

An Extension of Genocide: Gaza's Detainees Speak Out



Since the outbreak of the genocidal war on the Gaza Strip on October 7, 2023, Israeli prisons and detention centers have become the site of an unprecedented humanitarian tragedy. Palestinian detainees—especially those from Gaza—have been subjected to a string of grave violations that strike at their lives, dignity, and fundamental rights.

Fears are mounting over the fate of thousands of detainees and disappeared persons, amid a complete ban on lawyer visits and the absence of any international oversight. Rights organizations face immense challenges in even tracking these cases.

In this context, Noon Post conducted an exclusive interview with Mr. Alaa Al-Sakkafi, Director of Al-Dameer Foundation for Human Rights in Gaza—one of the region's most prominent rights organizations. Despite the war, destruction, and blockade, the foundation has continued its fieldwork.

In this conversation, Al-Sakkafi highlights the conditions of detainees in Israeli prisons since October 7, reveals the mechanisms his organization uses to document violations, outlines the main legal and practical challenges they face, and addresses the issue of the missing from Gaza—detailing documented violations including physical and psychological torture, killing during torture, and

sexual violence.

He also discusses the international community's double standards in addressing Palestinian rights, the conditional funding pressures imposed on rights organizations, and concludes with a set of messages and recommendations for the global community and human rights institutions.

How would you describe the situation of Palestinian detainees from Gaza since October 7?

Since October 7, the situation for Palestinian detainees—especially from Gaza—has deteriorated to an unprecedented level. This period marks a dangerous turning point in the occupation's policies: treatment has become increasingly brutal and vengeful, with persistent inhuman and sadistic practices.

Field data shows a sharp rise in both physical and psychological torture. The number of detainees who have died due to violent beatings, mistreatment, or deliberate medical neglect has increased—grim indicators of the violations occurring behind bars.

New torture methods, referred to as “suppression operations,” involve sustained or intermittent beatings by soldiers and prison guards. We are witnessing a real humanitarian catastrophe that flagrantly violates international humanitarian law and the Geneva Conventions, which guarantee minimum rights for detainees.

What mechanisms does your foundation employ to monitor detainee cases amid communication blackouts and access barriers?

Given the impossibility of direct access to prisons, Al-Dameer has developed alternative mechanisms to monitor detainees, maintain contact with families, and document abuses:

Field researchers are deployed across every Gaza governorate, especially after the occupation enforced geographical separation between north and south. Each researcher is in direct contact with families.

The foundation uses digitally signed legal proxies via special online links—shared on its website, social media, and through specialized WhatsApp groups—to collect data and case files.

They receive complaints and information directly from families, coordinating with lawyers inside the occupied territories via email, social media platforms, and telephone.

These combined efforts have enabled the foundation to build an advanced database on detainee conditions—despite the immense challenges posed by the war, siege, and communication cuts.



What are the main challenges—practical or legal—that you face in this work?

The foundation confronts layered challenges:

Field-level threats: Amid the genocidal war, neither staff nor civil society workers are safe from targeting. The organization lost logistical resources, safe spaces, and work infrastructure—but remained dedicated to documenting abuses every day despite the risks.

Information suppression: Israeli authorities deliberately conceal detainee data—locations, status, fate—making it hard to identify responsible entities, especially since arrests are split across prison services and military detention.

Legal distortions: Amendments to the “Unlawful Combatants Law” allow initial detention for 45 days (up from 7), first judicial review delayed to 75 days, and lawyer meetings postponed up to 180–210 days. These changes create legal cover for enforced disappearances and create conditions ripe for torture and slow death.

Despite these legal and procedural obstacles, the organization continues to employ all available legal and rights-based tools to expose the occupation’s crimes.

Reports mention thousands missing in Gaza—how are you addressing this sensitive issue, legally and ethically?

Rights reports estimate over 10,000 missing from Gaza amid the genocidal campaign. This issue is deeply complex, spanning humanitarian and legal dimensions, with the occupation offering zero transparency.

Al-Dameer prioritizes this file from the war's first weeks: gathering information from families, categorizing each disappearance (likely killed and buried secretly, detained in Israeli prisons, or unaccounted for), and creating individual legal files.

They have confirmed many detainees' fates and detention locations. The hardest challenge remains the bodies of nearly 4,000 Palestinians—especially from the early days of the assault—who were taken and held near Be'er Sheva, within Israel, yet to be released to their families.

The foundation is now collecting legal proxies from families to pursue legal action in Israeli courts to uncover the truth and retrieve bodies for burial with dignity and religious rites. Should these efforts fail, they are prepared to escalate to UN bodies and the ICC.

International humanitarian law—particularly the Fourth Geneva Convention—requires occupiers to preserve bodies, identify the dead, and deliver remains to families promptly. The occupation violates these mandates, especially since the 2018 “Bodies Retention Law,” which politicizes the release of bodies.

This legal battle aims to expose these unjust policies to the world and pressure the occupation to reveal the fate of the missing and return their remains.



Does your organization maintain a structured database or archive of violations, to use in legal action or international advocacy?

Yes. Al-Dameer places great emphasis on systematic documentation. It uses a rigorous classification system—detailing each reported violation, testimony, or evidence—to build comprehensive legal case files, particularly focused on detainee abuses.

The foundation also coordinates with Palestinian and international rights groups to develop legal dossiers for submission to international bodies and courts—and stands ready to expand these partnerships to hold the occupier accountable.

What types of violations have you documented through testimonies from current or recently released detainees?

Through verified testimonies, the foundation has documented multiple severe violations—many rising to the level of war crimes and crimes against humanity: Brutal suppression operations, using attack dogs, pepper spray, batons, and rifle butts.

A terrifying new pattern of sexual violence inside both military camps and prisons, legally documented.

A systematic policy of starvation and food deprivation, resulting in severe wasting, weakened immunity, and disease.

Killings under torture, with over 40 detainee deaths from Gaza since October 2023, often in interrogation or as a direct result of inhumane detention.

What broader challenges does the Palestinian human rights sector face, and how are you addressing them?

These challenges can be classified into three levels:

Internal: Palestinian political division, creating fragmented legal and judicial environments across the West Bank and Gaza, complicating unified rights efforts.

Occupation-imposed: Extreme Israeli restrictions, siege, closure, direct targeting, and smear campaigns branding Palestinian rights groups as terrorists—all while activists face arrest and persecution.

Resource-based: Chronic underfunding, reduced donor support, staff layoffs, and diminished capacity, even as violations surge.

Yet rights organizations—including Al-Dameer—remain committed to their mission, driven by their deep conviction to defend Palestinian human rights and pursue justice.

Have you faced pressure from donors or experienced double standards in the international sphere?

Yes. Al-Dameer—and many Palestinian rights bodies—has faced political pressure from Western-linked donors who impose conditional funding tied to narratives aligned with Israeli interests. The foundation maintains its national identity and independent rights-based stance and rejects any political funding.

Consequently, Israel has attempted to choke off their funding sources, undermine their reputation, restrict operations, and harass staff.

International double standards are glaring: while human rights violations elsewhere are met with strong response, violations by Israel are often ignored or tolerated. Hostility towards courts like the ICC or ICJ—when they examine cases involving Israel—reveals bias, undermining the global justice system and hindering Palestinian rights work.



What are your messages and recommendations to the international community and global rights organizations?

Our primary message: the scope of violations by Israeli authorities in Gaza is among the largest and most systematic human rights disasters of modern times. We are witnessing mass atrocity crimes—genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes—that demand extraordinary international mobilization.

Thousands of ongoing legal cases require collective documentation and judicial follow-up. We call for expanded cooperation programs and forming international coalitions to support Palestinian efforts toward accountability and justice.

International rights organizations must move beyond rhetoric—they must support field operations, develop actionable accountability mechanisms, and stand firm on international humanitarian law and human rights principles.

We urge rights institutions worldwide to build genuine partnerships with Palestinian organizations—based on mutual support, coordination, and shared goals: prosecuting war criminals, vindicating genocide victims, and restoring dignity and rights long denied to the Palestinian people.