Martyrs of the Palestinian Prisoner Movement | From British Gallows to Zionist Prisons



Ever since the British Mandate raised its gallows in Acre prison, prisons have never stopped being a killing ground for Palestinians. The Zionist occupation then inherited the Mandate's prisons and emergency laws and turned its cells into an instrument of slow execution: torture in interrogation cellars, deliberate medical neglect, bullets and starvation. By September 2026 the Palestinian Prisoners' Club had documented **329 identified prisoner martyrs** since 1967, 92 of them since the start of the genocidal war on Gaza in October 2023. [1][2]

This article opens Palestinuna's series on "The martyrs of the prisoner movement." It covers the martyrs of the British Mandate's prisons, the causes of prisoners' deaths in the occupation's prisons, the most prominent martyrs, and the crime of

withholding bodies. Detailed articles on each period, with tables of martyrs' names, follow.

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In numbers

Item	Details
Prisoner martyrs since 1967	329 identified martyrs (September 2026)
Since October 2023	92 martyrs, 53 of them detainees from Gaza
Martyrs of medical neglect	73 by 2022
Prisoners' bodies withheld	100, of whom 89 died after October 2023
Mandate executions after 1936	108 by official British figures; 148 sentences carried out according to Arab sources
Main British execution prisons	The Citadel prison in Acre and Jerusalem's Central Prison (al-Moscobiya)

[1][3][4][5]

Martyrs of the British Mandate's prisons

Red Tuesday: Acre, 17 June 1930

After the **Buraq Revolt** of August 1929, when Palestinians rose to defend the

Buraq Wall against settler marches, the Mandate authorities launched a wide arrest campaign. They arrested 26 of the wall's defenders and sentenced them all to death, then commuted the sentences of 23 to life imprisonment. In the Citadel prison in Acre, on Tuesday 17 June 1930, they hanged **Fuad Hijazi** at eight o'clock, **Ata al-Zir** at nine and **Muhammad Jamjoum** at ten. [6][2]

The day before their execution the three wrote a letter in Fuad Hijazi's hand, urging the people not to sell "an inch" of their land and asking that their graves be inscribed: "To the Arab nation: complete independence or death." The Mandate refused to hand over their bodies for fear of popular anger, and they were buried inside the prison for forty days before being moved to the Islamic cemetery in Acre – an early documented case of withholding Palestinian prisoners' bodies. [6]

Sheikh Farhan al-Saadi and the gallows of the Great Revolt

British forces arrested Sheikh **Farhan al-Saadi**, one of the leaders of the 1936 revolt, at his home in the village of al-Mazar on 22 November 1937, and executed him in Acre prison after a sham trial, while he was fasting in Ramadan and past seventy; they refused to delay or commute the sentence. [7][5]

After 1936 the Mandate executed more than a hundred Palestinians under emergency laws, in Acre and Jerusalem's Central Prison. Some 15,000 Palestinians were arrested during the Great Revolt. These are the very laws the Zionist occupation inherited and used to justify torture and the denial of rights. [5][4][2]

How prisoners are killed in the occupation's prisons

Torture in the interrogation cellars

Dozens of prisoners fell in interrogation cells, among them **Mustafa al-Akkawi** of Jerusalem in 1992, and **Jamal Abu Sharkh** and **Khaled al-Sheikh Ali** in the cells of Gaza prison in December 1989. In February 2013 **Arafat Jaradat** died under interrogation; the occupation claimed a heart attack, but the report of a Palestinian

forensic physician who attended the autopsy found bruises and torture marks on his back, chest and face, a broken rib, and a healthy heart. [8][9]

Medical neglect: “slow killing”

By 2022, 73 prisoners had died of medical neglect, according to the Prisoners’ Club, which calls this policy “slow killing.” Its martyrs include **Omar al-Qasim** of Jerusalem in 1989 after 21 years in captivity, and **Bassam al-Sayeh**, **Sami Abu Diak** and **Kamal Abu Waer**, who developed cancer and were held in Ramla prison, which prisoners call “the slaughterhouse.” On 7 April 2024 **Walid Daqqa**, 62, of Baqa al-Gharbiyye, died after 38 years in captivity, suffering from a rare bone-marrow cancer. [3][8][10]

Martyrs of the battle of empty stomachs

Hunger strikes have claimed martyrs from the start: **Abd al-Qader Abu al-Fahm** in the Ashkelon prison strike of 1970, the prisoner movement’s first hunger-strike martyr; then **Rasem Halawa**, **Ali al-Jaafari** and **Anis Dawla** in the Nafha strike of 1980; **Mahmoud Freitekh** after the Junaid prison strike of 1984; and **Hussein Obeidat** in the Ashkelon strike of October 1992. On 2 May 2023 Sheikh **Khader Adnan** of Arraba died after 87 days on hunger strike against his detention; he had been arrested about 12 times. [11][12]

Bullets

Jailers did not shrink from opening fire inside the camps: **Asaad al-Shawa** of the Shujaiyya neighbourhood was shot dead by guards in the Ansar 3 camp in the Negev in August 1988, at the height of the First Intifada. [8]

Since the genocide: prisons of death

Since October 2023 the occupation’s prisons and camps have become what prisoners’ organisations describe as arenas of “systematic assassination.” On 23 October 2023 **Omar Daraghmeh**, 58, of Tubas, and **Arafat Hamdan**, 25, of

Ramallah, died less than 24 hours apart. In November 2023 **Thaer Abu Asab**, 38, of Qalqilya, died in the Negev prison; he had been a prisoner since 2005, serving 25 years, and the Prisoners' Affairs Commission described his death as an assassination. [13][14]

On 19 April 2024 Dr **Adnan al-Bursh**, 50, head of orthopaedics at al-Shifa Hospital, died in Ofer prison; he had been seized from al-Awda Hospital in Gaza in December 2023. Prisoners' organisations called his death a "deliberate assassination" resulting from torture, and his body is still withheld. [15]

By September 2026 the number of prisoner martyrs since the war began had reached 92 identified martyrs, 53 of them detainees from Gaza, the latest announced by mid-September 2026 being **Mu'taz al-Atrash** of Hebron in Ofer prison. The Prisoners' Club attributes their deaths to torture, starvation, medical neglect and sexual assault, and says it holds testimonies about dozens of detainees executed in the field, while the fate of a number of Gaza detainees remains unknown because of the crime of enforced disappearance. [1][16]

Withholding bodies: captivity after death

A Palestinian's captivity does not end with martyrdom. The occupation withholds the bodies of 100 identified martyrs of the prisoner movement, 89 of whom died after October 2023, among at least 799 Palestinian bodies held in freezers and the "cemeteries of numbers." The body of prisoner Bassam al-Sayeh was held in a freezer for about three years. [1][17][3]

It is a policy rooted in the British Mandate, which withheld the bodies of the Red Tuesday martyrs and buried them inside Acre prison for forty days. [6]

Between the accounts

The number of martyrs: the figures change constantly with each new martyr and as the identities of Gaza detainees come to light: 243 in November 2023, 328 in August 2026 according to the Prisoners' Affairs Commission, and 329 in

September 2026 according to the Prisoners' Club. [13][16][1]

Mandate executions: official British figures give 108 executions in the 1936–39 revolt, while Noon Post reports 148 death sentences carried out after 1936. [4][5]

Farhan al-Saadi's execution: 27 November 1937 in one Noon Post article, and 24 November in another from the same site. [7][5]

Dates of the hunger-strike martyrs: Noon Post gives 11 June 1970 for Abd al-Qader Abu al-Fahm and 24 June 1980 for Rasem Halawa and Ali al-Jaafari, while Diwan al-Arab gives 5 November 1970 for Abu al-Fahm, and 20 and 24 July 1980 for Halawa and al-Jaafari. [11][8]

Arafat Jaradat: the occupation claimed he died of a heart attack, while the autopsy attended by a Palestinian physician found his heart healthy and recent marks of torture on his body. [9]

Timeline

Date	Event
August 1929	The Buraq Revolt and a wide British arrest campaign [6]
17 June 1930	Fuad Hijazi, Ata al-Zir and Muhammad Jamjoum hanged in Acre prison [6]
November 1937	Sheikh Farhan al-Saadi executed in Acre prison [7]
1970	Abd al-Qader Abu al-Fahm dies in the Ashkelon prison hunger strike [11]
1980	Rasem Halawa, Ali al-Jaafari and Anis Dawla die in the Nafha strike [11]
October 1992	Hussein Obeidat dies in the Ashkelon strike [11]
February 2013	Arafat Jaradat dies under torture [9]
2 May 2023	Khader Adnan dies after 87 days on hunger strike [12]
23 October 2023	The first two prisoner martyrs after the genocidal war began [13]

Date	Event
7 April 2024	Walid Daqqa dies after 38 years in captivity [10]
19 April 2024	Dr Adnan al-Bursh dies in Ofer prison [15]
September 2026	The toll reaches 329 since 1967, and 92 since the war began [1]

Frequently asked questions about the martyrs of the prisoner movement

How many martyrs has the prisoner movement lost?

329 identified martyrs from 1967 to September 2026, 92 of them since October 2023 – not counting those executed by the British Mandate or the Gaza detainees whose fate is still unknown. [1]

What was Red Tuesday?

17 June 1930, when the British Mandate hanged Fuad Hijazi, Ata al-Zir and Muhammad Jamjoum in Acre prison after the Buraq Revolt. [6]

How do prisoners die?

Torture under interrogation, medical neglect, hunger strikes and shootings, and since 2023 starvation, assaults and field executions. [3][1]

Who was the first hunger-strike martyr?

Abd al-Qader Abu al-Fahm, in the Ashkelon prison strike of 1970. [11]

How many prisoners’ bodies does the occupation withhold?

100 bodies of identified prisoners as of September 2026, 89 of whom died after October 2023. [1]

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