families because we all know the results of the court cases anyway, so why should we give them the facade of claiming to be a democracy when they are not."

Rami Fadayel's case is another example of arbitrary detention. He has been administratively detained seven times, his mother, Muna Fadayel, told Arab News.

"With the last arrest, however, they decided to charge him. They confiscated his printing press after finding a receipt at the medical relief committee. They charged him – without proof – with supporting terror," she said.

The evidence against her son, she added, "is so flimsy" that the Israelis will most likely fail to convict him, but will use administrative detention to keep him behind bars.

"He is 42 and his 14-year-old daughter has barely seen him out of jail due to the successive administrative detention orders that are regularly slapped on Palestinians," she told Arab News.

Fadaya is "praying that the boycott works," but is doubtful due to previous unsuccessful attempts. "It is a good idea. although nothing happened in the past. We are all frustrated and feel that no one is standing with us."

Palestinian member of the Israeli Knesset Sami Abu Shehadeh told Arab News that the Joint Arab List believes that the practice of administrative detention is "simply the kidnapping of Palestinians by Israel."

He said: "By not arresting them for a particular act and not charging them, the Israeli government is putting them in jail without any legal basis. Israel has inherited this act from the British Mandate, which enacted emergency regulations during the Second World War.

"The war is long over, but Israel is still using these war-related laws against Palestinians."

He added that administrative detention is "an immoral and illegal crime used by Israel to increase the oppression of the Palestinians, with the silence of all the countries that claim to be democratic."

Shahwan Jabarin, director of the Al-Haq human rights organization, told Arab News that Israel has transformed the procedure, which was previously limited to "extremely exceptional cases," into "punishment, a political weapon and a method of political intervention into Palestinian lives."



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Popular Palestinian protest succeeds in stopping settler march

[Bahrain authorizes use of anti-coronavirus drug Paxlovid for emergency use](#)

Sat, 2022-01-01 18:25

MANAMA: Bahrain's health authorities authorized Pfizer's Paxlovid COVID-19 drug for emergency use in adults aged 18 and over on Saturday. It will be used to treat adults suffering from mild to moderate symptoms who are at an increased risk of developing severe COVID-19 that may lead to death, Bahrain News Agency said.

The decision by the National Health Regulatory Authority was based on the review and evaluation of data provided by Pfizer.

The NHRA said the Health Ministry has begun importing procedures in accordance with the relevant standards and requirements, and that the medication was expected to arrive in January.

Meanwhile, new figures from Britain's official statistics body estimate that about 1 in 25 people in private households in England had COVID-19 in the week before Christmas, as the highly transmissible omicron variant spread rapidly across the country.

The number jumped from 1 in 45 in the previous week, the Office for National Statistics said on Friday. One in 25 is the equivalent of about 2 million people with coronavirus in England, the highest number since the statistics body began estimating infection levels in May 2020.

BACKGROUND

It will be used to treat adults suffering from mild to moderate symptoms who are at an increased risk of developing severe COVID-19 that may lead to death, Bahrain News Agency said.

The figure was even higher in London, the British capital, where officials said around 1 in 15 people was likely to test positive for the coronavirus in the week to Dec. 23.

In another development, Turkey's Health Ministry is allowing a fifth dose as a booster for people who've received two doses each of Sinovac and BioNTech vaccines.

Healthcare workers and people above 65 started off their inoculation early this year with China's Sinovac's inactivated vaccine. They became eligible for a third and fourth doses with Pfizer-BioNTech's mRNA vaccine in response to the highly contagious delta variant.

The fifth "reminder" dose would be available for people who had their fourth shot three months prior and appointments were opened on Friday.



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Bahrain moves to COVID-19 Yellow Alert Level starting Dec. 19 Bahrain reports first case of omicron

[Iraqi police commander sacked after deadly raid](#)

Sat, 2022-01-01 01:10

BAGHDAD: Iraq's interior minister dismissed the police chief of Babylon province on Friday and several officers were called for questioning following an operation that reportedly led to the deaths of 20 members of the same family.

The operation, details of which remain unclear, took place Thursday when rapid intervention units and intelligence forces sought to storm a house in the village of Al-Rashayed in the central Iraqi province.

In a brief initial statement, security forces said they had "pursued two individuals accused of terrorism" who "opened fire indiscriminately" once surrounded.

An investigation was opened "after the discovery of a number of dead bodies of citizens in a house," the statement added.

On Friday, Interior Minister Othman Al-Ghanemi traveled to Al-Rashayed where he sacked the police chief and announced the formation of a commission to investigate "the unit that carried out the operation."

The official Iraqi News Agency gave a death toll of 20 civilians from the same family, and said that the owner of the property had opened fire and "refused to surrender."

A separate statement from the security forces said a "number of officers and individuals" had been called in for questioning in connection with the incident, without providing details on their identities.

Interior ministry official Saad Maan posted a video of the premises on Twitter, showing a house with a blackened facade and gutted doors and windows.

He denounced a "crime on all levels," without identifying those to blame, and said the investigation was ongoing to "understand all the circumstances of the incident."

On Thursday evening, security sources and media outlets had suggested a suspect linked with the Daesh group or drug trafficking rings had been involved.



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Inquiry opened after civilians die during Iraq manhunt Rocket fired in attack on Chinese company in Iraq

[Senior Ennahdha party official held in Tunisia: lawyer](#)

Author:

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Fri, 2021-12-31 00:16

TUNIS: Plainclothes officers in Tunisia's capital on Friday arrested a senior official of the Ennahdha party which played a central role in the country's politics until a power grab by President Kais Saied.

Tunisia was the only democracy to emerge from the Arab Spring revolts of a decade ago but civil society groups and Saied's opponents have expressed fear

of a slide back to authoritarianism a decade after the revolution that toppled longtime dictator Zine El Abidine Ben Ali.

Ennahdha condemned the arrest of Nouredine Bhiri, a former justice minister and deputy president of the Islamist-inspired Ennahdha, as a "dangerous precedent".

"Plainclothes agents in two cars arrested Nouredine Bhiri when he was leaving home with his wife," Samir Dilou, a lawyer and former legislator, told AFP.

No official was available to explain the reason for Bhiri's arrest. But in a statement issued late Friday, the interior ministry said it had ordered two people, whom it did not identify, to be placed under house arrest.

This "preventive measure was dictated by the need to safeguard national security," it said, without elaborating.

Saied on July 25 sacked the Ennahdha-supported government and suspended parliament, presenting himself as the ultimate interpreter of the constitution.

He later took steps to rule by decree, and in early December vowed to press on with reforms to the political system.

The former law professor announced an 11-week "popular consultation" to produce "draft constitutional and other reforms" ahead of a referendum set for July 25.

His opponents have denounced a "coup" and warned against what they see as Saied's wish to settle scores with those he has called "enemies" but never names.

A Tunisian court last week sentenced in absentia exiled former president Moncef Marzouki, a fierce critic of Saied, to four years in prison.

Bhiri was "arrested brutally and taken to an unknown destination", Dilou said.

Agents also seized the mobile phone of Bhiri's wife Saida Akremi, who is a lawyer, he added.

In a statement, Ennahdha said that Bhiri was being questioned by authorities and denounced "a kidnapping and dangerous precedent marking the country's entry into a tunnel to dictatorship."

Party official Mohamed Goumani told a press conference that Saied and the interior minister "bear responsibility" and decried the "intimidation" of those opposed to the president's moves.

Ennahdha was the largest party in the parliament suspended by Saied.

But political rivalries had blocked ministerial appointments and diverted resources from tackling Tunisia's mounting economic and social problems, leading many in the country to initially welcome the president's power grab. Without commenting on Bhiri's arrest, the presidency on Friday announced a New Year's amnesty for 1,300 prisoners.



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Tunisia wallows in uncertainty as President Kais Saied pushes ahead
Cash-strapped Tunisia to borrow \$7bn more in 2022

[Lebanese bid farewell to 2021 amid health and security alerts](#)

Author:

Fri, 2021-12-31 21:17

BEIRUT: The Lebanese bid farewell to 2021 amid health and security alerts, cautiously awaiting what 2022 holds.

Security services and civil defense members were deployed throughout the country on New Year's Eve, setting up 60 checkpoints along the Lebanese coast from Anfeh to Naqoura, and in mountainous areas known to host parties this

time of year.

An awareness hashtag #DontLetLaughterTurnToTears was launched for citizens, warning them to drive with caution so that the joy of the coming New Year does not turn into a tragedy.

The Ministry of Tourism demanded that restaurants, nightclubs and hotels deny entry to those without a vaccination certificate or a negative PCR test in the past 48 hours, all while abiding by current COVID-19 preventive measures.

Many rushed to bakeries, supermarkets and catering services on the last day of 2021, as the majority of citizens are spending the night at home or in chalets, while the well-off and expatriates who returned home for the holidays are celebrating at hotels and nightclubs.

Almost all television stations broadcast entertainment programs on Friday, giving out various gifts to callers, such as cheese wheels, dinner vouchers and a few dollars, which are now worth a fortune amid the financial crisis Lebanon is experiencing.

Although most Lebanese artists are singing at parties abroad this New Year's Eve, the cost of attending a party during which several artists are singing ranges between \$100 and \$750, provided that only 30 percent of the venue's capacity is filled, per the Ministry of Health's guidelines.

Meanwhile, the committee that follows up on COVID-19 preventive measures had imposed a curfew on unvaccinated persons, but this measure has not been not taken seriously by all.

Ahead of New Year's Eve, the Ministry of Health confirmed 4,537 new COVID-19 cases and 15 deaths.

As Lebanon escaped a lockdown over the holidays, Minister of Health Dr. Firass Abiad fears a health disaster that would force the concerned authorities to impose a full lockdown, which may harm the academic year that is supposed to resume on Jan. 10, 2022.

The Minister of Education and Higher Education Abbas Al-Halabi called on all officials of public and private educational institutions to make sure all employees take two vaccine doses, or face taking a PCR test twice a week at their own expense.

Assem Araji MP, a cardiologist who heads Parliament's health committee, seemed concerned about the increasing omicron cases. "We face an outbreak; an increase in cases is imminent," he said.

He expressed concerns about "the hospitalization rate rising following New Year's Eve parties, especially since we are running low on COVID-19 beds in several hospitals amid the shortages in medical staff and medical supplies. We will thus be facing a painful health reality."

Araji called on the public to "abide by preventive measures, or we will pay."



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