

[UN rights chief concerned about health of Palestinian hunger strikers in Israel jails](#)

24 May 2017 – The United Nations human rights chief today expressed serious concern about the health of more than 1,000 Palestinian prisoners in Israeli prisons as their hunger strike entered its 38th day without resolution.

“I am especially alarmed by reports of punitive measures by the Israeli authorities against the hunger strikers, including restricted access to lawyers and the denial of family visits,” UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein [said](#) in a news release from his Office ([OHCHR](#)).

“The right of detainees to access a lawyer is a fundamental protection in international human rights law that should never be curtailed,” he added.

The Palestinian prisoners began a hunger strike on 17 April, demanding, amongst other things, an end to administrative detention and solitary confinement. They are also demanding an increase in the number and length of family visits and improved access to healthcare.

“Various international bodies have repeatedly called on Israel to end its practice of administrative detention,” Mr. Zeid said, noting that such detainees should either be charged with an offence and tried, according to international standards, or released immediately.

An estimated 6,300 Palestinians are currently being held in Israeli prisons, mostly outside the occupied Palestinian territory, in contravention of article 76 of the Fourth Geneva Convention.

[‘All roads should lead to universal healthcare,’ says new WHO chief](#)

24 May 2017 – The newly-elected head of the United Nations World Health Organization ([WHO](#)), Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, outlined his priorities for journalists at the agency’s headquarters today in Geneva, where he stressed the need for Member States to provide healthcare for all and to implement international health regulations.

Looking at the work ahead, [Dr. Tedros](#) stressed that the original reason the UN health agency was set up nearly 70 years ago remains true today: providing healthcare for all.

“All roads should lead to universal health coverage,” he underscored, and this mantra should be the WHO’s “centre of gravity.”

“What the world promised when WHO was instituted in 1948 – health for all – is true today, but half of our population still does not have access to healthcare, universal health coverage [...] I think it’s time to walk our talk. The whole world is asking for that [...] health as a rights issue, an end in itself.”

Another key WHO mission is managing global health emergencies, Dr. Tedros said, pointing to changes put in place by his predecessor Dr. Margaret Chan, that had led to the swift detection of the [current Ebola outbreak](#) in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).

But more reforms need to be made, the new WHO head insisted, suggesting the need for governments to fast-track internationally agreed regulations to deal with epidemics better in future.

He said that another major issue was regaining confidence in Member States and ensuring the best use of their contributions.

Dr. Tedros, of Ethiopia, will begin his five-year term on 1 July 2017, WHO said in a statement following his election yesterday.

Among his previous positions, Dr. Tedros was Ethiopia’s Minister of Foreign Affairs and, prior, Minister of Health.

He also served as Chair of the Global Fund and of the Roll Back Malaria (RBM) Partnership Board (RBM), where he secured “record funding” for the two organizations and created the Global Malaria Action Plan, which expanded RBM’s reach beyond Africa to Asia and Latin America, according to the UN agency.

[Top UN official in South Sudan urges Security Council to advance ‘common strategy’ on political process](#)

24 May 2017 – The head of the United Nations peacekeeping mission in South Sudan today urged the Security Council to unite behind a common strategy for advancing the political process and peace in the crisis-torn country.

Addressing the Council in New York via video link, David Shearer, the Secretary-General’s Special Representative in South Sudan and the head of the Mission, known as UNMISS, said that “unity of purpose will [send the best signal](#) to South Sudan’s political leaders to focus first and foremost on the

plight of their citizens.”

He also called for a “coherent and unified regional position” to aid political developments in the country, noting that Governments in the region hold “significant influence” on political developments to end the three-year war but are not communicating the same message.

Today’s briefing comes as President Salva Kiir again declared a unilateral ceasefire from Juba and pledged to review the cases of political prisoners.

Mr. Shearer said these announcements are “very welcome” but “the proof of the pudding, as they say, is in the eating.” He noted that there will be close scrutiny on the number of prisoners released and whether the ceasefire monitoring group can perform its work.

The senior UN official also noted that President Kiir formally launched a National Dialogue this week meant to end the conflict begun in December 2013, but has excluded his political rival and former deputy, Riek Machar.