



Inter-Parliamentary Union

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Palestine/Israel

Decision adopted by consensus by the IPU Governing Council at its 206th session (Extraordinary virtual session, 3 November 2020) ¹



Palestinian supporters of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) take part in a protest outside the UNDP office calling for the release of Ahmad Sa'adat, leader PFLP, in Gaza city on 29 July 2015. MAJDI FATHI/NurPhoto/NurPhoto via AFP

PSE-05 – Ahmad Sa'adat

Alleged human rights violations

- ✓ Arbitrary arrest and detention
- ✓ Inhumane conditions of detention
- ✓ Lack of fair trial proceedings

A. Summary of the case

On 14 March 2006, Mr. Ahmad Sa'adat was abducted by the Israeli Defence Forces from Jericho Jail and transferred to Hadarim Prison in Israel, together with four other prisoners, after being accused by the Israeli authorities of involvement in the October 2001 murder of Mr. R. Zeevi, the Israeli Minister of Tourism. The Israeli authorities concluded one month later that Mr. Sa'adat had not been involved in the killing, but went on to charge the other four suspects. Subsequently, 19 other charges were brought against Mr. Sa'adat, all arising from his leadership of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), which Israel considers a terrorist organization. None of the charges allege direct involvement in crimes of violence. On 25 December 2008, Mr. Sa'adat was sentenced to 30 years in prison. While detained, Mr. Sa'adat reportedly did not receive the medical care he required, nor visits from his family. In March and June 2009, he was placed in solitary

Case PSE-05

Palestine/Israel: The Palestinian Legislative Council and the Parliament of Israel are affiliated to the IPU

Victim: Member of the Palestinian Legislative Council (member of the majority)

Qualified Complainant(s): Section I.(1).(b) of the [Committee Procedure](#) (Annex I)

Submission of complaint: July 2006

Recent IPU decision(s): October 2018

Recent IPU mission(s): - - -

Recent Committee hearing(s): Hearing with the Palestinian complainants (October 2020)

Recent follow-up:

- Communication from the authorities: Letters from the head of the Knesset delegation to the Inter-Parliamentary Union (October 2020)
- Communication from the complainant: October 2019
- Communication addressed to the authorities: Letter to the Speaker of the Knesset (September 2020)
- Communication addressed to the complainant: October 2020

¹ The delegation of Israel expressed its reservations regarding the decision.

confinement, prompting him in June 2009 to go on a nine-day hunger strike. He remained in solitary confinement for three years, until May 2012.

In April 2017, Mr. Sa'adat took part in a mass hunger strike by Palestinian detainees to protest against their detention conditions in Israeli prisons. He was reportedly moved at that time to solitary confinement in Ohlikdar Prison. According to the information gathered during a hearing with the Palestinian complainants in October 2020, the strike had also been triggered by the 2017 decision of the Israeli authorities to reduce the number of monthly visits to one instead of two visits per month. The complainants stated that the Israeli authorities had promised to increase the number of monthly visits; however, this has yet to be done.

In their letter of 18 October 2020, the parliamentary authorities did not provide any information on Mr. Sa'adat's current conditions of detention, including his visiting rights. The authorities suggested that the IPU should consider whether future correspondence relating to the case of Mr. Sa'adat was appropriate, given his involvement in terrorism-related crimes.

During the hearing held with the Palestinian complainants in October 2020, the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians gathered the following information on the situation of Palestinian inmates in Israeli prisons:

- The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is allegedly the main focal point between the Israeli authorities and the inmates' families, and the only international organization allowed to conduct visits to Israeli prisons. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, family visits are allegedly restricted to one relative instead of five, and phone calls are allegedly prohibited. Prison guards may, however, allow an inmate to have a phone call in the event of emergencies. Nevertheless, there appears to be no consistency with respect to phone calls, which, according to the complainants, are arbitrarily granted or refused by prison guards;
- According to the complainants, visits are restricted to spouses and first-degree relatives (children, parents and siblings). They said that, before any visit could take place, the family had to receive confirmation from the ICRC and be granted a permit to enter Israel. Visits lasted for 45 minutes and took place in the visiting room, where prisoners and their relatives communicated by phone in front of a glass window separating them. The complainants added that preparing for a visit was a time-consuming process; the round trip could take almost eight hours, owing to the family's place of residence, the location of the prison and the number of checkpoints to cross. The complainants stated that those conditions also applied to other inmates, and were more complicated for inmates from Gaza. According to the complainants, the Israeli authorities purposely detained inmates in prisons located far away from their place of residence, making it difficult for their families to visit;
- According to the complainants, detention conditions in Israeli prisons were dire. They said that prison buildings were obsolete, with poor sanitary conditions, and that they were infested with fleas and mosquitoes, while prison overcrowding was prevalent. The complainants alleged that inmates were not allowed to have a fan in times of high temperatures. The same applied during colder times, as prisons do not have central heating. Reportedly, prisoners were constantly being moved from one prison to another, or from prison to an investigation centre or to court, which meant that they spent several hours handcuffed inside a vehicle with aggressive and strict guards. The complainants also alleged that there were clothes shortages in prison and that inmates were allowed to have a new shirt only every three months. Inmates were required to first signal their needs to the prison guard, and wait for the guard to grant the request. Once the request was approved, inmates had to wait for a family visit before informing their relatives of their needs. The shirt could then be provided during the following family visit. The complainants also stated that detainees of all ages were held together, including children and young adults. Inmates suffering from serious diseases, including cancer or diabetes, were allegedly denied appropriate medical care. The complainants also denounced Israel's overuse of administrative detention.

B. Decision

The Governing Council of the Inter-Parliamentary Union

1. *Takes note* of the Israeli parliamentary authorities' letter of 18 October 2020; *deeply regrets*, however, the lack of information about Mr. Sa'adat's detention conditions;
2. *Strongly reaffirms* its long-standing position that Mr. Sa'adat's abduction and transfer to Israel were related not to the original murder charge but rather to his political activities as PFLP General Secretary; *deplores* his continued detention for over 14 years as a result of a politically motivated trial; and consequently *calls again on* the Israeli authorities to release him without delay;
3. *Is deeply concerned* about the complainants' account of the detention conditions in Israeli prisons, including the prevailing overcrowding and the alleged obsolete state of prison buildings; *is also worried* about the prohibition of phone calls and the arbitrary practice of prison guards in this regard; and *urges* the Israeli authorities, in light of the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent visiting restrictions, to enable detainees to call their relatives;
4. *Reiterates its long-standing wish* to be granted permission to visit Mr. Sa'adat; and *urges* the Israeli authorities to give serious consideration to this request;
5. *Questions* why the Israeli authorities decided to reduce the number of visits to one visit per month, instead of the two monthly visits that were allowed until 2017; *wishes* to receive more information on the reasons pertaining to this decision; *also notes* that, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, family visits would be limited to one person instead of five; *deplores* the fact that Palestinian prisoners feel compelled to resort to hunger strikes to have their demands heard and acted upon; and *is eager* to receive updated information on Mr. Sa'adat's current conditions of detention;
6. *Stresses* that the many national and international reports denouncing the conditions of detention of Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails should be of concern to the Knesset; *reaffirms* that the Knesset can, and should, exercise its oversight function of the Israeli prison service with regard to the treatment of Palestinian prisoners and thereby help ensure that all persons under the jurisdiction and effective control of Israel are afforded the full enjoyment of the rights enshrined in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; *wishes* to know if the Knesset and individual members are allowed to carry out impromptu prison visits and, if so, to receive information on the applicable legal framework;
7. *Requests* the Secretary General to convey this decision to the competent authorities, the complainant and any third party likely to be in a position to supply relevant information;
8. *Requests* the Committee to continue examining this case and to report to it in due course.