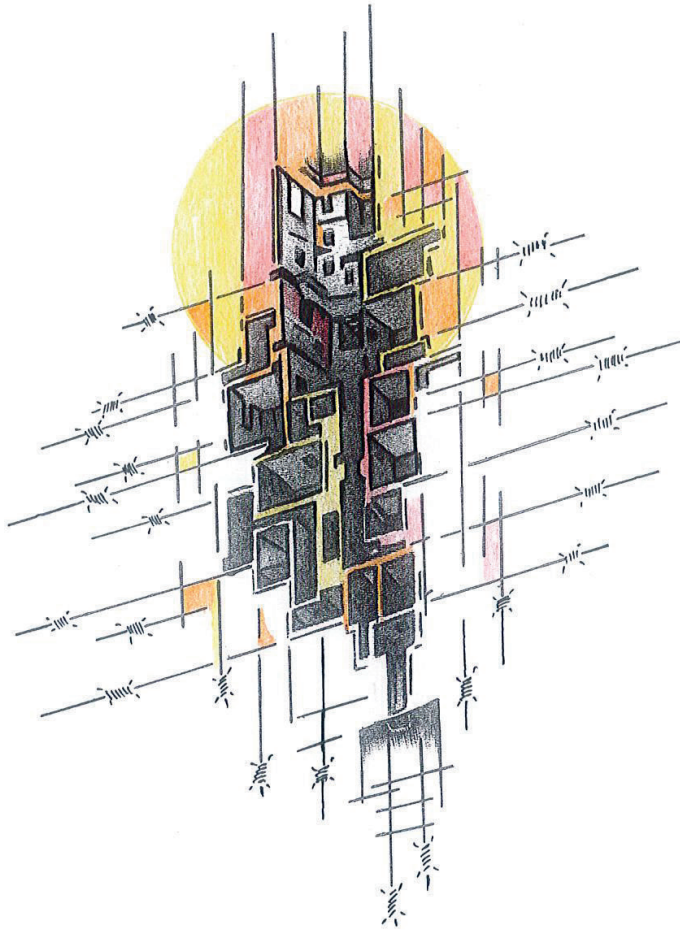


Prison is a Still Point

— ❦ — in a Turning World — ❦ —



Prisoner Support and Human Rights Association
مؤسسة الضمير لرعاية الأسير وحقوق الإنسان



Addameer Prisoner Support and Human Rights Association

Prison is a Still Point in a Turning World

Room to Move: The Spatial Dimension of Israeli Occupation Prisons

The title of this report is a quote from Nelson Mandela's autobiography describing his prison experience: Mandela, Nelson. *Long Walk to Freedom: The Autobiography of Nelson Mandela*. Little, Brown and Company, 1994.

Preface

Since the beginning of the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories, the occupying power has systematically implemented an ever-expanding arsenal of prisons and detention centers. Over the course of time, the Israeli occupation authorities have thrown hundreds of thousands of Palestinians into these facilities. This policy is never a mere response to security contingencies, it reaches beyond policing, to serve as a concerted translation into bricks and mortar of the occupying power's guiding school of thought—one that is steeped in the drive to subjugate all sections of Palestinian society, dispossess them of their land, and divide them into easily conquerable human enclaves.

Like other occupying powers in history, Israel has wielded all means at its disposal, both technically within and brazenly outside of international law, to achieve its ends. As time advances, the Israeli occupation stands out, looking ever more like a last-of-a-kind relic, persisting in primitive enmity even as it equips itself with a hypermodern knowledge base and technology to deep-seat its dominance over the occupied people. To that end, prisons, enforced starvation, deportation, killing, and destruction have been employed. Several changes can be observed in the treatment of Palestinian detainees over the years. An intensification of damage and circumvention of rights and charters has characterized these waves of change, despite the façade sold to the international community of an occupier in step with modern norms, when Israel has, in fact, exceeded the cruelty of many other chapters of colonialism throughout history.

Space in prison settings is not only a place where a period of penalty is spent in proportion to a legal violation, or walls and well-sealed structures that prevent prisoners from communicating with their natural space, as the Israeli occupation claims. In essence, the prison space by the Israeli occupation extends beyond that to a far-ranging set of tools and measures that destroys the body and soul of the prisoner, turning them into examples for anyone who might dare to reject or confront the occupation's measures and praxes. Buttressing the immediate prison system from without, the occupation's military courts and judiciary at large, including all its formal mechanisms that fail to deliver the minimum level of justice, are used in pursuit of the same destructive end. Along the same lines, day-to-day operations in prisons are subject to disciplinary rules, or the so-called Israeli Prison Service's procedural rules, that are riven with arbitrariness as part of a larger intent to deter, punish, and oppress Palestinian prisoners.

A careful perusal of the occupation's measures reveals that the entire occupation system is well placed to achieve its ambitions of becoming a fully-fledged settler-colonial occupation that controls all aspects of the Palestinian people's lives. In this politico-scientific-military configuration, the torture and abuse of detainees and their families as well as the demolition of some detainees' homes become legitimate tactics that do not require any shade of accountability.

Given the Israeli occupation's knowledge and scientific superiority, detaining people and subjecting them to a strict regime of procedures turn prison spaces into a suite of laboratories that can have significant physical and psychological impacts on the detainees. With a visual field of no more than fifteen meters in the best scenarios, detainees lose their ability to process thoughts, innovate, or hope due to a lack of stimulus. Denied the chance to see their children grow up, unable to touch their fingertips or embrace them even on visits due to the thick glass partition that keeps them apart, prisoners can sink into seemingly bottomless despair. Deprived of sunrays for years while living in a high-humidity space not only destroys their bones but also robs them of the vitamin D of the soul.

The physical and compounded psychological impacts arising from imprisonment never cease to eat away at the detainees. Instead, these insidious effects crawl beneath their skin and get stuck between their teeth for long years, sometimes to the grave. Examples abound of the long (often lifelong) shadows cast by imprisonment over the bodies and minds of those incarcerated.

The Israeli occupation prisons are not places and spaces where freedom is deprived but rather a complex of monstrous machinery in form, laws, procedures, and policies. In fact, they are designed to liquidate and kill, just as weaponry would in the hands of the prison wardens, and just as the mindset that paints these landscapes sets out to do. On prison walls and throughout its extended yards, the struggle is at its height between the will to freedom and life the detainees stand for and the will to destroy that is nurtured by a system that brings all its resources and capabilities to bear to degrade human life.

In light of all the above, this paper shines a light on four prisons: Damon Prison, Naqab Desert (Ketziot), Eshel, and Ofer. It canvasses the conditions of each, from the cells that hold detainees and prisoners for long years, through the minutiae of their daily lives and their strenuous efforts to defeat their jailor, to the most exhilarating flashes of hope and the cruelest lows of despair that any prisoner might go through during their detention experience.

This paper mainly draws on interviews specifically conducted with prisoners who spent more than ten years in detention for the purpose of this paper. It also relies on an archive holding records of hundreds of visits conducted by Addameer to the occupation's prisons over the years. During these visits, Addameer documented various praxes the occupation uses against prisoners, the nature of the prisoners' daily life, and all the policies they face. At the same time, in an attempt to monitor any changes to the buildings or layouts of these facilities, Addameer used several aerial photographs of the aforementioned prisons. It is perhaps fitting to highlight that Addameer could only access limited quantities of fairly clear aerial photographs, as access to these images was restricted to a window between 2011 and 2016, either because of the poor quality of older images or due to security restrictions.

It should be noted that the measurements and dimensions mentioned in this report may differ from their actual existence by a small margin, as they are based on the prisoners' estimations.

Glossary

Given that the words, terms, and expressions below are commonly used in relation to Israeli occupation prisons and Palestinian political prisoners, this Glossary is provided to ensure that their meanings are well-defined.

Fora (colloquial Arabic for yard time or recreational time) is an enclosed yard with cement ground, often rectangular in shape and painted dark red. The prisoner cells often line one side of this space, while high cement walls, between five to eight meters in height, flank the other. Yards are often sealed with many small square iron windows. Some yards are completely covered; while others are partially sealed. Prisoners gather in this shared space when given time out of their cells, typically for four to seven hours.

Balata (colloquial Arabic for a hot plate) is an electric, small, heated, flat surface similar to stove cooktop elements. This appliance is given to prisoners from seven in the morning to ten at night to prepare hot drinks or cook food.

Borsh (Hebrew) means the prison bed, usually made of iron and bolted to the cell flooring. A borsh usually consists of two beds, one placed above the other with a bunk ladder to get to the upper bed.

Dubeir (Hebrew for representative or spokesperson), is a prisoner selected to speak on behalf of their fellow prisoners before the Israeli Prison Services to demand their rights.

Kumkum (colloquial Arabic for kettle) is an electrical appliance to boil water.

Khawliya' (Arabic) or mardwan (Hebrew) is a prisoner who voluntarily helps fellow prisoners. A mardwan handles a variety of duties, primarily related to cooking and cleaning.

Canteen is a facility where prisoners purchase personal necessities, such as shampoo, soap, and shared food and products, including detergents, meat, and vegetables. Notably, the products are sold at significantly higher prices than the market price.

The daily count is a process taking place three times a day to count prisoners. The first count usually takes place between five and seven a.m.; the second round is carried out during the day, and the last occurs just before the prisoners are locked in their cells. This routine is set to ensure that all prisoners are present in their assigned cells.

Window-knocking refers to a twice-to-thrice-daily check to ensure that the cell windows and bed bunks are firmly fixed and cannot be moved in any way.

Ashnaf (Hebrew) refers to the tiny slot in the cell door used to cuff prisoners' hands or to serve meals.

Damon Prison



Damon Prison

On April 4 2021, a flock of birds glided through the prison's sky, breaking its shades of monotony. Nourhan wrote about the seldom-seen event in her diary- one she keeps for rarities-and was surprised to learn that she had recorded the sighting of a flock of birds on the same date last year. She does not have a bird migration map, nor can her sight reach beyond the extent her eyes can reach if she stands on the tips of her toes and stretches her neck. Still, she could document bird migration across this patch of sky year after year-but who does document the misery of this world?

Layan Kayed¹

Damon Prison, constructed as a complex on Mount Carmel in Haifa during the British Mandate to be used as a tobacco storehouse and a stable, is one of the old prisons the Israeli occupation still retains. In 1953, the construction was officially opened as a detention camp by the then-Israeli minister of police. Given the original *raison d'être* of the facility, it was designed to breed humidity to preserve tobacco leaves and was never meant to hold humans.²

In 2000, due to the appalling and inhumane detention conditions, the Israeli Prison Services (hereinafter IPS) decided to close Damon Prison-only to reopen it again one year later. This time, IPS used it to incarcerate immigrant workers and Palestinians who entered the 1948 occupied Palestinian territory without a permit.³

Although this prison was first constructed in the 1950s, the occupying power has not made any significant changes to its structure and layout. The aerial images below, taken between 2011 and 2014, show no fundamental alterations to the complex: Neither new buildings were added nor the available sections were expanded. This fact reveals the extreme environment in which prisoners and children are detained without any improvements or new facilities other than those erected over sixty years ago.⁴

¹ Layan Kayed, Prison as Text. *Majallat al-Dirasat al-Filastiniyya* 128 Autumn 202 :2021. https://www.palestine-studies.org/sites/default/files/mdf-articles/1_206-201.pdf.

² Addameer Prisoner Support and Human Rights Association, *The Annual Violations Report 2019*, (Ramallah: Addameer Association, 94–93 ,(2019). https://www.addameer.org/sites/default/files/publications/v2020_online.pdf

³ Mandela Institute, Palestinian Counseling Center, and Addameer Association, *Fact Sheet*. (Ramallah: Mandela Institute, Palestinian Counseling Center, and Addameer Association, July 2008).

⁴ In addition to Ofer and Megiddo prisons, Damon Prison has a section dedicated to Palestinian child prisoners. Although the child section in Damon prison falls beyond the scope of this paper, it should be noted that the living conditions of child prisoners are not significantly different from those of prisoners. All the Damon sections are old, riven with humidity, and lack adequate natural ventilation.

Jan. 01, 2011



July 30, 2014



● Transfer of Female Prisoners to Damon Prison

The number of Palestinian prisoners increased significantly in 2015 and 2016. Specifically, 105 and 164 Palestinian women were detained in 2015 and 2016, respectively. In response to this dramatic rise, the occupying power opted to establish a new female prisoner wing at Damon Prison-in addition to Hasharon (Telmond) Prison, the only detention facility that used to hold Palestinian female prisoners. During these two years, the number of female prisoners hit its peak since the October 2011 Prisoner Exchange Deal between the occupation government and the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas). Damon and Hasharon prisons continued to hold female prisoners up to 2018 when IPS decided to open a female prisoner section in Damon Prison. Accordingly, all female prisoners in any other sections at Damon Prison, as well as the few female prisoners in Hasharon, were relocated to the new section. In three stages, the transfer process was declared complete on November 6, 2018.⁶

● General Conditions

Damon Prison is devoid of the necessities for human life. Palestinian prisoners who served all or part of their imprisonment in Damon often report about the substandard cells, the poor ventilation, the pest infestation, and the extreme humidity. The cement floor may be bitterly cold in winter and oppressively hot in summer, and the fora floor is made of soft concrete, which, when wet, becomes

⁵ Addameer Association, The Annual Violations Report: Violations of Palestinian Rights in Israeli Prisons. (Ramallah: Addameer Association, 34, (2016. https://www.addameer.org/sites/default/files/publications/annual_violations_report_for_web.pdf

⁶ Addameer Association, The Annual Violations Report. (Ramallah: Addameer Association, 38, (2018. https://www.addameer.org/sites/default/files/publications/for_webtqyr_lnthkt_lnhyy_lnjlyz.pdf

dangerously slippery. In this can-of-worms environment, humidity creates a host of problems; many of which affect electricity. During a visit by Addameer to Damon Prison in 2019, Safa Abu Sneineh, a prisoner at the time, relayed, “[the] electricity problem posed a real threat to the prisoners’ lives. A tabletop stove exploded in room 10 while the heater in room 2 burned. My notebook caught on fire when the stove exploded, as did another prisoner’s clothes.”⁷

I had a lifelong dream of visiting Haifa with my friends—one of the most beautiful, picturesque Palestinian cities. It has been a dream to see Mount Carmel but I never thought that my dream would come true while shackled on a bosta to Damon Prison, stealing glances of Haifa’s beauty.

Elyaa Abu Hijleh

● Prison Sections and Cells

Damon Prison is divided into six sections, Section 3 is designated for female prisoners, and Section 4 is for Palestinian child detainees. The remaining sections are reserved for criminal prisoners. Each section consists of thirteen multiple-occupancy cells of varying sizes. Some cells, measuring around nine square meters, hold three prisoners, others measuring some fifteen square meters accommodate five prisoners, and some extending over twenty-four square meters hold eight prisoners. By and large, the living space per female prisoner is three square meters. The number of female prisoners in each cell is determined by the number of beds, ensuring that the female prisoners in each cell must not outnumber the beds. Over the years, female prisoners stood up for their right to choose their cells and gained it. Damon IPS attempted to set strict mechanisms for the assignment of prisoners to the cells immediately after their transfer. However, the prisoners refused to enter the assigned cells at the time and staged a sit-in at the fora until the IPS acquiesced to their demand to choose their cells.

⁷ Addameer, The Annual Violations Report 92 .2019. Note: Late in 2019, the detainees’ relentless insistence on fixing the prison’s electricity bore fruit, and the IPS solved the issue.



A photograph taken by a prisoner's family during a visit to Damon Prison (The family of the prisoner Fadwa Hamada)

● Virtual Tour in Cell 8

Cell 8 holds eight female prisoners. Measuring roughly $4 \times 5 \text{ m}^2$, this cell is relatively large compared to other multi-occupancy cells. Female prisoners call this room "reception" because it is often used to hold newly admitted female prisoners. It contains eight beds,⁸ each with its own locker unit consisting of two small square shelves for each prisoner. These storage units cannot fit more than six pieces of clothing. On one side, the room has a small corner the prisoners refer to as the "kitchen." The nook has a small sink for washing dishes, hands, or foodstuffs.

⁸ The beds, made of iron and bolted to the floor and walls, are stacked in a double-decker configuration. Each bed has an iron base that rusts with time and starts to make sickening sounds. Although the beds are bunk, they lack safety rails. "Given that broshes lack protection, prisoners sometimes fall off. A slight movement while asleep might cause the prisoner to fall. Many prisoners, in fact, fell off and got injured," Safa Abu Sneineh indicated.

Cell 8 has a small toilet of approximately 1x1.5 m², with a wooden door with a small sliding latch. It also has a small loft for storing detergents, face and hand tissue, and toilet paper. The restroom has a single toilet seat and a 30x40 cm² window, 1.5 meters above the ground. The window is locked with cylindrical and square iron bars and grills. Overlooking walled fora, this opening fails to carry out its main function—that is, to ventilate the bathroom. Female prisoners have reported that while this window fails to bring fresh air in summer, it harvests biting cold wind in winter. It also serves as an entry point for cockroaches and other insects because it overlooks the fora that includes a sanitary sewer.

In this bizarre environment, female prisoners lack privacy while using the toilet. Elyaa Abu Hijleh reflects on this, stating that: «There is no privacy in the cell's "restroom.»» No fresh air through the window, and any sound made in the toilet echoes throughout the cell. As they are in need of a minimum level of privacy, female prisoners turn up the radio or television volume while using the facility.⁹

Cell 8 is sealed with an iron door with small sight-level glazing covered with iron bars and square forged grilles. This window remains open throughout the year. In winter, however, female prisoners try to seal it with old scarves to avoid cold air. The IPS has always thwarted this action on the pretext that it would make it difficult for the wardens to ensure that all prisoners are locked in their assigned cells at night. As the procedural rules stand, prison wardens are expected to inspect the cells every other half hour.

Moreover, the cell door has a rectangular slot called Ashnaf used to insert meals. There is a gap at the bottom of the cell door that exacerbates the pest infestation issue in the cell. The insects and rodents that fail to make it through the toilet's window can crawl through this gap. Prisoners attempt to fix this problem by using scraps of fabric and towels to close the gap. Next to the door of each cell

⁹ Elyaa Abu Hijleh (former prisoner who served a -11 month sentence in Damon Prison) in an interview with Addameer Association for this paper, July 7 ,2021.

is a small window, around 1x1 m², shielded with iron bars and narrow square grilles.

While there is lighting mounted on the cell ceiling, it is very dim because the ceiling is very high. This issue compels prisoners to buy small lighting units, i.e., lamps. They usually hang these lamps beside their beds to help them read and write at night. These lamps are purchased from the prison canteen at the prisoners' expense. Lastly, each multi-occupancy cell has a television with thirteen channels, most of which are in Hebrew with the exceptions of MBC, MBC Action, and MTV.¹⁰

● Additional Facilities

Section 3 encompasses various facilities, including the canteen, kitchen, library, toilets, and walkways.

Canteen

The canteen measures around 4x3 m². It contains an air conditioner and several shelves with items for sale in addition to miscellaneous supplies bought by the canteen committee that may be used by all the prisoners, such as laundry detergents, fabric conditioner, oil, and washing-up liquid. The canteen also stores IPS food supplies-including rice, vermicelli, semolina, and tuna. As the space is air-conditioned, some prisoners use it to rest, pray, or read the Qur'an during hot summer days. This canteen is not the only one at Damon Prison; there is another, larger, canteen located outside Section 3. The other canteen, set out similarly to a cafeteria, has a window on the other side of which an Arabic-speaking civil prisoner receives prisoners' purchase orders. The female prisoner in charge of purchasing notifies the civil prisoner of the products and the quantities required; he then fills down the order on a computer, and all purchases are packaged in a large cart and delivered to the female prisoners' section.

¹⁰ All cells, no matter how small, have the elements mentioned above (e.g., beds, small cabinets, TV).

Kitchen

The kitchen is roughly four square meters and mainly contains two freezers, similar to ice cream freezers. Most products that require refrigeration (e.g., frozen vegetables, hummus, corn, milk, and cheese) are stored in these freezers. There are two other refrigerators, similar to those used in houses, placed in the kitchen, with each shelf assigned to a cell. Prisoners are not allowed in the kitchen unless accompanied by khawliya' (also known as mardwan). The kitchen also has a sink for cleaning and washing culinary equipment, as well as two large hot plates, each with two stove tops; some larger hot plates have three burners.

Library

The library in Section 3 is around five square meters. Apart from being air-conditioned, it houses a desk similar to school student desks and a couple of bookcases that are used to fit as many books as possible. Prisoners turn to this space for various purposes, from reading and studying to escaping high summer temperatures. Prisoners also work out and prepare decorations for Ramadan and other holidays in the library. The library committee assumes responsibility for lending, returning, and organizing books by genre and subject matter.

Fora

In the early days of my detention, along with other newly admitted prisoners, I used to wait for the fora time at the cell door. With a horizon constrained within the confines of the cell, the fora became the landscape in which we felt "free." At the time, we were looking at everything around us with astonishment. Looking into the blue sky and breathing air felt great. However, as time crawled by, we grew lazier and more lethargic about getting out of the cell to the fora. The horizon extending between the cells and the fora became run-of-the-mill, and we realized that it was not a real horizon. Even the sky we saw was nothing like the real sky, given the bars and wire between it and our eyes. Instead, our eyes saw walls, iron bars, and a surveillance system.

Elyaa Abu Hijleh

The fora of Section 3 is located in the center of the section, surrounded by the cells on all sides, with a corridor running through the prisoners' cells and leading into the fora.¹¹ The fora is around 8x7 m² and is roofed with two square forged iron grids. The IPS installed surveillance cameras in every nook and cranny of the yard. These cameras violate the privacy of female prisoners and prevent many of them from wearing comfortable clothes or exposing their hair while in the yard because they wear hijab.

In relation to the fora as a space, prisoners indicate that while it appears sufficient and spacious at first sight, as soon as over thirty-five female prisoners gather, the once ample space turns into a very narrow room. Due to this limitation, prisoners find themselves compelled to organize their movement in circles of different sizes to walk simultaneously without bumping into each other. Above all, the iron bars¹² at the heart of the yard used to be an additional obstacle.

The IPS allows female prisoners in the fora from seven o'clock until eight o'clock in the morning to exercise. The layout of the fora, coupled with the surveillance cameras and the constant presence of two wardens, deprives many prisoners of working out. However, Palestinian prisoners in the Israeli occupation prisons usually do not succumb to such praxes. Instead, they branch out into new ways to stand up for their rights. For example, female prisoners started a sports club in December 2020. They called it Nādy el-Hilwāt (lit., the beautiful ladies' club), with prisoner Hilwa Hamamrah as lead coach to hold sports classes on Saturday, Tuesday, and Thursday in the library in lieu of the highly-surveilled fora. In addition to the morning period, the fora opens for several hours during the day as follows: 09:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m.; 01:00 p.m. to 02:30 p.m.; and 04:00 p.m. to 06:30 p.m.

¹¹ This passageway, barely more than a meter wide and roofed with tin sheets, runs through all the cells. The corridor includes has several doors that lead into the fora, so the prisoners need to pass through this corridor to get out to the fora.

¹² There are several iron bars in the middle of Section 3's fora to allow the female prisoners to practice gymnastics. But these bars, as the female prisoners say, are unfit.



Prisoner Elyaa Abu Hijleh's piece for the sports club at Damon Prison

The fora is surrounded by towering walls of about five meters high on all sides. Over the course of more than two years, the prisoners have suffered various casualties due to the soft, slippery flooring of the fora. Many of them slipped while walking through the yard, especially when it was wet. In this vein, Layan Nasir says, "This problem puts female prisoners at risk of falling and being injured, especially on their way from the shower area to their cell through the fora, given that their footwear is more likely to be wet." While the IPS coats the fora's ground with coarse material from time to time so as to minimize the possibility of slipping, female prisoners assert that this material wears away quickly and thus demand a radical solution to this issue.¹³

¹³ Layan Nasir (former prisoner who was arrested on July 2021 7 and spent fifty days in Damon Prison) in an interview with Addameer Association for this paper, May 10 ,2021.

Prisoner Hilwa Hamamrah, as the lead coach, tried to motivate us to attend sports classes and imposed a penalty on those who failed to do so. Each inmate had a membership card made of the cardboard boxes we used to get. But, no one may have gotten the card unless they participate in five classes in a row.

Elyaa Abu Hijleh

Showers

In Damon Prison, female prisoners are forced to use showers located outside of their cells, found in a room located further down the fora. The space has eight showers: four to the right; and four to the left. There are no doors to the shower stalls, only curtains. Each shower stall is separated from the next by a small half wall, with showers and pipes riven with rust. All showers are served by a single drain in the middle of this space, through which insects and rodents frequently inch their way inside. Prisoners have also indicated that half of the showers do not work. For those that do work, the water pressure is dependent on the number of prisoners using the showers, simultaneously. For example, if two prisoners take showers at the same time, the water from the other showers will not flow. This inadequacy causes a real problem for prisoners and compels them to coordinate their shower usage, given the limited fora time.

Showers outside cells deny female prisoners of their privacy. Furthermore, showers are only available during the fora hours and prisoners are unable to use them at their own convenience. Female prisoners feel constantly monitored as they lug their clothes and toiletries to the showers at the far end of the fora, and report often hearing voices of the wardens closeby as they shower, which serves to intimidate the prisoners and further encroach upon their privacy. Sometimes, the voice of the wardens near the showers confuses the female prisoners while using the showers.

The IPS uses the availability of showers as a card to pressure female prisoners whenever they take any steps to peacefully demonstrate against their conditions. Following an escalation in November 2020, the IPS decided to lock Section 3 for three days, preventing the female prisoners from using the showers. To add to the strain, the IPS later allowed every four cells one hour to shower. Noting

the inadequacies outlined above, the expectation that fifteen female prisoners shower in one hour is facetious, given that water would only pour from two showers at any given time.

● Social Life on the Inside

These actions are not limited to the quotidian lives of female prisoners but also extend to decorating for each occasion or holiday. For example, during Ramadan, the female prisoners use any cardboard they have and cut it into crescents and lanterns to be hung throughout their cells. At Christmas, they fashion a Christmas tree from a newspaper and decorate it with tuna can lids covered in bright textiles. They also appropriate food cans to make Christmas chocolate boxes.

'Prison is the good company one finds, otherwise, it's a death sentence suspended.

Lama Khater

Despite the more pleasant environment created by the prisoners, the nature of prison life necessitates that prisoners set general rules for interaction and shared living. This helps avoid problems arising from differences in cultures and customs. Convicts set rules regarding when the TV and lights should be turned off at night and emphasize the significance of maintaining a clean and orderly environment in their cells.

● Pain Put on Hold

Palestinian female prisoners communicate with the outside world through various means. According to Shatha Hassan, family visits that occur once a month are the main way of staying in touch with life on the outside. Nevertheless, the occupying power uses these visits to pressure female prisoners by halting visits under security pretenses or for administrative measures. For example, family visits were suspended by the IPS during the COVID-19 pandemic, where female prisoners were cut off from the outside world for several months. Visits from legal counsel are the second key form of communication. These audiences are used to advise detainees about updates in their legal status, document developments in prisons, and relay any news from female prisoners to their families, or vice versa.

Shatha Hassan also references other innovative means used by female prisoners to communicate with the outside world. For example, prisoners often send messages to their families through other prisoners whose release date is due. The prisoner who is due for release is provided with the contact details of the family of those who remain incarcerated. Likewise, both male and female prisoners, communicate with the outside world through local radio programs, namely those for prisoners in particular. These programs take on greater significance when female prisoners are not allowed to receive visits or are otherwise isolated from the outside world.¹⁴

Many radio stations dedicate programs for prisoners' families to send messages to those on the inside, including warm greetings, wishes, and news of any significant developments. The female prisoners anxiously tune in to these programs on their portable radios every week in hopes of hearing family updates. However, female prisoners often suffer from the constant need to reset their radios. In this context, Layan Kayed says: "Radio programs have been the most popular among female prisoners. We patiently waited for the radio programs and were careful not to plan any internal events during these times. We ached for any news from our families, whether good or bad-it has been a way to stay in touch with the outside world."

¹⁴ Qasam Al-Haj, *Four Female Prisoners, Four Liberated Prisoners: Stories of Freedom*, *Majallat al-Dirasat al-Filastiniyya* 128 (Fall 69–68 :{2021). <https://www.palestine-studies.org/sites/default/files/mdf-articles/073-060.pdf>.

Through the prism of these programs, prisoners experience flashes of hope but often cruel lows of despair, such as the news of the death of a relative. In 2021, it was via radio that prisoner Khalida Jarrar was informed of the death of her daughter Suha before Jarrar’s attorney could visit her and let her know.¹⁵ Layan Kayed had a similar experience when she heard on the radio that her cousin had passed away. Kayed relates: “My father’s voice came out of the radio, but there was a lot of background noise that day; I couldn’t catch every word he said. I just understood that a cousin was martyred. I waited for seven hours to find out who he was. The identity of the martyred relative haunted me during those long hours. That day, I felt I had lost all my cousins and could not offer anything to my family. Being away from my loved ones brought up conflicting emotions of rage and despair.”

Losing loved ones while we’re in prison has been our cruelest fear. As radio beams in the sounds and words of our loved ones, we dissect every nuance. We listened to them as riddles to be unraveled. The true loss is that of your closest loved one: your mother, father, sister, brother, son, or little daughter, whose abrupt death would feel like a world lost to you. That day, you can bid them farewell with a rose—never a kiss.

Layan Kayed¹⁶

● Daily Obstacles

The IPS enters the rooms of female prisoners more than five times a day, to count them, check the borshes and windows, or for other reasons. The prison guards enter the cells three times a day to count the prisoners: around 6:00 a.m., 3:00 p.m., and 6:30 p.m. The window-knocking process takes place twice a day. The first is at eight o’clock in the morning and the second at three in the afternoon. However, these are not the only times the IPS enters the cells, as the prison guards might enter for another count round, sudden inspection, or other pretexts.

¹⁵ The occupying power overruled all legal attempts made by Addameer and other rights organizations to release Khalida Jarrar to bid her farewell to her daughter. At the time, Jarrar had spent nearly two years of her sentence and had only two months until her release date.

¹⁶ Kayed, Prison as Text.

By and large, cells in female prisons are subjected to two types of inspection. The first is the periodic inspections that occur monthly and are carried out by Special Units. The Units conducting such inspections regularly deliberately tamper with, confiscate, or destroy certain belongings and personal items-including journals or “banned” books.

The second type of inspection is sudden and often takes place at night in order to intimidate the prisoners and make them feel uncomfortable. During these inspections, the prisoners are removed from their cells. Many female prisoners report having their privacy violated as their belongings and clothes, including underwear, are searched.¹⁷

The inspections serve to disturb the lives of the female prisoners in Damon Prison. They report that such counts or inspections regularly take place during cultural or educational sessions (which are banned by the IPS). In this context, female prisoners indicate that when summoned for the count or inspection while in a cultural or educational session, they have no option but to end the activity abruptly and each prisoner busies herself with a different action so as not to stir up the prison guard’s suspicion of the available educational or cultural activities inside the prison. These random inspections impede the stability of the daily life of female prisoners who are required to leave their rooms throughout the inspection until the wardens are gone.

¹⁷ Many prisoners’ belongings are confiscated during inspection rounds, including books and notebooks. Some of the objects confiscated make the prisoners’ life difficult. For example, prisoners use iron can lids instead of knives to prepare food, but according to the IPS, no cell may have more than one of these lids. With time, the lids lose their sharpness, still, the wardens collect all and any lids if they find more than one lid.

A loud voice echoes throughout the cell and jolts me out of my reverie, "Sifra, Bnut, Sifra," and then again in Arabic, " 'Adad, 'Adad (count time).» Another familiar voice inside the cell, «Girls, it's count time, and there's a man... It is the count time.» At first, I didn't understand what was happening and what I should do. "It's the count time,» a fellow prisoner tells me, «the prison guards will enter to count us; we need to stand up so they can count us.» Indeed, the prisoners put on their prayer wear and cut their lunch, and we all stood up, waiting to be counted. The door opens, and a female prison guard, no more than 19 years old, comes in. Behind her was a guard holding the cell door handle. Looking at us, she counted us while pointing her finger at us, «1 ,2 ,3 4 ,5 ,6.» Once done, she traced her steps out of the cell and slammed the door, leaving a sickening sound jangling in the cell.

Shatha Hasan¹⁸

● We Can Never Get Used to Incarceration

While Palestinian female prisoners are sentenced to months or years in Israeli occupation cells, the majority-if not all-assert that no matter how long one spends in prison, the deprivation of freedom and liberty never becomes normalized.

One prisoner recalled a point where the emotional toll of incarceration became too much for prisoner Amal Taqatqa: "Two months after my arrest-exactly at half past six in the evening, the typical time for cells to be locked-prisoner Amal Taqatqa bursts into tears. Amal had already spent six years behind bars, yet she still couldn't accept the reality that the occupier could lock her cell door anytime and deny her sunlight and air."

In this context, Dr. Fathi Fleifel¹⁹ notes that while some psychiatrists might diagnose this incident as a panic attack, he personally sees Amal's tears as a healthy reaction, representing an attempt of her mind and body to reject her

¹⁸ Shatha Hassan, «The Imprisoned Storyteller,» The Prisoners (Blog), Institute for Palestine Studies, March 17 ,2021: <https://www.palestine-studies.org/ar/node/1651060>.

¹⁹ Fathi Fleifel (Psycho-therapist) in an interview with Addameer for this paper, December 16/12/2021 .16 2021

reality in prison and to resist the occupation's policies of oppression. The prisoner experiences detention twice: at the moment of arrest and every time the doors of their cells are locked on them in limited space for a specific stretch of time. That being the case, the person's sudden failure to accept this status quo, i.e., the deprivation of freedom, is part of their physical and psychological mechanism to create a flicker of hope and resist the detention as a reality, whether through hysterical crying, in the case of Amal Taqatqa, or other physical expressions. By and large, this response is healthy and helps the prisoner resist the lows of despair and submission.

● Seasonal Challenges

In general, female prisoners suffer from high humidity in summer and extreme cold in winter. In summer, the IPS provides the prisoners with fans, one for every two prisoners, however, the oppressive humidity renders these useless. According to the prisoners, one seldom feels air coming from these fans. In an effort to curb the extreme humidity, prisoners take at least three showers every day. However, the IPS restricts the number of pieces of clothing that detainees may keep in their cells. The female prisoners lack enough clothes to keep changing when they shower repeatedly-let alone the need to keep washing and drying their clothes to have something to change.²⁰

Moreover, this oppressive humidity affects the prisoners' health. Yassmin Shaban reflects, "The humidity issue affects the prison at large, including the cells where we live. In layman's terms, it does affect our health. As a result of the building's age and the chronic dampness, some of the walls have begun to flake away." These observations are also seconded by prisoner Shoruq Dweiyat. While the IPS may paint a few cells in an alleged bid to combat this, it fails to deliver a comprehensive solution to the humidity issue.

²⁰ Female prisoners are allowed to keep four outfits, two for winter and two for summer. In winter, the cabinet holds winter garments, while in summer, summer clothes.

Similarly, female prisoners endure bitter colds and a shortage of blankets during the winter. The IPS is reluctant to provide a good heating system and instead provides an electric heater that fails to provide warmth if one is far from it and may cause burns if one is close.

Perhaps I live in a geography similar to that of Damon Prison, except that my house has the electrical appliances and necessities one needs to live in this environment, but Damon Prison does not.

Elyaa Abu Hijleh

- «Everything around me is either white or rusty.»

For the most part, female prisoners at Damon Prison live in a stark white environment. The IPS painted every door and wall in the facility white. “With the shades of white all around, we felt like we were in a hospital; even iron was painted white. This setting might sound normal in daily life on the outside, but on the inside, everything becomes disturbing, even the prevalence of the color white,” Elyaa Abu Hijleh reflects.

- On the Inside, Violations of Privacy Come in Many Ways

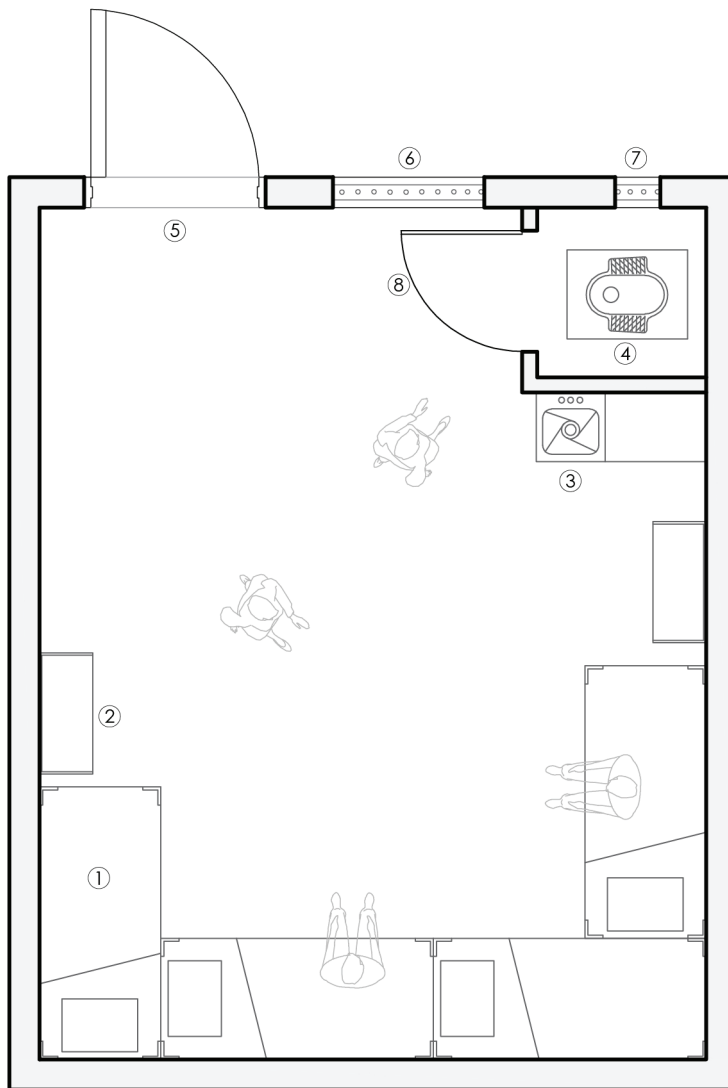
Female prisoners often try to find ways to relate to the outside world - one such way is through family photos. The IPS allows the prisoners’ families to send family photographs to the prisoners. The female prisoners are then allowed to hang these photographs inside their cells, provided they do so on their borshes or on certain parts of the walls according to special conditions. Elyaa Abu Hijleh explains: “We used to surround ourselves with photos of our loved ones. With time, we noticed how prison guards, male and female, scrutinized these photos. Their stares felt like a flagrant violation of our privacy, so we took the photo down from the walls and borshes. Instead, we used the photographs as bookmarks.

Elyaa continues: “In addition to using the pictures as bookmarks, some prisoners bought five small notebooks from the prison canteen, stuck them together, and wrapped them using some cardboard leftovers—such as vegetable and fruit cardboard boxes. They then tied all these parts together using small threads from potato sacks and wrapped the multilayer notebook with pieces of cloth to lend it some shape. Once done, they use it as a photo album, where they stick their family pictures and write on the rear of each inscription, such as the date

on which the photo was received, the names of the people in the image, or any feelings about it.”

In this context, Dr. Fleifel emphasizes that the way prisoners interact with their family photos is unique to each individual. In these photographs, some prisoners find a motive for continuity and hope for the future. They see these items as a personal haven. Other prisoners, he indicates, see the photos as a constant reminder that they are separated from their loved ones and cannot join them at will. More often than not, the IPS forbid prisoners from receiving family photographs or destroying them during their raids on their cells. These practices aim to break the spirits of the prisoners, hoping that the female prisoners internalize the occupier’s power to control their lives on the inside, even down to the most minute detail.

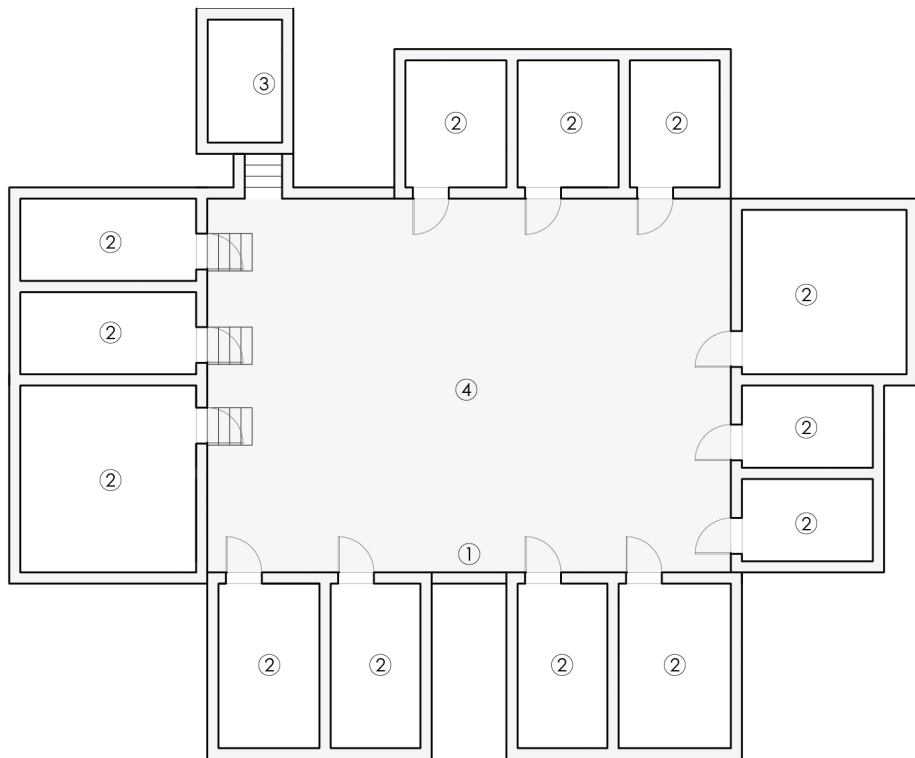
Architectural Plan of a Prison Room in Damon Prison



1:50

1. Bunk bed [180 cm x 80 cm].
2. Metal cabinets with multiple units [40 cm x 40 cm].
3. Small washbasin [50 cm x 30 cm] with a sink to hold a kettle and electric cooktop.
4. Metal squat toilet (old Arabic toilets).
5. Iron door 10 cm thick with a window, bars [40 cm x 30 cm], and an opening Ashnaf.
6. Window with bars and nets [100 cm x 100 cm].
7. Window with bars and nets [30 cm x 40 cm].
8. Light wooden door with a lock.

Architectural Plan of the Women's Section in Damon Prison



1:200

1. Section entrance.
2. Prison room + prison facilities.
3. Showers.
4. Prison yard [7 m x 8 m].

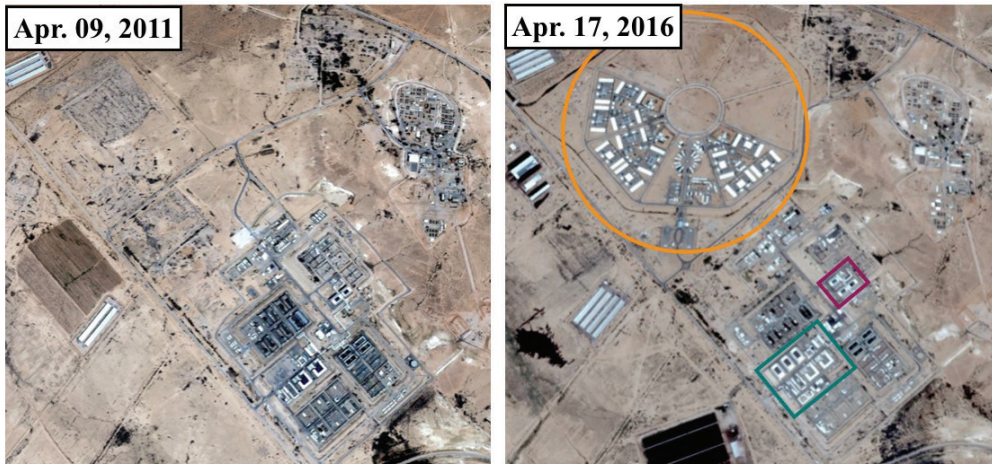
Naqab Prison



Ma'an News Agency

Naqab Desert Prison

Naqab Desert (Ketziot) Prison, formerly known as Ansar III Prison, is located in the southern part of the 1948 Territories in the Negev Desert. It was built and opened in 1988 and held Palestinian detainees until 1995. It was then closed for several years before reopening in 2000 following the outbreak of the second intifada (also known as Al-Aqsa intifada).²¹ Naqab Prison is divided into three main architectural spaces: the camps, the caravans, and the concrete buildings (or cells). Not all of these spaces existed when Naqab Prison was established; they were built sequentially, due to the increase in the number of detainees. The concrete cells were constructed in 2007, followed by caravans in 2008. In total, the prison can hold around two thousand prisoners. The pictures below show the large-scale changes to Naqab Prison's structures and layouts over the past years, as highlighted in orange, red, and green.



²¹ «Israeli Prisons and Detention Centers,» Wafa - Palestine News and Information Agency, updated January 5 2021, https://info.wafa.ps/ar_page.aspx?id=3800.

Similarly, the images below show the great change that unfolded in the locale of Naqab Prison, including the nature of the urban growth.

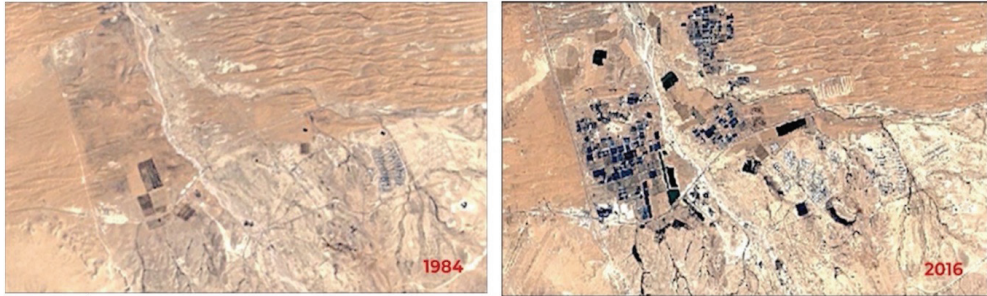


Photo from Birzeit University student thesis project (Shaden Awad)

● Prison Sections

Naqab Desert Prison is divided into three basic architectural spaces; each is called a Qal'a (Arabic for fort) and assigned an alphabetical coding as follows:

➡ Fort A

This section consists of a camp of tents made of combustible reinforced plastic. To support each tent, two pole pegs are used: the first at the front section of the tent and the other at its rear. This camp consists of eight sections, with six large tents in each. Every two sections are separated by a -9meter fence surrounding the section on all sides.

The area of each section is 200 dunums and 200 square meters. This area encompasses for a; tents; six caravans (made of composite panels) used as toilets; six caravans (made of composite panels) used for showers; kitchen and storage space for groceries, each measuring an area of two square meters;



An old common photograph of the camp section of Naqab Prison²²

²² This photo was taken from "Palestine Online" website.

shaded laundry space (usually in the rear of the shower and toilet caravans), and a plastic tent serving as a canteen.

Before the Supreme Court of Israel's ruling regarding living space in prisons, the IPS held twenty prisoners in each tent, with ten borshes. Following the Supreme Court's provision, the number of prisoners per tent was reduced to around twelve. Prisoners with sentences for less than seven years are usually held in this section.

The tents are open to the prisoners at all times. This peculiarity makes it impossible to carry out the count inside the tents. Instead, the count takes place in the fora. The prison's location in the Negev Desert adds to its discomfort, transforming the tents into «human ovens». Many prisoners complain of the difficulty of living in such tents, especially during the warm summer.

There is no legroom for privacy in this prison [Naqab Prison], particularly in the tents. You always feel insecure in an open space with no walls.

Bilal Odeh

► Fort B

Fort B is an area comprising eight subsections, with caravans made of iron sheets. Only four caravans are usually used as needed depending on the prison population. Each subsection encompasses sixteen caravans, with three borshes in each caravan, confining six prisoners. Prior to the Supreme Court ruling mentioned above, each caravan used to hold eight prisoners. This section is usually reserved for prisoners sentenced for less than ten years.



A common picture of the caravan section in Naqab Prison²⁴

²³ Addameer Association, Annual Violations Report 2019, p: 32. Available at: <https://addameer.org/media/4287>

²⁴ This photograph is taken from Palestine Today website.

In general, the height of the caravans is around two and a half meters, with several small windows measuring 1 m x 50 cm. Covered with iron grilles and bars, these windows are usually located in the upper part of the caravan at the level of the upper borshes, overlooking the fora. The caravans also contain a small area with a western toilet seat and a small window. This space lacks a door and is covered with a piece of fabric that serves as a curtain. Given these caravans' limited space and peculiar layout, they do not have showers, which are instead usually installed in a special section in the fora. In addition to the showers, the fora contains a caravan used as a storage space and another area used as an annex for the prisoners.

► Fort C

Finally, Fort C comprises of concrete structures and cells, dividing the space into eight subsections. Each subsection contains fifteen rooms and other facilities, such as a library, laundry room, and canteen. Holding five to six prisoners, each room is divided into two sections: a ground floor and an upper section (accessible via a ladder). Before the Supreme Court ruling mentioned above, each of these rooms previously held ten prisoners. Fort C is usually reserved for prisoners with long sentences. The subsections are opened for prisoners from seven until eight in the morning to exercise and kept open until eleven before noon. At noon, the prisoners are summoned to be counted. Following this, the subsections are open again from half past eleven until one o'clock in the afternoon and remain open until six in the evening. In Fort C, the fora is located in the basement of the subsections.

It should be noted that there is a difference in the structure and layout of Fort C, as certain parts were built earlier than others. Therefore, some rooms have showers while the showers for other rooms are located outside. All subsections have one component in common—a small western toilet in each room topped with a small window for ventilation. The prisoners use pieces of fabric as a curtain to cover this space, given that it lacks a proper door. Each room has a blue iron door, measuring 100 cm x 190 cm in size. The door has a small window, approximately 50x50 cm, shielded with iron grills. There is another small slot under the window, measuring 15 cm x 30 cm, used to serve food.

► Other Facilities

Due to the limited space of rooms, prisons have some additional external facilities, including, but not limited to, a kitchen; Canteen, laundry area; grooming space; Fora; and/or showers. In general, prisons allocate different areas for these facilities. In some cases, two facilities are allocated to one space. In some prisons, facilities for laundry, grooming, and a library are assigned just one room. Below, the facilities at the Negev Desert Prison are outlined.

► Fora

Typically, the Fora is located in the middle of each section, surrounded by the prisoners' rooms and high walls. The prisoners are allowed to enter the fora in specific numbers. Following prisoners' strikes and escape attempts over the years, the IPS in Naqab Prison allows only half of the section's population in the fora at any given time. This development requires the prisoners to coordinate in order to go to the fora in groups. In the room section, the fora is similar to a large room, half of which is roofed with grill mesh without sheets that do not block sunlight; unlike in the tent section, where the fora ceiling is covered with small wire mesh that obstructs the prisoners' view of the sky.

In prison, the prisoner cannot see anything: Inside the sections, you cannot see anything because of the high walls; and once you step into the rooms, you get a sense of utter seclusion from the outer world.

Salah Husain

► Showers

As noted earlier, subsections of the prison do not have the same layout. While some have internal showers, others have external showers. Despite this difference, Palestinian prisoners in Naqab Prison have organized a schedule to keep the toilets and showers clean. They have agreed to clean the toilets twice per day and the showers once, in addition to cleaning these facilities every Friday as a group.

► Harsh Terrians

Due to its desert location, Naqab Prison can be scorching during daylight and bitterly cold at night. There are regular infestations of insects and reptiles. Prisoner Salah Husain explains:

“Despite the challenging climate, the occupying power embarked on a mission to revive the Negev roughly three years ago. To that end, it started bringing vegetable and fruit waste and laying them in the soil to change Negev Desert’s soil. This effort has turned the prison into a breeding ground for insects like cockroaches and flies making it a living hell for the prisoners. With the desert humidity and waste, the prison’s atmosphere was thick with strange smells. Which further complicates life for the prisoners, especially given the lack of insecticides to solve the issue.”

The occupying power generally detains prisoners in distinct geographical contexts than those from which they originate. This is to make it more challenging for them to adapt to the prison environment. It often holds prisoners from mountainous regions in desert prisons (e.g., Naqab Prison) or vice versa. Such tactics destabilize the prisoner’s inner rhythm, as people often draw their rhythm from their surroundings. On this psychological note, Dr. Fathi Fleifel underlines that forcible relocation to an unfamiliar environment would disturb a person’s internal system and thus affect their balance and ability to adapt. The Israeli occupation’s practice of movement is not limited to forcibly transferring the prisoners from their locales and deprivation of freedom in their occupation prisons; it is also used to punish prisoners, transferring them from one room to another. Every forcible relocation further destabilizes the prisoner’s social circle. The prisoner is compelled to adapt again and establish a new network of social relations.

While we do reject imprisonment as a de facto reality, we get used to its aspects, semantics, and semiotics. With time, what was a cell becomes your “room” to move and care for. For example, all female prisoners express how they miss their section when transferred to another facility or made to appear before the occupation’s courts. They see it as their «final stop» and imaginary haven. They often use the word *tarwiha* (colloquial Arabic for return to one’s home) to refer to their return to their section-not their actual homes.

Layan Kayed²⁵

► Social Life on the Inside

The Naqab IPS leaves no room for prisoners to live a normal social life. The fact that cells are inspected more than five times per day for the count, window-knocking, and inspection, impedes the daily lives of prisoners. Any form of disruption can lead to the IPS launching an immediate raid on the cells.

Feeling the presence of the occupier all the time makes the prisoner feel watched day and night. This state of mind casts its shadows over the prisoner's mental health.

Salah Husain

► In the Heat of the Moments Before Family Visits

In many Israeli occupation prisons, family visits are the only link between the prisoners and the outside world. Although the visits do not exceed forty-five minutes and happen once a month, the prisoners spend a great deal of time and effort preparing for them. They put in extra effort to look well for their loved ones by grooming, styling their hair, and changing into nice clothes. On this personal note, Bilal Odeh relates: "Time flies for the inmate during the visit of their loved ones. The forty-five minutes fly by like five. After seeing our loved ones, we are more likely to talk to one another, but soon we feel the desire to retire to a quiet place to reminisce the visit as a recorded tape, including the smallest details."

► Holidays on the Inside

Palestinian prisoners attempt to stay in touch with life on the outside and break the monotony of that on the inside. Celebrating holidays and maintaining a certain pattern of practices throughout the holiday season is one of the simplest ways to maintain their connection with the outside world. For example, on the Eid holiday, the representatives of each section make their way to the fora to greet each other, followed by their fellow prisoners. They also exchange Eid

²⁵ Layan Kayed, *Prison as Text*.

treats and sweets in the cells, a behavior forbidden by the IPS in the fora. This restriction reveals the extent to which the occupation endeavors to abuse and mistreat prisoners.

► «Sleeping on an 80 cm wide Brosh Becomes a Second Nature»

In their cells, prisoners have few belongings. Rooms mainly contain borshes, a few shelves for clothes, a hot plate, and some other personal items. As a space, borshes represent a significant part of prisoners' life on the inside. Given the limited space, prisoners spend much of their time on their borshes. Their beds become a space where they read, write, and sometimes eat, especially in cramped rooms where prisoners cannot move at the same time. In Naqab Prison, borshes are iron bunk beds, approximately 80×180 cm in size.

These details may seem fleeting to those on the outside, but to prisoners, these are the bricks and mortar of life on the inside. The experience of imprisonment does not stop with the release of the prisoner. Many details of prison life crawl beneath their skin and get stuck between their teeth for several years after they leave the prison-including waking up early, although there is no a count to be ready for. On this lingering note, Raafat Maarouf says: "Some details remain with the prisoner to the grave. One of the details that has stuck with me is that I sleep in one position without moving. For fifteen years, I slept on an 80 cm x 180 cm bed, and to this day, I sleep in the same position, although my bed is larger now."

In prison, everything you are deprived of becomes of greater value. For example, prisoners are not allowed to use sewing needles, lighters, or cigarettes -except for a certain type. As a result, prisoners develop an impulsive drive to get these items. When it happens that one of the prisoners, especially the newly admitted, manages to acquire any of these items, prisoners who have been behind bars for years see it as a treasure.

Salah Husain

► Keeping Pets and Growing Lentil: Forms of Playing for Time on the Inside

Naqab Prison is one of the Israeli occupation prisons with the highest level of privacy. Encompassing camps, caravans, and concrete units, the layout of Naqab Prison allows for some privacy enabling prisoners to keep one of the animals that can make it to the prison as a pet or grow legumes or similar plants by using

cotton or pieces of fabric. Such experiences enable the prisoner to transcend above the prison walls, creating links, albeit simple, with ordinary life on the outside.

Bilal Odeh indicated that while in the caravan section in Naqab Prison, he was able to raise a cat once. Bilal took care of the pet from the moment it was born until it turned a year old, just before he was transferred to another section. «Eventually, the cat and I developed a close bond. It used to doze off on my brosh beside me. I took care of it and always fed and cleaned it. This kitty lent me a space with some moments of calm,» Bilal relates.

► The Prison Camera: Unforgettable Moments

On rare occasions, the IPS allows prisoners to take photographs with their families within the prison walls. It gives the detainees a few seconds to meet with their loved ones without the thick glass partition to take photographs with them. The IPS requires that the prisoner must already be sentenced in order to be able to take photographs with their mother, father, or both, and in a few cases, their wife. The prisoner can make a request for this purpose only once every few years. Many prisoners recounted to Addameer the significance of these moments to them and the amount of joy they experience when the prisoner touched their father, mother, or children and took a souvenir photo with them, even if inside the prison.

On this personal note, Odeh recounts: “Over the course of my detention, I took souvenir photos with my mother and father twice. These moments were very special and unforgettable. They were full of conflicting feelings. As a prisoner, I felt flashes of joy and zeal to see and embrace my loved ones. Still and all, this joy remains incomplete-as the sense of deprivation of freedom persists.”

► Oppressive Architecture

Palestinian prisoners are constantly exposed to a multitude of violations in Israeli occupation prisons, including frequent raids from IPS Special Units. These Special Unit members receive intensive training on breaking into prisoner rooms and sections and severely beating them with various weapons including tasers, batons, nightsticks, poison gas, tear gas, and rubber-coated metal bullets.²⁶

The architecture of prisons aids and abets the mission of special units. Windows and doors are designed to allow special units to throw tear gas canisters without getting harmed, as they can shut door glazings and slots with their shields. Rooms are also designed with minimal movable furniture to prevent prisoners using objects to defend themselves. As indicated above, borshes are bolted to the ground and walls, so prisoners cannot use them as shields or resist the special units' regular raids.

Randi Odeh recounts his experience during one of the raids while in Naqab Prison in 2017. According to Randy, the Special Units subjected prisoners to barbaric treatment. The troops stormed the section, blasting tear gas canisters as they marched from one cell to another, cuffing the prisoners and throwing them to the ground in the courtyard. The prisoners were shackled on the fora ground for around eight hours in cold temperatures. Randi recounts: "We stayed in this state from eight in the evening until three before dawn, moaning with agony from excruciating pain and extreme cold, beating, verbal insults, and dragging. As they were throwing us to the fora, the unit divided into two squads: One wreaked havoc throughout our rooms, destroying our belongings, walls, and toilet doors and throwing them outside, while the other stood watching and beating the prisoners on the fora ground if they make any move. They prevented us from even going to the toilets. A fellow inmate with diabetes was forced to wet his clothes. After about four hours of being forcibly lying down on our stomachs on the cold ground-including the severe pain with our hands tied, almost bloodless, behind our backs and biting cold crawling into our skin and bones, some signs loomed that the raid was about to be over."²⁷

Prisoners' cells in Naqab and Ofer prisons are among the most frequently stormed by Special Units, given their large population compared to other detention facilities. In 2007, prisoner Mohammad Ashqar was martyred after a Special

²⁶ For more information on this issue, see Addameer Association, Aggressions by Special Units of the Israeli Prison Service against Prisoners and Detainees during Transfers and Raids, (Ramallah: Addameer Association, 2014). https://www.addameer.org/sites/default/files/publications/special_units_of_the_ips.pdf.

²⁷ Randi Odeh, «Memories of the Warden's Repression and the Faithfulness of Cats,» The Prisoners (Blog), Institute for Palestine Studies, May 2020, 13: <https://www.palestine-studies.org/en/node/1650077>.

Unit brutally stormed his cell. In a similarly harsh vein, about 100 prisoners were injured in Naqab Prison in 2019, and approximately fifteen of them were sent to Soroka Medical Center to be treated for their serious injuries.²⁸

■ Power Outage Aesthetics

Palestinian prisoners' experiences are often punctuated with intricate details that become abiding memories they keep kindled for months and years. Bilal Odeh recounts a winter day when there was a power cut throughout Naqab Prison "That Monday was flowing by the book: Prisoners were counted and locked in their cells. But at half past nine in the evening, the power cut. The prison fell under cover of darkness. Power cuts are rare in the Naqab Prison, especially at night. Dozens of huge lights are set to shine on all spaces of the section and every nook and cranny within the prison walls. Prisoners spend the night in nearly-lit cells as light seeps in through windows. This uninvited darkness served as a timely reminder that night has no place within the confines of prison. A sudden ruckus broke up and died down within seconds in thick silence without coordination or request of anyone as a sign of respect for the night darkness that unfurled like a small dream that unexpectedly came true—a dream of enjoying night darkness as humans do."²⁹

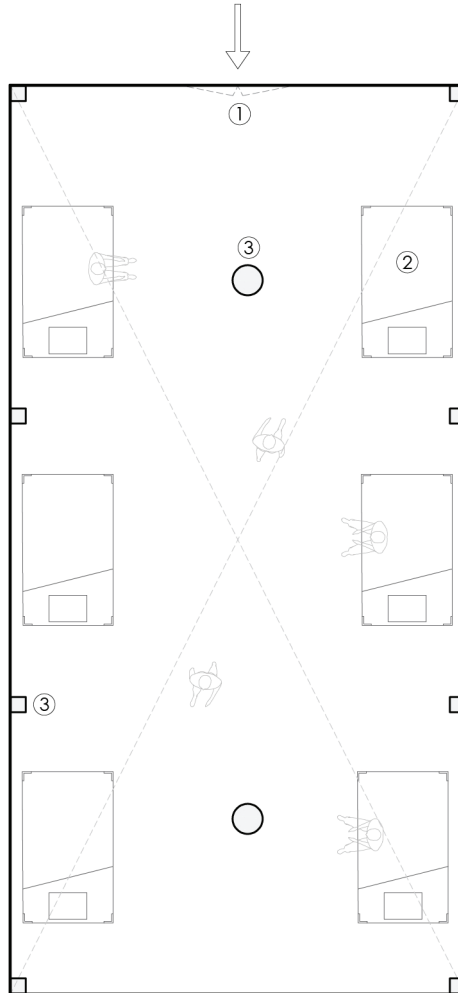
Although such details are very small, they constitute focal points for the prisoners and leave an impact on them that may continue after their release. For example, Ihab Masoud explained that while he spent more than fifteen years in prison, he never once experienced complete darkness. During evening hours, the yard is kept illuminated by large lights. Wardens also regularly check rooms every half hour to ensure that all prisoners are present. During this process, guards deliberately shine their torches on the prisoners in their caravans. Masoud indicates that he could barely sleep after his release, if not in complete darkness.

²⁸ Addameer, The Annual Violations Report 2019, 114 -25.

²⁹ Bilal Odeh, «Memories of Detention From the Month of September,» The Prisoners (blog) the Institute for Palestine Studies, June 10 2020. <https://www.palestine-studies.org/en/node/1650161>.

Dr. Fleifel notes that prisoners' reactions to lighting and darkness may lead some to become acclimatized to sleeping in a lit atmosphere, as was the case for him. Others may associate nighttime lighting with their prison experience and thus strive to avoid it. On the whole, light and dark, and how one reacts to them, become entangled with other factors that bring back very particular memories of their time on the inside.

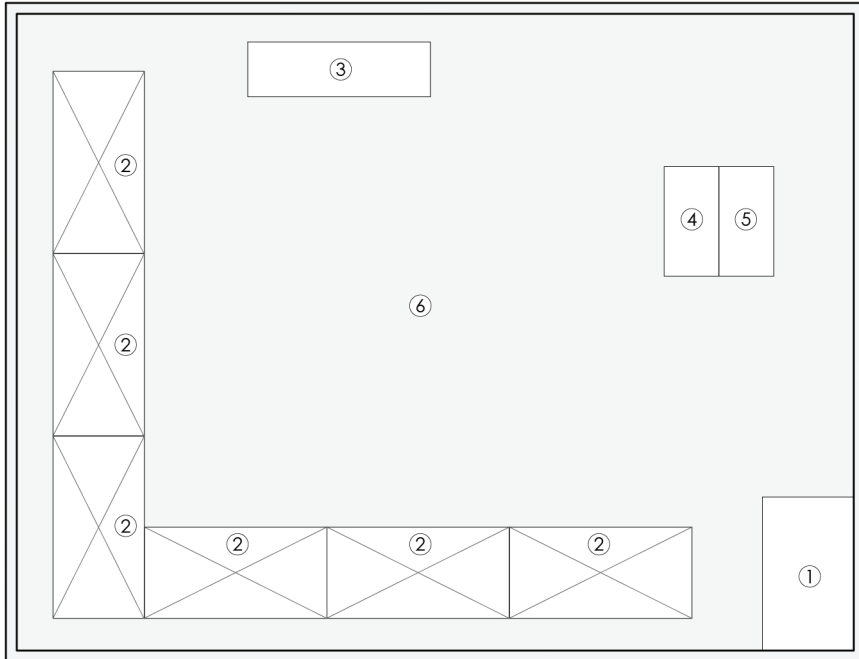
Architectural Plan of a Tent in Naqab Prison



1:100

1. Tent Entrance.
2. Bunk bed [200 cm x 120 cm].
3. Tent poles.

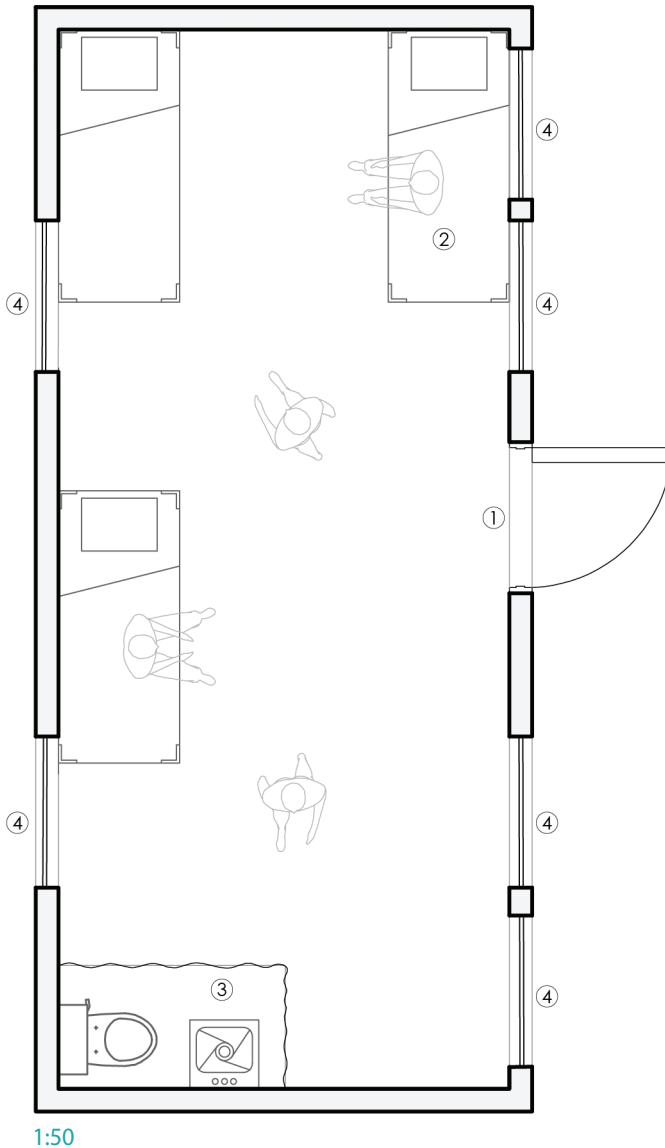
Architectural Plan of the Tent Section in Naqab Prison



1:500

1. Section entrance.
2. Prisoners' tents [12 m x 6 m].
3. Kitchen [metal containers].
4. Bathrooms [metal containers].
5. Showers [metal containers].
6. Yard.

Architectural Plan of a Carvan/Container in Naqab Prison



1. Carvan/Container entrance.
2. Bunk bed [180 cm x 80 cm].
3. Bathroom including toilet and sink] it's closed with a curtain.
4. Bars 100 cm in width and 50 cm in length.

Eshel Prison



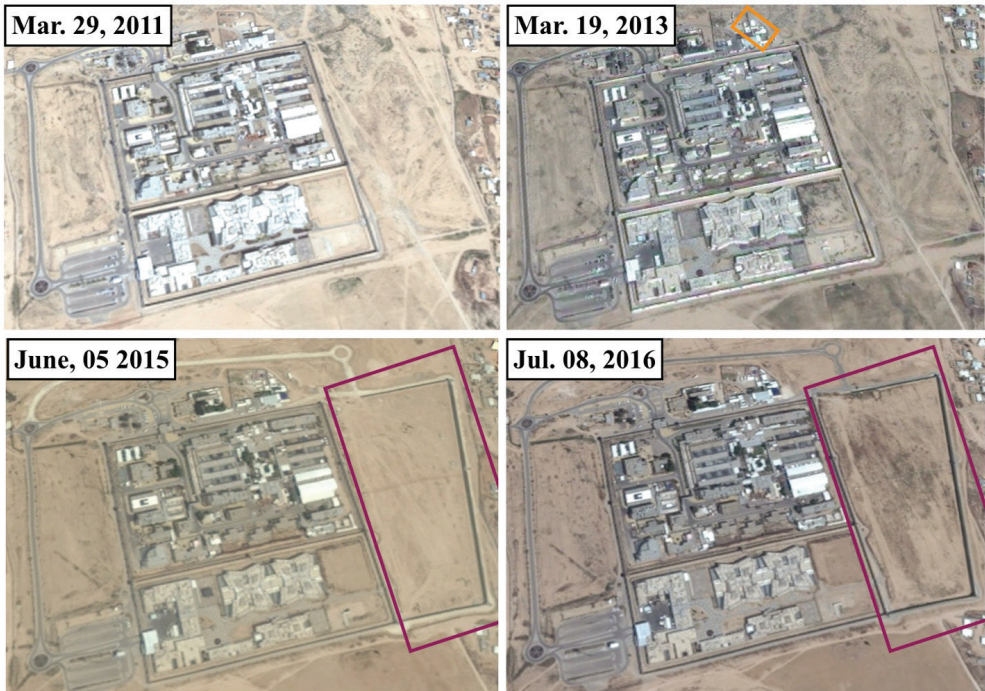
Hadf News Agency

Eshel Prison

In this postmodern time, cells in Israeli prisons have shelved some of their historical functions—such as deprivation of light and enforced disappearance. Still and all, they continue to confine Palestinian prisoners and deprive them of sunlight—not shackled in dark dungeons, though. These waves of change do not render Israeli prisons any less brutal and repressive; rather, they metamorphose prisoners’ minds to become their own self-prisons, with their senses used as torture instruments.

Walid Daqqa, *Harir nafsuk bi-nafsik* (Set Yourself Free)

Eshel Prison is one of the four prisons in the Beersheba prison complex near Beersheba, in the Southern parts of historic Palestine. The Beersheba prison complex encompasses four separate prisons in the same locale: Ohli Kedar and Eshel for security prisoners, Dekel for criminal prisoners, and closed Ayala, which is used for specific confinement cases, such as hunger strikes.³⁰ The following aerial photos show two major changes to the complex between 2011 and 2013; specifically, the construction of the highlighted orange buildings. Between 2013 and 2016, a large part of a plot of land adjacent to the complex was fenced off with an access road. This step paves the way for the use of this land to scale up the prison and add new buildings and facilities.



● Main Prison Sections

Eshel Prison is divided into three main sections: two for security prisoners and one for civilian prisoners. While the IPS uses 10 ,11, and 12 to refer to these sections, prisoners use 15 ,16, and 17 instead. This slight divergence acts as a rejection of the semantics imposed by the IPS. A simple act of insubordination, but one that conveys the prisoners' rejection of the occupation system down to the smallest of details.

Each section in Eshel Prison is divided into eighteen rooms, with eight prisoners in each room- 148 prisoners in total. Each room is 7 x 10 meters in area, including a water closet. The IPS used to place six borshes in each room, holding twelve prisoners. However, following the Supreme Court of Israel's ruling regarding living space in prisons, the IPS began reducing the number of prisoners in each room to increase the living space per prisoner.

● Cells/Rooms

Each room in Eshel Prison is rectangular and has a window opposite the cell door between two borshes, yet approximately 5–15 cm away from each of them. Fitted with cylindrical iron grilles and bars, the window overlooks a -2.5meter-high tin wall. The wall is roughly 1.20 meters distant from the windows in Section 15 but just 20–30 cm in Sections 16 and 17, obscuring the view and aborting the *raison d'être* of the windows-that is, the admission of air and ventilation. On the contrary, this wall often turns the rooms into suffocating enclosures.

Each room has a television with eleven channels set by the IPS. Some of these channels are changed from time to time following negotiations between the prisoners and the IPS. The bulk of these channels is generalist - not Palestinian or local. This reflects the Israeli occupation's policy to isolate Palestinian prisoners from their communities and local developments outside the prison walls. Rooms

³⁰ «Prison and Detention Centers,» Addameer Association, <https://www.addameer.org/prisons-and-detention-centers>.

are also fitted with a hot plate and some utensils, such as a cooker, a frying pan, and a tea and coffee pot.

In addition, each room has a water closet and a shower. The bathroom is approximately 2x2 m and has a suction toilet seat, similar to an aircraft lavatory. Besides the shower, the bathroom has a stainless steel cabinet for toiletries and detergents. The toilet stall is designed in a square shape with 30–40 cm gaps at the bottom and top. This design forces some prisoners to use a piece of fabric to cover these gaps so as to feel some privacy when using the toilet. The shower's water pipe is slender, like a very little tap; therefore, some prisoners use Coke bottles or other available pipes to increase the water pressure when it pours out.

- **Lighting**

In Eshel Prison, rooms have three light units (neon lights) mounted on the ceiling, with each containing two neon tubes covered with a transparent plastic case. At each inspection, wardens check the light units to ensure that prisoners do not use them to hide anything. Many prisoners have complained about eye pain and other health problems due to the constant exposure to artificial lighting, the lack of access to sunlight, and the restricted field of view.

- **Inspection and Window-Knocking**

Prisoners in Eshel Prison are subjected to several inspections, the same as in other prisons. Rooms are inspected three times to count the prisoners (in the morning, noon, and evening). The window-knocking takes place twice daily, in the morning and evening before the evening count round.

- **Fora**

The fora in Eshel Prison vary from one section to another. For example, the fora in Section 15 is the largest in Eshel, covering approximately 25 square meters. Section 17's fora, on the other hand, is relatively limited. Prisoners go out to the fora in groups: Every nine rooms go out to the fora together. In this prison, the fora has a small bathroom and a concrete bench along the fora for the prisoners. Despite the importance of this bench, it reduces the fora space in one way or another. The fora also contains a water cooler, a sports bar, and iron parallel bars bolted to the ground for exercise.

Palestinian prisoners in Eshel cannot get adequate exposure to sunlight during the fora because it is almost completely roofed with concrete, except for a small part of 120 cm x 7 m. Still, the only sun-exposed area is topped with a wire mesh roof. The location of this part limits the time for sunlight exposure, given that sunlight falls on this area only in the morning hours and rarely in the afternoon. With a large number of prisoners and the narrow sun-splashed space, the chances of exposure to sunlight grow slimmer.

The fora is open for prisoners from half past six till quarter past seven in the morning, mainly for exercise. In addition, the fora is open four times-a hundred minutes each. The impact of the roofed fora extends beyond limited sunlight exposure to turning this into a noisy place unfit for rest or recreation. Given the large number of prisoners in the limited roofed space likely all speaking simultaneously, the fora can become a very noisy space.

Raafat Maarouf recalls that after spending several years in Eshel Prison without exposure to sunlight, he was transferred to Ramon Prison: «As soon as I set foot in Section 4 at Ramon Prison, I was taken aback by how pale I looked compared to other prisoners. At that moment, I realized that deprivation of sunlight at Eshel Prison has turned me yellowish.»

● Field of Vision on the Inside

Prisoners in central prisons mainly suffer from the lack of an adequate field of view. The range in prison rooms is no more than eight meters. In foras, it may extend to fifty meters at maximum. As a result, prisoners become predisposed to eye conditions such as long- or short-sightedness. With time, prisoners' vision gradually becomes limited as they adjust to their surrounding fields of view.

In reference to this special dynamism, Raafat Maarouf relates:

"In 2006, when I first arrived at Askalan [Ashkelon] Central Prison, I would often stand by my cell door and read the news ticker on the TV across the room. Five years later, I was moved to Ramon Prison; as I entered the room, I stood by the entrance and tried to read the news ticker, only to be startled that I couldn't read the same line from the same distance. This drove me to seek to be transferred to Naqab Prison to exercise my sight because the range of view is greater there."

● Deliberate Medical Negligence

Palestinian prisoners in Israeli occupation prisons suffer from systematic deliberate medical negligence, including but not limited to delayed or incomplete treatment. Living for years in an unsuitable environment that lacks the basic necessities of human life often adversely affects prisoners' health. Many prisoners highlighted that the prison environment often plays a major role in exacerbating any health conditions the prisoners have. Damp walls and the lack of adequate ventilation cause the prisoners to develop respiratory diseases and conditions - or worsen their health condition if they were previously diagnosed with these diseases, e.g., shortness of breath (dyspnea), chest cold (bronchitis), nose and sinus disorders, headache, and poor vision.

● Abhorrent Hues

Prisoner's rooms in Eshel are painted white, while the windows and doors are painted blue, as are most, if not all, of the Israeli occupation prisons. Prisoners are not allowed to wear all colors and are prohibited from wearing those worn by IPS officers, such as blue and navy. Many prisoners noted that hues of brown are the most common among prisoners, as it is the color of the IPS prisoner uniform. These practices illustrate the continued infringement of prisoners' rights by the Israeli occupation, as restrictions extend beyond the color of the clothes prisoners may wear to the cut and style. For instance, the IPS often prohibits clothes with zippers, ties, pockets, or hoodies. Such dictates exert a great impact on the souls of prisoners, serving as a constant reminder of being detained, watched all the time, and controlled in the simplest matters, including their choice of clothes.

In this vein, Dr. Fleifel argues that prisoners have varying relationships with the colors of their cells and their surroundings that take three main manifestations. Prisoners subjected to extended exposure to certain colors, such as brown, blue, or white, may develop an emotional attachment or revulsion towards these hues. The connotations of these tints with the authoritarianism and confinement experienced by the prisoners mean that they often acquire a strong aversion to the colors they were compelled to wear and see during their imprisonment. Others, however, make peace with these colors, forming new connections with them apart from their time spent in confinement and their forcible interaction with these hues.

Then what is the need for directions if all alternatives are rectangular? All structures are decaying, rectangular in shape, white-blue in color, from the rooms, the fora, and other facilities to the visits hall. This rectangular architecture stands as a stark contrast to nature, where blue pours from the sky, and white comes from the sky and the heights of the snowy mountains. On the inside, white and blue blend. With no room for misunderstanding or misinterpretation, this monochromatic setting reflects the official color of the Israeli occupation prison enterprise.

Ameer Makhoul³¹

● Daily Life Problems on the Inside

The small rooms lack adequate ventilation, leading prisoners to suffer ongoing consequences from living inside. Prisoners are required to cook in these confined spaces– the smell of cooking oil, supplemented by cigarette smoke for those who share their cells with prisoners who smoke, becomes unbearable. The prisoners constantly attempt to overcome these problems by cleaning the walls and borshes with chlorine and other detergents. Many prisoners brought up this dimension of their detention experience during the interviews: «If cooking oil fume can get the walls of these rooms, think what it must be like for the prisoners' lungs that inhale these fumes daily?»

In Eshel, everything is delivered late to prisoners. Canteen orders are supplied every forty days. It's true that some prisoners never get to experience the flavor of some fruit or vegetable during their stay behind bars. Personally, I could not have any guava or fresh green almonds. I had watermelon only once during my fifteen years of imprisonment and molokhia only once a year.

Raafat Marouf

³¹ Ameer Makhoul, «On Prison Memories and the Playful Breeze,» The Prisoners (blog) Institute for Palestine Studies, July 8 2020. <https://www.palestine-studies.org/ar/node/1650309>.

● Horrible Iron Borshes

Borshes in Eshel Prison consist of hanging cylindrical iron bars that emerge from the room's walls forming a double-decker, a lower and an upper bunk. The size of each bed is about 190 x 90 cm. These borshes are fixed with large screws to avoid dismantling or being used in any other way, such as closing the room door or window. Each couple of bars holds an iron sheet that serves as a bed frame fitted with eight circular holes for ventilation. Eshel IPS provides thin mattresses, 6 cm thick, which after less than a month of use, becomes about 2 cm thick. Prisoners develop back pain as a result. The lack of adequate ventilation and the inability to expose mattresses to sunlight in the almost fully ceiled fora means that prisoners resort to the use of fans to help ventilate their mattresses.

● Libraries with Limited Resources

Over the years, Palestinian prisoners in Israeli occupation prisons have set up libraries as part of their concerted effort to maintain their education and exercise their intellect. To that end, prisoners have appropriated a storage room at Eshel Prison into a library. This library houses some 1,500 – 1,800 books. Not all prisoners are allowed in this space; only one prisoner assigned as a librarian brings books requested by the prisoners. He also keeps a tracker of the borrower prisoners, the date of borrowing, and other relevant information.³² Given the lack of a separate library or storage space, prisoners put some belongings in it, such as summer clothes during the winter, or vice versa, additional blankets, and fans.

● Smuggled Sperm: A Different Face of Life

Smuggled sperm is one of the idiosyncrasies of Palestinian life on the inside. The first was in 2012 by Ammar al-Zabin, who is serving twenty-seven life sentences—his wife has since given birth to their first child. After the al-Zabin case, the number of prisoners who attempted to smuggle sperm to have children was on the rise. Raafat Maarouf was one of those prisoners whose experience was

³² For more information see: Addameer Association, *Opened - Books on Cuffed - Hands: The Cultural and Educational Life of Palestinian Political Prisoners in Israeli Prisons and Detention Centers*. (Ramallah: Addameer Association, 2020). <https://www.addameer.org/sites/default/files/publications/fullwithcover.pdf>

³³ Awad Rujub, «An-nutaf al-muharaba: Wasilat al-asrā al-filastīnīn llinjāb [smuggled sperm: Palestinian prisoners] to have children,» Al Jazeera Media Network (December 11 2014). <https://shortest.link/8ERy>.

documented by Addameer. Maarouf was able to have four children thanks to sperm smuggling. Raafat reflects:

“Some prisoners and I were watching the Li Ajlikum (lit. tr. For you) TV show, presented by Manal Seif. The episode shed light on sperm smuggling and how one of the prisoners succeeded in having a child through this method. As I watched, I felt that I wanted to go through this experience. I had serious concerns about the reaction of my wife and mother, but I broached my thoughts on the next visit, and they welcomed the idea.

When the first artificial insemination was successful, I celebrated and distributed treats and sweets to my fellow prisoners. Everyone thought that I was cheering for the success of my nephew in the high school general examinations. No one knew that I was celebrating my first child, ‘Amer.”

As more prisoners succeeded in smuggling sperm, the IPS tightened their grip on the prisoners. In parallel, Israeli media spearheaded several campaigns against sperm smugglers and their families. IPS also denied those born this way of visiting their fathers, as the occupying power refused to recognize the relationship between these children and their fathers behind bars.³⁴

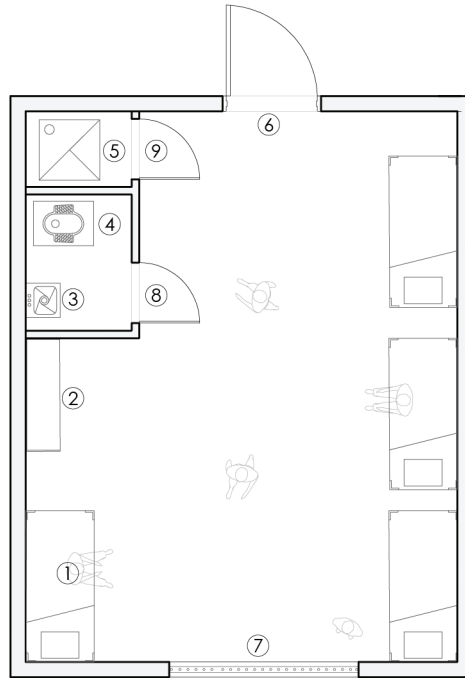
Raafat also adds:

“While I rarely shed tears, I couldn’t help but cry when I first laid eyes on my son Amer. As my first time meeting Amer approached, I couldn’t contain my excitement. I sat in the visits hall, waiting for family to step in. Each child’s squeal of delight or chuckle from the visiting families made my heart flutter. Feelings I had never experienced before welled up in me once I saw ‘Amer as my family walked in. I was able to see him, embrace him, and smell his scent like any father. My dream was to kiss his feet, but as I took off his shoes to do so, he began to cry, prompting the guards to suspect that we were trying to hide something in his shoes. And I gave the baby to my wife before I’d had enough of him.”³⁵

³⁴ Raafat adds: This policy had lasted for a while before the IPS allowed the families of prisoners to bring these children to visits.

³⁵ Rafat also mentioned that while the occupying state refuses to admit children born through smuggled sperm, Rafat Maarouf’s first child was able to enter prison thanks to the negligence of one of the prisoners because the spelling of ‘Amer’s is similar to another family members name.

Architectural Plan of a Prison Room in Eshel Prison

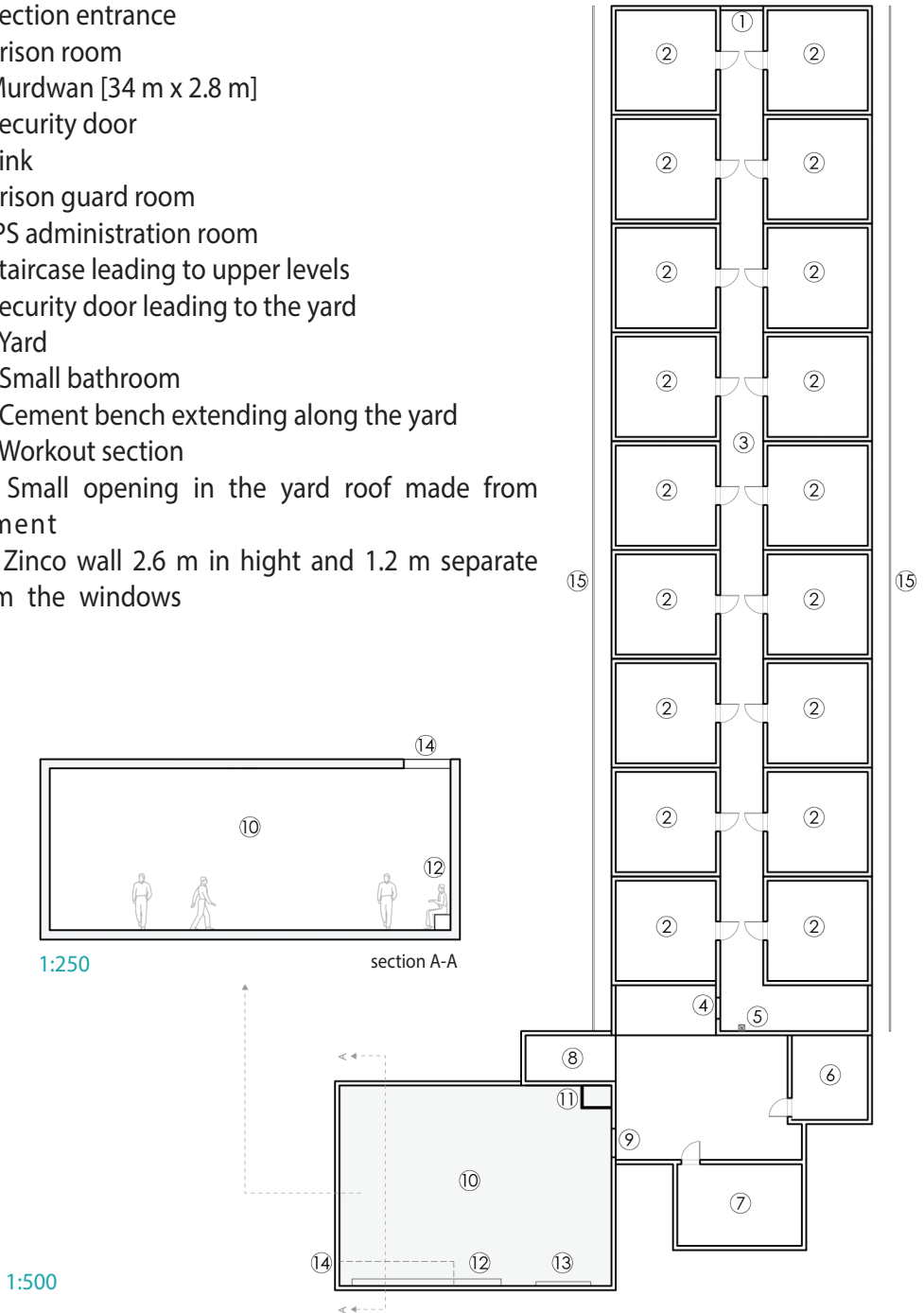


1:100

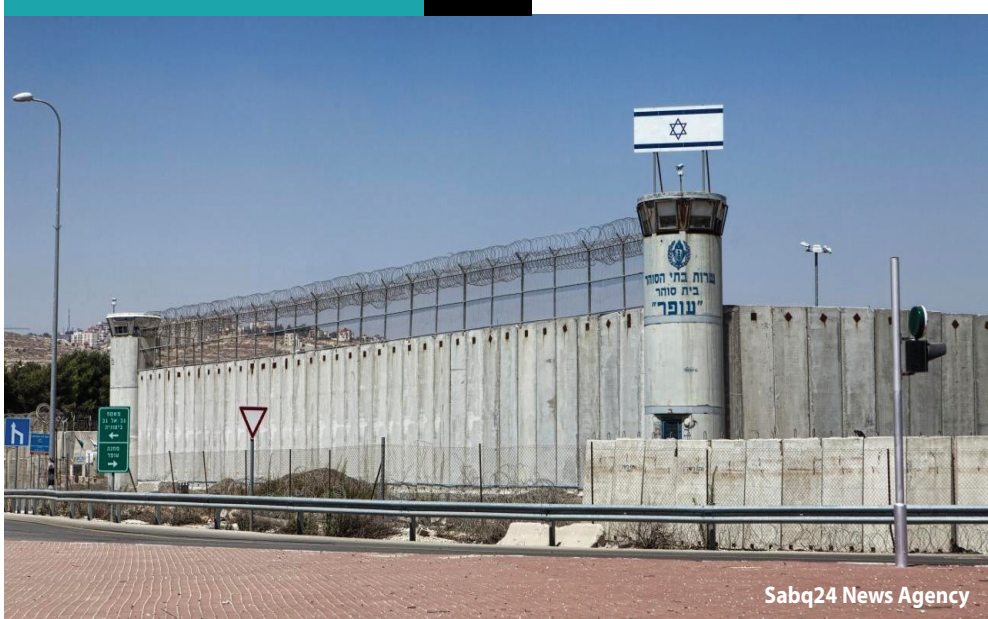
1. Bunk bed [200 cm x 120 cm]
2. Metal cabinets to store food, and top there's space for a kettle and electric cooktop
3. Small washbasin [50 cm x 30 cm]
4. Metal squat toilet (old Arabic toilets)
5. Shower
6. Iron door 10 cm thick with a window, bars [40 cm x 30 cm], and an opening Ashnaf
7. Window with bars and nets [250 cm x 100 cm]
8. Bathroom door 1 cm thick made from thin aluminum
9. Bathroom door 1 cm thick open from the top and bottom

Architectural Plan of a Prison Section in Eshel Prison

1. Section entrance
2. Prison room
3. Murdwan [34 m x 2.8 m]
4. Security door
5. Sink
6. Prison guard room
7. IPS administration room
8. Staircase leading to upper levels
9. Security door leading to the yard
10. Yard
11. Small bathroom
12. Cement bench extending along the yard
13. Workout section
14. Small opening in the yard roof made from cement
15. Zinco wall 2.6 m in high and 1.2 m separate from the windows



Ofer Prison



Ofer Prison

Repression and torture in Israeli prisons are not the same as those depicted in world prison literature. There is no actual deprivation of food or medicine, and you will not see people deprived of the sun or buried underground. Prisoners are not shackled, as in novels, with chains bolted to iron blocks day and night. In the prisons of a postmodernist occupier, bodies are no longer the target-souls, and minds are. Palestinian prisoners on this sui generis inside are not confined in penitentiaries like the Abu Za'abal Prison, not even Abu Ghraib or Guantánamo. In all these prisons, you know your torturer and their instruments, and you are certain about the direct physical torture. In the Israeli prisons, however, you face deeper shadows of «civilized» torture that turns your senses and mind into tools of daily tantalization. It sneaks to you, often without a baton, and makes no fuss. It lives with you and becomes like a fellow inmate that shares your time, your cell, your fora, your sunlight, and the relative material abundance.

Walid Daqqa, Sahr al-Wa'y (Consciousness Disintegration)

Ofer Prison, established in 1988 in Beitunia, west of Ramallah, consists of twelve sections-some are new, others somewhat old. In 1990, the facility was closed for almost a decade and reopened in 2000, with eleven to sixteen tent-based sections. After several years, Ofer was transformed from a camp prison to a built concrete facility. In 2015, Sections 17 and 18 were added to the facility, then Sections 19–22. Ofer Prison is one of the prisons used as a holding facility for those with pending cases and those serving short terms. As a result, Ofer is often congested, despite having a capacity of roughly 1100 prisoners, according to the Israeli occupation authorities. This population is more likely to be in conflict with the relevant international standards and those approved by the Israeli Supreme Court. The Israeli occupation authorities often defy these standards and hold many prisoners in small spaces.

The images below show the changes to the layouts and buildings of Ofer Prison between 2011 and 2016:



● The Ordinary Sections: Sections 11–20

Each section consists of twelve rooms fitted with ten borshes for ten prisoners. After the Israeli Supreme court's ruling regarding prison space, the number of prisoners per room in this facility was reduced to six-i.e., seventy-two prisoners in each section. Each room measures approximately 8 x 3.5 m. The rooms are spread across two floors: The ground floor comprises five rooms for prisoners, a canteen, laundry room, hairdressing room (barber's), and a library. On the upper floor are located rooms 6–12 and a storage room for prisoners to keep extra clothes, belongings, fans, and fleece blankets. The upper and lower floors are joined via external stairs. While each prisoner's room has a toilet, each floor has a designated area for showers-approximately seven showers on each floor. This architectural dynamic means that prisoners can only take showers during foras, given that showers are located outside the rooms.

● Multi-Occupancy Cells

The size of each room/cell is approximately 8 x 3.5 m, including several borshes commensurate with the prisoners and a space designated for the bathroom, which is canvassed thoroughly below. Each cell also has a corner used as a small kitchen fitted with a hot plate and kumkum (see the Glossary). Next to each brosh are a couple of small metal lockers for each prisoner to keep personal items, such as clothes. Every room has one television set, usually above the cell door. These devices are provided by the IPS. However, if the television is broken, the prisoners bear the cost of purchasing a new one. The IPS also specifies the available TV channels and prisoners are not permitted to add new channels to the preset menu.

In addition, cells are fitted with a plastic table, six chairs, and two small coffee tables. Prisoners use these items at lunchtime to serve food and eat together. However, if the cell holds seven or more prisoners, one (or more) of the prisoners will need to sit on the floor or their borshes or eat while standing. The IPS provides only six plastic chairs, and if a chair is broken, the process of replacement takes a long time.

After the IPS installed an air conditioning unit in the storage room, one of the prisoners lugged his mattress to sleep under the air conditioner in that room during the scorching summer days.

Hafez Omar

During the summer, prisoners are allowed to buy fans for each room.³⁶ The prisoners keep these fans throughout the summer and put them in the storage room as winter looms. Despite their quantity, several prisoners indicated that these machines fail to make any real difference in summer due to the prisoners' use of electric hot plates for preparing food and boiling water, which, in turn, keep room temperature high. The situation is worse for the prisoners on the

³⁶ This issue is one of the permanent problems for prisoners. Over the years, the IPS has succeeded in converting a large part of prisoners' rights into paid privileges to be bought at the prisoners' expense, including but not limited to fans, plates, spoons, pots, pillows, sheets, and the list goes on.

upper floor, as the IPS deliberately paves the roof of their rooms with bitumen topped with iron sheets, turning their living spaces into ovens. The cells are lit by three lighting units that extend the room controlled by the prisoners, yet most prisoners buy small lamps that can be hung on their borshes to help them read at night.

Personal fans, most of which are old, were procured directly by the IPS at the prisoners' expense or indirectly from the canteen profits, either way using the prisoners' money. Like all other rights, fans are considered a privilege or a «gesture of goodwill» from the IPS, which uses them whenever as retaliatory tools against the prisoners under the pretense of punishment. Not to mention that these fans have nothing to blow but the dry, damp air locked within the walls and trapped by the massive iron wires throughout the day. In summer, walls are hot and lend their heat to the borshes bolted to them. The borshes, which do not extend beyond sixty centimeters, give each inmate their most share of the stored heat.

Ameer Makhoul³⁷

Each cell is sealed with an iron door, about 10 cm thick, which opens outward. It has a glazing, approximately 40 x 60 cm, covered with three circular iron bars and square wires. The cell door also has a slot at the bottom that is sometimes used for serving food. The window at the top of the door is covered with a piece of reinforced plastic during the winter to reduce the cold air that seeps into the rooms, a cover which is then removed during the summer. In every room, there is a window next to the door that leads to the fora. This window is also covered with three to four rectangular bars and a square forged grill frame. The size of this window is approximately 1 x 1 meter. This window does not help ventilate the cells and fails to provide strong lighting due to the high walls surrounding the prison. The repressive special units close this window when they storm the cells and release tear gas to block the main, inadequate ventilation source.

³⁷ Ameer Makhoul, «Warmer than the Annual Average [Temperature],» Prisoners (blog), the Institute for Palestine Studies (August 6, 2021). <https://www.palestine-studies.org/en/node/1651505>.



A common photo of the IPS Special Units as they seal the cell window during a prison raid³⁹

● Cell Toilets

In the rear corner of each cell, there is a water closet of approximately 180 x 80 cm fitted with a basin and squat toilet.⁴⁰ This area also has a small window, 50 x 70 cm, covered with rectangular bars and a square forged grill frame. This window overlooks the back wall of the prison, similar to the window at the end of the room mentioned earlier. Specifically, the window overlooks long metal sheets that leave no room for anything else to be seen and block the flow of air into the bathroom for ventilation.

One of the prominent problems concerning toilets in Ofer Prison is their doors. In the old sections (Sections 11–14), toilet doors were made of reinforced plastic, fitted with an aluminum frame, and closed by a zipper. The most significant problem with these doors was that they were not soundproof or smell-proof, which made the prisoners embarrassed to use the toilet, especially when the number of prisoners in the rooms was high.

³⁹ Palestinian News & Information Agency-WAFA.

⁴⁰ All the toilets at Ofer Prison are squat pans, excluding some toilets in the newly established sections. Lately, the IPS began to install one toilet seat in one cell in each new section to be used by the prisoners with health conditions that make it difficult for them to use a squat toilet.

A few years later, when Sections 15–20 were built, iron doors were used for toilets. This helped the prisoners overcome the issue of sound and smell that used to come from the toilets and gave the prisoners a greater sense of privacy while using the bathrooms. The design of Sections 21 and 22, despite being recently built, fails to take into account the detainees' privacy. The toilet door is a one-meter-long iron sheet of iron with gaps of around 40 cm at the top and bottom of the toilet stall. This design forces prisoners to use a piece of fabric to cover these gaps to obtain some privacy when using the toilet. However, this does not solve the lack of privacy, or the issue of sound or smell.

Prisoners are constantly trying to find solutions to these problems. Some prisoners flush the toilet several times so that the water sound covers up other sounds or smells. The IPS regularly tries to stop these attempts on the pretext that such practices incur additional costs and increase the prison's water bills. They began to impose a financial fine on any room with a high rate of water consumption, despite failing to offer any practical alternative.

● Briery Ground

At first glance, one might think that the floors on which prisoners walk in prisons are made of concrete. However, the prisoners who lived in Ofer Prison indicated that these floors were instead made of smooth tile-like plastic. This flooring is not durable, and fissures appear with time. Consequently, this increases the suffering of prisoners as water pools form in these cracks during cleaning due to the unevenness of the ground under these plastic floors. Prisoners frequently injure themselves if they step on a broken tile without footwear. As noted above, prisoners are often forced to sit on the uneven floor when eating due to the lack of chairs provided.

● Fora Yard

The prison yard, rectangular in shape over an area of about 8 x 3 meters, is located in the center of each section. In Ofer, all foras are on the lower floor. At the rear of the fora, there is a staircase that connects the upper to lower floors. The color of the fora flooring is usually reddish-brown, similar to basketball courts. Bedded with smooth flooring, the fora is roofed with iron bars topped by iron wire on some sides and metal sheets on others. This design impedes sunlight from falling on some areas of the yard and completely blocks it in others. Ayman

Nasser reflects, «I was in a section where the sun did not enter much; the sun would reach a small area of one and a half meters. Therefore, whenever I wanted to get sunlight, I had to stand on one of the chairs in this small area until the rays glinted on me, although this was only possible at noon.»

When you're in the prison yard, you feel like you're sitting in a well, more accurately, at the bottom of that well, surrounded by walls on all sides at least 10 meters high.

Ayman Nasser

As the IPS stands, room doors are closed every half hour during the fora so that the prisoners can return to their rooms or go out to the yard. In one of the corners of the fora, there is usually a small area designated as a toilet that may be used during the fora hours to avoid the issue of closing the cell doors every half hour.

The Israeli occupation attempts to isolate prisoners from their families and friends, as well as impose policies to make prisoners feel alone and unable to connect with the outside world.

Mais Abu Ghosh⁴¹

The height of the walls surrounding the fora and the prison is exaggerated; security necessities do not require the erection of walls higher than eight meters. This exaggerated height appears to be devised to cage the spirits of prisoners, not only their bodies. Dr. Fleifel observes that “the extremely high walls are mainly set to curb and minimize the ability of detainees to enjoy anything. With walls, prisoners cannot use their sight to appreciate and enjoy the beauty of nature. These walls make prisoners feel as if they are stuck in a well, in another attempt to make prisoners internalize a sense of helplessness, isolation, and estrangement from the world.”

⁴¹ Mais Abu Ghosh, «Amid Cruelty, I Saw A Brighter Tomorrow,» Prisoners (blog), the Institute for Palestine Studies (February, 17 2021). <https://www.palestine-studies.org/en/node/1650999>.

You build your own directions in pursuit of a balanced life on the inside, along with it, the piece of mountain that appears from the canteen's gate, the angle of the eight-meter-high wall that borders you on all sides, topped by the grille that cuts the sky and clouds into small squares-not like mosaics though. Each square does not fit more than one star, making it look lonely throughout your detention period. The piece of the mountain appears in one section and disappears in another because the directions of the sections intersect. It all depends on your body measurements: your height. The taller, the more pieces of the mountain your eyes can get. If unlucky, the mountain would escape your horizon, and the walls keep standing tall.

Ameer Makhoul⁴²

● Sports and Exercise in Limited Spaces

Prisoners are usually allowed to exercise during the fora hour in the morning, which is often from seven until eight o'clock. Although the prison yard does not contain workout equipment, it does contain a bar and small hooks to hang a net. In addition, there is a machine similar to a chest press. The prisoners are also allowed to jump rope and run. They are given a rope in the morning, but they must return it to the IPS immediately after the workout in the fora is over.

Although exercise might seem like a simple issue, the IPS consistently attempts to make prisoners uncomfortable in this very limited space. For example, prisoners are not allowed to jump rope on Fridays and Saturdays on the pretense that it is the weekend for the administrative staff, so if any prisoner is injured, it is very difficult for the administration to transfer them to the hospital. Moreover, the small size of the fora causes several health problems for prisoners, as a number of them suffer from joint conditions as a result of exercising and running in a limited space.

⁴² Makhoul, «On Prison Memories and the Playful Breeze.»

● Dreams on Iron Slabs

Borshes in Ofer Prison are bunk beds mainly made of iron, each fitted with a small ladder to reach the upper brosh. Each bunk bed is covered with a mattress frame made of iron. With time, these sheet slabs wear out as a result of their constant use and the various physiques of those who slept on them, matching the silhouettes of past prisoners. Not only do these iron slabs creak loudly, but they also become extremely cold during the winter, especially in light of the wear and tear of mattresses, which are no more than 2 cm thick at best. The brosh size is approximately 180 x 50 cm.

Winters in prison are cold, and heating facilities are limited. We were eight prisoners huddled around a useless radiator. We used it to warm up our socks and put them on right away, trying to stimulate the blood circulation in our frozen feet.

Hafez Omar

Ayman Nasser reflects: "As a prisoner, I suffered from disc and back pain. Throughout my detention, I constantly felt these pains as a result of being uncomfortable sleeping on these mattresses. Sometimes I could find a gummy, a reinforced plastic slab that was placed on the bed to help people who suffer from back pain. However, there are not many of these slabs in prisons. One can find one or two [slabs] in each section, usually allocated to prisoners suffering from considerable pain. What makes the situation worse is the IPS's refusal to bring more of these slabs or even replace worn-out ones."

● Towel: From a Piece of Cloth to a Tool that Undermines the IPS's Security

Prisoners often need to find inventive ways to overcome cultural differences which are exacerbated in the prison's crowded space. Everyday occurrences can cause issues in prisons, including watching television or reading during the night, as the lighting of the television or the small lamps used for reading can disturb prisoners who prefer to sleep early. Some prisoners recall trying to drape a towel across the open side of their borshes to block or reduce the possibility of being disturbed by the lighting while asleep.⁴³ This helped a large number of prisoners, however, once this was noticed by the IPS, the practice was banned on the basis that it blocked the wardens from making sure each prisoner was in bed during night hours. Each evening, the wardens perform a periodic check every half hour

by shining torches on the prisoners through glazing in their doors. While these intrusions on the agency of the prisoners may seem minor, they coalesce into a broader network of oppression.

● Darwin Wanted

An additional mode of oppression used by the Israeli occupation authorities is to obstruct prisoners' educational and intellectual growth. The prison service prohibits many books from being distributed in prisons and requires that one book be removed to allow another in. One prisoner recounts a funny story that took place in Ofer Prison, beginning when one of the prisoners wanted to read Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species*. Every time he requested the book through family visits, the prison authorities turned him down. After several unsuccessful attempts, the prisoner asked the IPS for the grounds for rejection and was told it was on the basis of «security necessities!» Such practices embody the intransigence of the occupying power and the illogicality of any of its practices. What security threats can a scientific book on evolution pose?

● Kitchens

Since 2019, the administration of Ofer Prison has returned governance of the kitchen to security prisoners, mainly to reduce the financial cost spent on cooks. Meals are usually served via carts and transported to the sections and rooms. In each section, about seven prisoners distribute the meals, and there is a prisoner in each room in charge of cooking and finalizing the meals if not fully prepared. The IPS prohibits the entry of certain foodstuffs and renders the entry of others conditional on them being cooked, such as potatoes and eggplant. The IPS argues that these items are solid and could be used for smuggling, despite the fact that all food items are subject to a thorough inspection before being admitted to the kitchen, as well as prior to being served, demonstrating the entirely arbitrary nature of prison regulations.

⁴³ The IPS has punished a number of prisoners for continuing to use towels for this purpose until the trick was shelved.

- **Canteen**

The canteen in Ofer Prison is similar to an ordinary prisoner's room, with some metal shelves where the items allowed are displayed for sale. Items are purchased through a menu prepared by the prisoners in the canteen, containing all the items that are allowed to be brought into the prison. Some items need to be ordered in advance, as it can take a long time for orders to be delivered to the various sections.

- **Count**

The count takes place in Ofer Prison, like other prisons, once in the morning, again at noon, and before the closure of sections. The morning count starts, for example, at five or half past five in the morning and lasts between an hour and a half to two hours. During this period, the prisoners cannot do anything; they cannot take a shower, go out to the fora after their names are called, or start exercising- their lives and activities are placed on hold. The same members of staff complete the count for each section, meaning that prisoners from the earlier sections are forced to wait, on hold, until prisoners from the later sections are counted.

- **Everyday Annoyances**

On the inside, prisoners build up their own way of life, one that is based on keeping their rooms organized and clean, setting up libraries, maintaining a reading schedule, and surviving through the Israeli occupation's punitive policies.

In prison, the jailers see you as a criminal, and therefore, you do not deserve to celebrate or be happy. While behind the prison walls, you do not have the right to celebrate a holiday or even to shout with joy after your sports team scores a goal.

Hafez Omar

The IPS and Special Units carry out periodic and random raids into the sections of the prison. Some inspections are conducted periodically, as general checks to confiscate any banned items, such as educational books or extra hot plates. However, during other inspections, the IPS or the special units destroy prisoners' belongings- this is especially frequent when the special units carry out searches. On this experience, Hafez Omar reflects,

“As a prisoner in the Israeli occupation prison, you always try to create a specific system for yourself, including keeping your room tidy and clean. However, your system is breached every time the wardens march in for inspection. The special forces scatter the detainees’ belongings, tampering with their clothes, food, and any personal items, such as books, notebooks, photos, and more. Once the inspection is over, the prisoner may need a whole day to rearrange the room—sometimes, it takes more than a day. For example, Special forces sometimes mix the available foodstuffs in the room together; for instance, they might spill the oil over the flour. Not to mention the inspection of clothes, radios, and lamps. This might damage these items, yet the issue becomes more painful when some irreplaceable things are vandalized or confiscated, such as prisoners’ writings.”

The IPS controls the smallest daily details of the prisoner, including the places in which the prisoner may hang family photos and even the nature of these pictures. Such practices, although seemingly simple, break the spirit of the prisoner by depriving them of their sense of identity and furthering their control. It brings prisoners a sense of comfort to assert control, however limited, over their life in detention. The constant attempts by the IPS to strip the prisoners of their control over the simplest daily details are engineered to shatter the prisoners’ morale and make them feel that all they have can be taken from them at any moment.⁴⁴

Little Aws was looking at a photo of himself and his dad, Aser. He told me he would present it to his dad at his next visit. But the image seemed photoshopped, not real. When I asked about that, Aser’s wife confirmed it was unreal. The occupation does not allow prisoners to take souvenir photos with their families, including their children and wives. That is why she keeps creating pictures that show Aser as if he were hugging Aws. She makes these pictures at Aser’s request because he longs to feel, even if only for deceptive moments, the joy of kissing and hugging his kid.

Raafat Al-Asous⁴⁵

⁴⁴ It is noteworthy that the IPS allows families to give family photos to the prisoners from time to time, but it limits the number of the photos that may be admitted. It sometimes prohibits the entry of some photos under the pretext that they are taken in security zones, or that they contain pictures of martyrs, or other.

⁴⁵ Raafat al-As’ous, «The Mother Who Hid Her Pain to Keep Her Imprisoned Son Smiling,» Prisoners (blog) the Institute for Palestine Studies, (December 9, 2021). <https://www.palestine-studies.org/en/node/1652134>.

● Between Firecrackers and Tear Bombs

Ofer Prison is located in the Beitunia near Ramallah, also near a major checkpoint separating Jerusalem from the West Bank. Several prisoners indicated that they could hear the sounds of civil automobiles and racing motorcycles during their stay in Ofer Prison. They often tried to predict the brand of these cars or motorcycles. At other times, they could hear firecrackers at a wedding party in a nearby area. However, they also smell gas bombs at solidarity marches outside the prison complex. This flux of oddities makes the detainees feel close to life on the outside. There is therefore a significant difference between life on the inside in a location like Ofer and in life on the inside in one of the isolated desert prisons in the south.

● Forty-Five Minutes of Freedom

For a long time, Addameer has documented the procedures for the families' visits to the detainees in Ofer Prison. Many detainees indicated that the concerned prisoners are informed only a day or two before the families' visits. On the day of the visit, the detainees are gathered in the morning. The wardens ensure that the prisoners wear the IPS uniform, except administrative detainees, who are allowed to wear civilian clothes that the IPS approves of. After these procedures, the prisoners are searched using inspection machines, then handcuffed and their feet are shackled. They are then taken on foot to the visiting room through internal corridors that are covered on all sides with iron sheets.

During visits, prisoners sit in a rectangular room containing forty-one seats on two sides of the room. In front of each prisoner, there is a soundproof glass partition and a telephone headset to talk with their families on the other side of the glass partition. Each prisoner may be visited by three family members. There is very little separation between each seat and each prisoner's respective visits disturb the others, particularly given that there are over forty detainees being visited by over eighty people. This limits the ability of prisoners to talk about personal or family issues given the total absence of privacy.

On this aspect, Mohammad Khalaf recounts his experience:

"Prisoners' rituals begin as soon as the prisoner is informed that their name is on the list of visits. The prisoner gets up early to get ready, shower, shave their face,

and wear the IPS uniform, which he will wash and iron the day before to appear in the best way he can when he meets his loved ones. Khalaf reflects on one of the most occupation's oppressive policies:

"Guards classify the list of visitors into categories; A and B, as if the prisoners and their loved ones were fruits and vegetables. We do not know how the decision is made that this prisoner will be allowed to be visited by his grandson or granddaughter while others are denied this right. As the saying goes: «The worst disaster is the one that brings laughter.» The IPS allows grandfathers to visit their imprisoned grandsons, but at the same time, they prevent grandsons from visiting their imprisoned grandfathers. This is one of the wonders of repression and racism that IPS embraces and uses against prisoners of freedom."⁴⁶

As soon as the loved ones step into the visiting room, they find themselves parted from imprisoned family members by a thick, glass physical and psychological barrier. They realize that those who have been waiting patiently for a visit will not be touched. After all, those on both ends are forced to make do through the dangling telephones. More often than not, the telephone handsets are broken or useless, which causes inconvenience, continuous confusion, and much waste of the precious little time the prisoners and their family members have.

Mohammed Khalaf

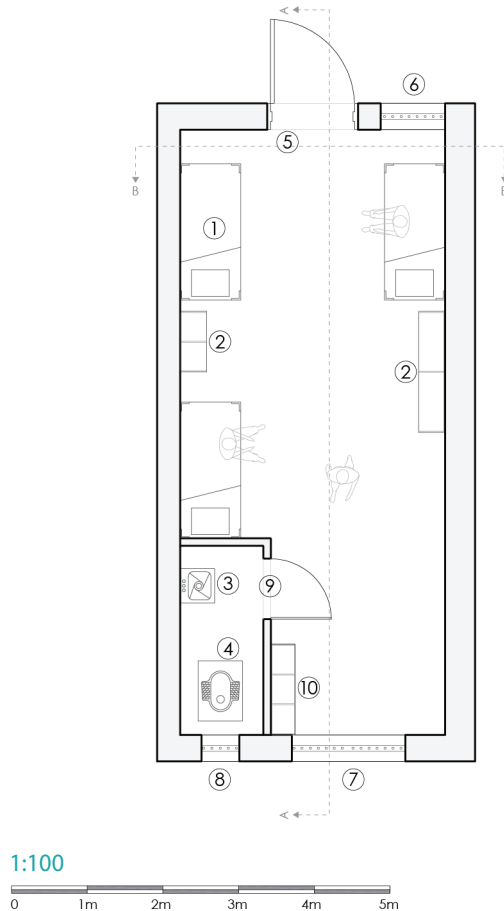


A picture of the layout and design of the visiting room⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Mohammad Khalaf, «Rituals of Visitation and Postponed Embraces,» Prisoners (blog), the Institute for Palestine Studies (July 29, 2020). <https://www.palestine-studies.org/ar/node/1650424>.

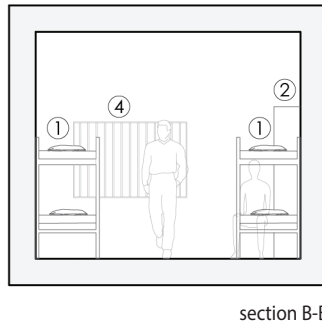
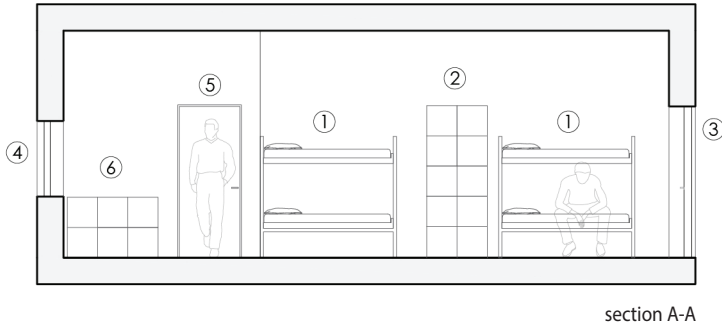
⁴⁷This image is taken from alresalah.com

Horizontal Architectural Plan of a Prison Room in Ofer Prison



1. Bunk bed [180 cm x 80 cm].
2. Metal cabinets with multiple sections [40 cm x 40 cm].
3. Small washbasin [50 cm x 30 cm].
4. Metal squat toilet (old Arabic toilets).
5. Iron door 10 cm thick with a window, bars [40 cm x 30 cm], and an opening Ashnaf.
6. Window with bars and nets [80 cm x 100 cm].
7. Window with bars and nets [150 cm x 100 cm].
8. Window with bars and nets [50 cm x 80 cm].
9. Bathroom door 1 cm thick made from thin aluminum.
10. Metal cabinets to store food, on top of them is a space to store a kettle and an electric cooktop.

Vertical Architectural Plan of a Prison Room in Ofer Prison

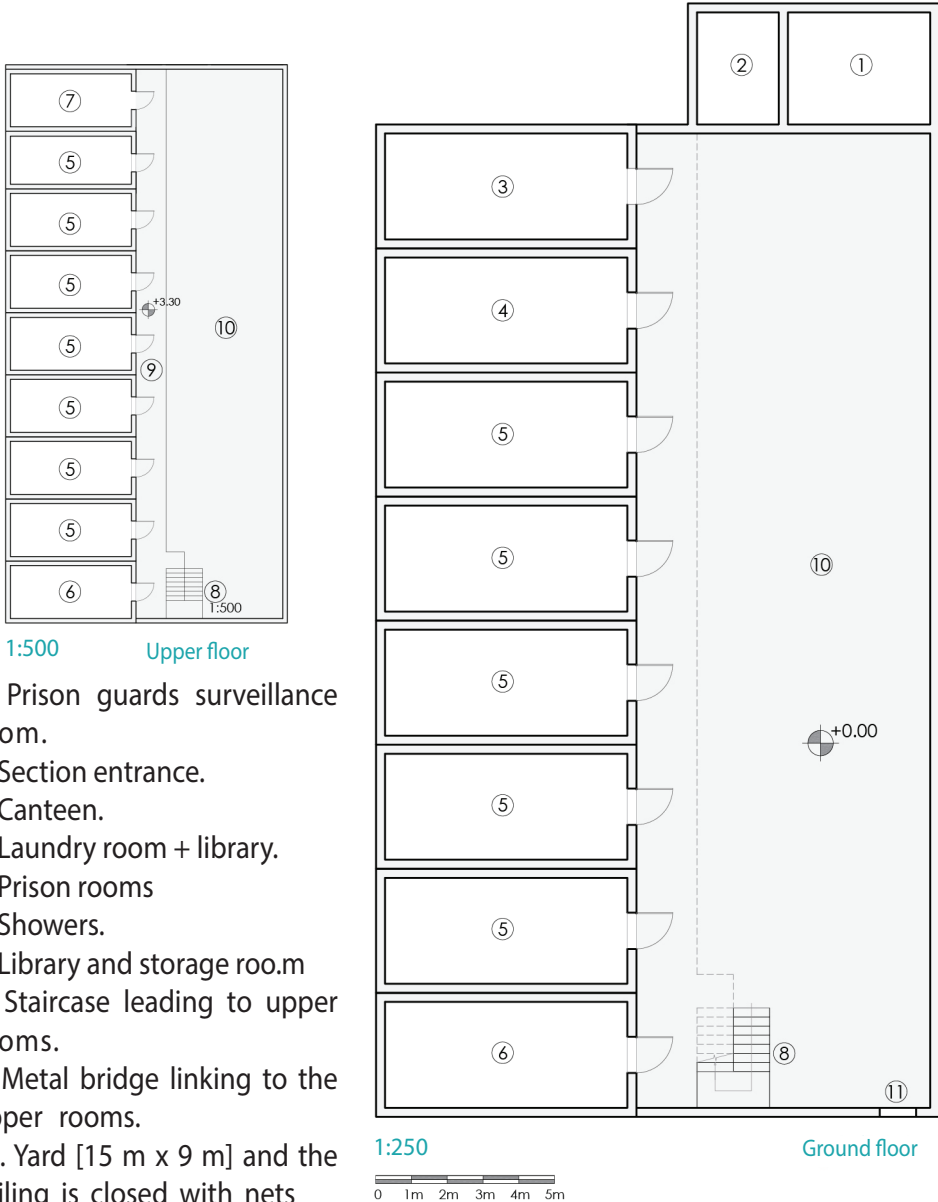


1:100



1. Bunk bed [180 cm x 80 cm].
2. Metal cabinets with multiple sections [40 cm x 40 cm].
3. Metal door 10 cm thick with a window, bars [40 cm x 30 cm], and an opening Ashnaf.
4. Window with bars and nets [150 cm x 100 cm].
5. Bathroom door 1 cm thick made from thin aluminum.
6. Metal cabinets to store food and on it there's space for a kittle and electric cooktop.

Horizontal Architectural Plan of a Prison Section in Ofer Prison



1. Prison guards surveillance room.
2. Section entrance.
3. Canteen.
4. Laundry room + library.
5. Prison rooms
6. Showers.
7. Library and storage room
8. Staircase leading to upper rooms.
9. Metal bridge linking to the upper rooms.
10. Yard [15 m x 9 m] and the ceiling is closed with nets Security door.

International Standards on Detention Conditions



Addameer Prisoner Support & Human Rights Association

International Standards on Detention Conditions

Standing as the basic building block for many human principles and rights, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights enshrines that «[a]ll human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights»⁴⁸ and that «no one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.» These principles have been confirmed by other international covenants, such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights,⁴⁹ the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment,⁵⁰ and the Fourth Geneva Convention.⁵¹ Furthermore, the same safeguards have also been seconded by many international conventions with a specific focus on persons deprived of their liberty, such as the Body of Principles for the Protection of All Persons under Any Form of Detention or Imprisonment and the Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (Mandela Rules),⁵³ all of which enshrine and underscore the importance of respecting human rights and not stripping detainees of theirs.⁵⁴

However, this corpus of safeguards has failed to establish firm, clear, and specific standards for the architecture and construction of prisons. Instead, it sets a suite of principles that must be observed and preserved for the detainees and the environments in which they are held. For example, in its section on standards for prisoner accommodation, the Mandela Rules provide that: All accommodation provided for the use of prisoners, and in particular all sleeping accommodation shall meet all requirements of health, with due regard being paid to climatic conditions and particularly to cubic content of air, minimum floor space, lighting, heating, and ventilation.”⁵⁵ heating and ventilation.” It also stressed that «the windows shall be

⁴⁸ United Nations General Assembly. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). New York: United Nations General Assembly, 1948: Preamble; Article 1; and Article 5.

⁴⁹ United Nations (General Assembly). 1966. "International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights." Treaty Series 999 (December): Article 7.

⁵⁰ UN General Assembly, Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, 10 December 1984, United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 1465, p. 85; Preamble; and Article 2; available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6b3a94.html>,

⁵¹ International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Geneva Convention Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War (Fourth Geneva Convention), 12 August 75, 1949 UNTS 287; Article 85 available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6b36d2.html>

⁵² UN General Assembly, Body of Principles for the Protection of All Persons under Any Form of Detention or Imprisonment : resolution / adopted by the General Assembly, 9 December 1988, A/RES/173/43, Principle 1, available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/3b00f219c.html>

⁵³ UN General Assembly, United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (the Nelson Mandela Rules) : resolution / adopted by the General Assembly, 8 January 2016, A/RES/175/70, Principle 1, available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/5698a3a44.html>

⁵⁴ For more information, see: HCHR with PRI and the International Centre for Prison Studies, A Pocket Book of International Human Rights Standards for Prison Officials, (New York and Geneva: 2004).

⁵⁵ The Nelson Mandela Rules, Principle 10.

large enough to enable the prisoners to read or work by natural light and shall be so constructed that they can allow the entrance of fresh air whether or not there is artificial ventilation.»⁵⁶

The bounds of the Mandela Rules extend beyond the architecture and layout of prisons to other matters, including the importance of ensuring that each prisoner is «provided with a separate bed and with separate and sufficient bedding which shall be clean when issued... and changed often enough to ensure its cleanliness.»⁵⁷ The rules also highlight the issue of toilets and the importance of having them in sufficient numbers.⁵⁸ In the same vein, it is stated: «every prisoner shall be provided by the IPS at the usual hours with food of nutritional value adequate for health and strength, of wholesome quality and well prepared and served.»⁵⁹ In addition to asserting prisoners' right to have a library adequately stocked with recreational and instructional books,⁶⁰ it guarantees that prisoners should be kept informed of developments and news by reading newspapers and periodicals, listening to radio stations, or by any other means.⁶¹

Similarly, Article 51 of the Second General Report of the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture stated that «It is also very important for prisoners to maintain reasonably good contact with the outside world. Above all, a prisoner must be given the means of safeguarding his relationships with his family and close friends. The guiding principle should be the promotion of contact with the outside world; any limitations upon such contact should be based exclusively on security concerns of an appreciable nature or resource considerations.»⁶²

⁵⁶ The Nelson Mandela Rules, Principle 11(a).

⁵⁷ The Nelson Mandela Rules, Principle 19.

⁵⁸ Of note, Article 31 of the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture's General Report No. 10 provides that «The specific hygiene needs of women should be addressed in an adequate manner. Ready access to sanitary and washing facilities, safe disposal arrangements for blood-stained articles, as well as provision of hygiene items, such as sanitary towels and tampons, are of particular importance. The failure to provide such basic necessities can amount, in itself, to degrading treatment.» In fact, this clearly contradicts the practices in the Israeli occupation prisons, where women are often denied the use of showers at the times they need them, given that they are located outside their cells. Therefore, once the sections are closed, it becomes impossible for them to use the showers.

⁵⁹ The Nelson Mandela Rules, Principle 1(20).

⁶⁰ The Nelson Mandela Rules, Principle 40.

⁶¹ The Nelson Mandela Rules, Principle 39.

⁶² The European Committee for the Prevention of Torture's General Report No. 2, Article 51:

The Israeli occupation's prison apparatus enjoys total noncompliance with these rules. To this day, despite a ruling from Israel's Supreme Court of that obliges the IPS to expand the space of prisons and reduce the number of prisoners in the rooms so that the living space for each prisoner becomes 4.5 meters, including the toilet, the occupying power has not succeeded in honoring its obligations. It has begun limiting the number of prisoners per prison but has not finished this process.

Many prisoners confirm that their cells are unfit for human beings. As indicated in previous sections of this paper, the rooms in which prisoners are kept lack ventilation, and in many cases, the windows turn into gaps for insects and rodents to crawl in.⁶³

The Israeli occupation authorities have worked with the IPS for years to convert a large part of the prisoners' rights into paid privileges, as part of the process to evade its obligations towards the prisoners. The provision of mattress covers, blankets, pillows, fans, and shoes become commodities sold in prison canteens for prisoners to buy them at double the price. This way, the IPS shifts this burden to the families of prisoners and detainees.⁶⁴ Food provided to prisoners is another illustration of this issue, given poor cooking and inadequate quality and quantity. This insufficiency prompts prisoners to come together to share meals, supplement them with items from the prison canteen, and recook the meals to get around the food shortages.

⁶³ Addameer Association, The Annual Violations Report. (Ramallah: Addameer Association, 2018). https://www.addameer.org/sites/default/files/publications/for_webtqyr_Inthkt_Inhyy_Injlyzy.pdf

⁶⁴ Addameer Association, The Economic Exploitation of Palestinian Prisoners. (Ramallah: Addameer Association, 2016). https://www.addameer.org/sites/default/files/publications/final_report_red_0_2.pdf

Conclusion and Findings

- Since the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories began, the occupying power has devised a systematic policy of running an ever-expanding range of prisons and detention centers, some dating back to the British Mandate. Despite the substandard buildings and impractical layouts of some, the Israeli occupation authorities still use them to hold Palestinian political prisoners.
- The Israeli occupation authorities systematically hold Palestinian political prisoners in settings that are unable to cater to basic human needs. For example, Damon Prison, a structure built over sixty-five years ago as a stable and tobacco storehouse, holds male, female, and child prisoners. Prisoners in Naqab Prison are held in tents, caravans, and concrete units, all of which feel like ovens in the middle of the desert, given the layout and design of these tents and caravans which increase temperature retention inside the facilities. These prisons are not drastically different from the rest of the Israeli occupation prisons, where Palestinian detainees endure similar harsh and unjust circumstances.
- The nature of the spaces in which Palestinian prisoners are held lacks adequate ventilation, lighting, sunlight exposure, fora, space for exercise, and an adequate field of view. The cumulation of these elements means that prisoners frequently develop ongoing joint conditions and pain, eye conditions, respiratory diseases, and skin health issues.
- The various occupation policies impede the daily lives of prisoners. Guards enter the rooms five times a day for counting, window-knocking, or periodic or sudden inspections. This does not allow the prisoners space to adapt to a fixed life routine, and in many cases, it hinders their daily activities and disrupts the rhythm of their daily lives.
- The Israeli occupation authorities control the smallest details of prisoners' daily life to break their spirits and cause them to lose any sense of personal control. The IPS controls the number of people allowed to visit the detainee– the degree of kinship– the number of photos that they are allowed to keep– the places to put these photos inside their rooms– the number and identity of television channels they are allowed to watch– the times they can take a shower– the colors and cut of the clothes to wear– exercise times– along with countless other details.

- It is clear that the architecture of the layouts and buildings of the Israeli occupation prisons is not accidental. As indicated in the sections above, the exaggerated nature of the security measures transforms these practices from mere security measures into a clear policy geared to abuse the prisoners. Prisoners in occupation prisons are surrounded by towering walls, usually not less than eight meters high, fitted with surveillance cameras and barbed wire. Most foras are topped with iron sheets or concrete that prevents the sunlight from adequately penetrating the cells. As a result, many prisoners feel as if they live in wells, in utter isolation from the outside world.
- Despite all the practices of the occupation, prisoners have succeeded over the past years in creating a social milieu as close as possible to the natural one. They tried to transform their cells into rooms and surround themselves with reminders of their families and life on the outside. Against all the odds, they are still human and are subject to the whole range of human emotions, from fleeting highs of joy at the accomplishment of a family member or the birth of a new soul, to crushing lows of sorrow at the loss of a loved one.
- Prison as a space is part and parcel of the occupation's policy to punish Palestinians. Not satisfied with confining Palestinian prisoners in physical detention for extended years, the occupying power incorporates the prison system, with its oppressive architecture of day-to-day operation based on the repression of prisoners, into its larger policy of punishment.

ADDAMEER (Arabic for conscience) Prisoner Support and Human Rights

Association is a Palestinian non-governmental, civil institution that works to support Palestinian political prisoners held in Israeli and Palestinian prisons. Established in 1992 by a group of activists interested in human rights, the center offers free legal aid to political prisoners, advocates their rights at the national and international level, and works to end torture and other violations of prisoners' rights through monitoring, legal procedures and solidarity campaigns.

Addameer's Vision: Addameer believes in the importance of building a free and democratic Palestinian society based on justice, equality, rule of law and respect for human rights within the larger framework of the right to self-determination. Addameer's work is based on a belief in the universality of human rights as enshrined in international law.

The Programs of Addameer :

1. **Legal Aid Unit:** Since its founding, Addameer's legal aid work has formed the backbone of the organization's work, with Addameer's lawyers providing free legal representation and advice to hundreds of Palestinian detainees and their families every year.
2. **Documentation and Research Unit:** Addameer documents violations committed against Palestinian detainees and monitors their detention conditions through regular prison visits, and collects detailed statistics and information on detainees.
3. **Advocacy and Lobbying Unit:** Addameer's advocacy work is aimed primarily at the international community, with the unit publishing statements and urgent appeals on behalf of detainees, bringing international delegations and the media, and submitting reports and individual complaints to the United Nations.
4. **Training and Awareness Unit:** Addameer raises local awareness of prisoners' rights on three levels: by training Palestinian lawyers on the laws and procedures used in Israeli military courts; by increasing the prisoners' own knowledge of their rights; and by reviving grassroots human rights activism and volunteerism and working closely with community activists.

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