

Number of Palestinian children in administrative detention quadrupled since last year

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Ramallah, October 16, 2024—The number of Palestinian children in administrative detention as of the end of September has nearly quadrupled since the same time last year.

Israeli forces gather on a road during a raid at the al-Fara'a camp for Palestinian refugees north of Nablus city in the occupied West Bank on October 10, 2024. (Photo: Jaafar Ashtiyeh / AFP)

Israeli forces are holding 85 Palestinian children in administrative detention as of September 30, representing 35 percent of all Palestinian children held in Israeli military detention, according to the latest information shared by the Israel Prison Service. This is a record number since Defense for Children International - Palestine began monitoring child administrative detainees in 2008.

“Israeli forces are arbitrarily detaining Palestinian children without charge or trial at a rate we have never seen before,” said Ayed Abu Eqtaish, accountability program director at DCIP. “Palestinian children held under administrative detention orders issued by Israeli military commanders have no idea when they will be released and reunite with their friends and family, which causes immense stress, anxiety, and depression for the children.”

Israeli forces were holding 23 Palestinian children in administrative detention as of September 30, 2023, representing 15 percent of all Palestinian children held in Israeli military detention at the time, according to data from the Israel Prison Service.

The number of child administrative detainees has rapidly climbed since October 7, 2023, when Israeli forces sharply escalated arrest operations throughout the occupied West Bank. Palestinian child detainees have consistently reported increased instances of ill-treatment and torture alongside deteriorating prison conditions since October 7, according to documentation collected by DCIP.

All 85 child administrative detainees are 16 or 17 years old, according to data shared by the Israel Prison Service. Palestinian children as young as 12 are subject to arrest and prosecution by the Israeli military, as 12 is the age of criminal responsibility under Israeli military law.

Administrative detention is a form of imprisonment without charge or trial regularly used by Israeli authorities to detain Palestinians, including children. Palestinian children held under administrative detention orders are not presented with charges, and their detention is based on secret evidence that is neither disclosed to the child nor their attorney, preventing them from preparing a legal challenge to the detention and its alleged basis, according to documentation collected by DCIP.

Arbitrarily depriving Palestinian children of their right to liberty through the use of administrative detention, which is the imprisonment of individuals for prolonged periods without charge or trial, often based on secret evidence amounting to an arbitrary detention.

Administrative detention orders are issued by the Israeli military commander of the area, or a military officer delegated by the military commander, and can last up to six months, but there is no limit to the number of times an administrative detention order can be renewed. The orders are approved by military court judges giving the illusion of independent legal oversight, yet Israeli military courts fail to meet international standards for independence and impartiality because military court judges are active duty or reserve officers in the Israeli military.

In October 2015, following a three-year suspension of the practice, Israeli authorities began arresting and imprisoning Palestinian children without charge pursuant to administrative detention orders.

International juvenile justice standards, which Israel has obliged itself to implement by ratifying the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1991, demand that children should only be deprived of their liberty as a measure of last resort and must not be unlawfully or arbitrarily detained.

Defense for Children International - Palestine (DCIP)

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- DCIP. Oct 16, 2024:

https://www.dci-palestine.org/number_of_palestinian_children_in_administrative_detention_quadrupled_since_last_year