



PCHR's delegation of Palestinian prisoners' families concludes international tour in Switzerland, travels to France



10 March 2013



PCHR's delegation during a session of the UN Human Rights Council

The delegation of the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights (PCHR), which consists of families of Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails and former prisoners, is continuing its international speaking tour that started in late February. Today, 10 March 2013, the delegation left Switzerland and travelled to France after participating in a number of activities, the most prominent of which was

the sessions of the United Nations Human Rights Council (HRC) in the Palais de Nations in Geneva.

PCHR's delegation arrived in Switzerland on 01 March 2013. On 04 and 05 March 2013, they participated in the sessions of the Human Rights Council, during which the reports of the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture and Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders were considered.

On 05 March 2013, the PCHR delegation met with Counsellor Mahmoud Afifi, representative of the Egyptian Mission to the European Office of the United Nations, who emphasised Egypt's determination to defend the rights of Palestinians in general and the prisoners in particular. He discussed Israel's attempt, two years earlier, to remove the seventh item from the HRC agenda, which relates to the situation of human rights in the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt). Egypt carried out a diplomatic campaign to retain that item. On the same day, the delegation met with Mary Lawlor, Director of Front Line Defenders, the international foundation for the protection of human rights defenders. In the meeting, the delegation provided a detailed overview of Israeli practices, including the denial of the right to family visits.

Additionally, the delegation met with Edris al-Yazmi, President of the National Human Rights Council in Morocco, and called upon him to enhance the role of Morocco in drawing international attention to the issue of Palestinian prisoners. In the evening, the delegation participated in an assembly organised by the Swiss Emergency Coalition for Palestine in the NGO head office in Geneva. The delegation presented their testimonies and personal experiences, and described the suffering that results from the Israeli policies with regard to Palestinian prisoners and their families.

On 06 March 2013, the delegation met with Mada Andinas, a member of the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention. The meeting addressed the situation of Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails, and violations of prisoners' rights, including abuse of the procedure of administrative detention, use of solitary confinement and torture and incidents of medical negligence. On the same day, they met with Mohammed al-Khamlishi, Assistant Secretary-General of the League of Arab States, along with a number of employees of the League's office in Geneva. During the meeting, the delegation requested that the issue of the Palestinian prisoners be prioritised in the agenda of the Arab Councils of Ministers and various Arab summits. They highlighted the necessity to follow-up on the implementation of decisions that were taken in previous meetings and summits.

PCHR's delegation held a meeting with Kevin Turner, Human Rights Officer for Middle East and North Africa, in the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). They discussed poor detention conditions for Palestinian prisoners and emphasised the need to form a committee to investigate Israeli violations against Palestinian prisoners, particularly in view of the death of the Palestinian prisoner Arafat Jaradat in February, which is alleged to have resulted from torture. On the same day, in cooperation with the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), PCHR organised side event that took place alongside the session of the Human Rights Council. The delegation presented testimonies and personal statements based on their experiences, giving concrete examples of the suffering of the Palestinian people. The event concluded with a lively Q&A session.

On 07 March 2013, the delegation met with the Pakistani Counsellor Mariam Aftab. Pakistan is a representative of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and the Islamic Group in the HRC. The delegation briefed Aftab about the conditions of Palestinian prisoners in Israeli prisons, pointing particularly to the suffering of the prisoners' mothers due to the poor detention conditions under which the prisoners live, as well as the denial of family visits. Aftab pledged to advocate for the HRC to take a stronger position on Israeli violations. On the same day, the delegation met with J. Melih, Officer of the Middle East Sector and Central Follow-up and Protection in the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), and Celine Matter, Deputy Head of Operations for the Near and Middle East. The delegation underscored the necessity to activate the role of the ICRC in the oPt, particularly in light of escalating violations by Israel against Palestinians in general, and prisoners in particular.

On 08 March 2013, the delegation met with Seyit Yoaniqe, Human Rights Officer for the Permanent Mission of Turkey to the UN in Geneva and provided a briefing on the situation of Palestinian prisoners in Israel. Yoaniqe stressed the importance of achieving accountability for Palestinian victims by prosecuting Israel for crimes committed by Israeli forces.

The delegation also met with Ambassador Suleiman Sheikh, the Permanent Observer of the OIC to the UN in Geneva and Vienna. The meeting addressed detention conditions for Palestinian prisoners. The delegation called upon Sheikh to encourage the organisation of a special session of the Islamic Organisation Conference to consider detention conditions. Sheikh agreed that the situation of Palestinian prisoners should be a permanent item on the OIC's agenda. On the same day, in coordination with the Swiss Emergency Coalition for Palestine, the delegation participated in a solidarity sit-in that was held in front of the Palais de Nations. The Mayor of Geneva, members of the Arab community and a number of Swiss activists participated in the sit-in.

Jaber Weshah, head of the delegation and PCHR's Deputy Director for Branch Affairs, met with a Swiss Member of Parliament, Carlo Somarruga. Weshah outlined the human rights situation in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, highlighting the situation of Palestinian prisoners who are on hunger strike.

On 09 March 2013, the delegation held a meeting with members of various committees of solidarity and friendship with the Palestinian people.

The delegation is scheduled to continue their advocacy tour in France, where they will visit Paris and Nantes to participate in a number of meetings that aim to draw the attention of the international community to the various human rights issues facing the Palestinian people.



A set-in in front of the UN, in presence of Geneva Mayor