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OPT/Israel: Palestinian human rights defender Diala Ayesh held without charge

On 25 January 2024, woman human rights defender **Diala Ayesh** was issued with a four-month administrative detention order by the Israeli military's Central Command for the occupied West Bank. The order was given without any charge or trial, and she did not appear before a court. On 17 January 2024, Israeli military forces arrested Diala Ayesh as she passed through the "Container" Israeli military checkpoint near Bethlehem in the West Bank, Occupied Palestinian Territory.

[Diala Ayesh](#) is a Palestinian woman human rights defender and lawyer. Her work is dedicated to advocating for the freedom and fair treatment of political prisoners. She actively monitors and documents the conditions of Palestinian political prisoners within the Israeli military prison system. As a consequence of her work, she has faced arrests, threats, and harassment from both the Israeli occupation forces and the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank.

On 25 January 2024, woman human rights defender Diala Ayesh received a four-month administrative detention order after spending nine days in Israeli military prisons. The detention order was issued by an Israeli intelligence officer, Col. Nathaniel Kola, on behalf of Maj.-Gen. Yehuda Fuchs, the Israeli military commander of the occupied West Bank, without any charge or trial, and she was not brought before a court. On 17 January 2024, Diala Ayesh was arrested by Israeli military forces while passing through the "Container" checkpoint, an Israeli military checkpoint that separates the southern parts of the West Bank from the rest of the provinces. According to her lawyers at [Addameer Prisoners Support and Human Rights Association](#) ('Addameer'), the woman human rights defender was subjected to assault, threats, and insults by Israeli soldiers during her arrest.

After her arrest, she was initially detained in Hasharon Prison, known for its dire conditions, and was later transferred to Damon Prison. During the first week of her arrest, Diala Ayesh was denied access to her lawyer and any phone calls. Her lawyer could only see her once on 23 January 2024. Since her arrest, her family has not heard from her, and they are not allowed to call or visit her.

The already distressing conditions in Damon prison, where the woman human rights defender is currently held, have considerably degraded since 7 October 2023. Lawyers of the woman human rights defender at Addameer have warned of challenging conditions in Damon prison, including high overcrowding, complete denial of family visits, restrictions on lawyer visits, poor food quality and quantity believed to be part of a starvation policy, limited 30-minute open-air time, lack of hygiene products, and inadequate provisions for cold weather, along with other reports of ill-treatment.

Before her arrest, Diala Ayesh actively organized and participated in prison visits alongside a group of Palestinian lawyers to Israeli military prisons. During these visits, she diligently documented the harsh and deteriorating conditions that Palestinian political prisoners, including human rights defenders, have been enduring in the preceding months and continue to face until the present.

The arrest of the woman human rights defender is influenced by a set of laws and military orders enforced in the West Bank, which have been updated since 7 October 2023. These changes disadvantage Palestinian political prisoners, including human rights defenders, allowing extended holding periods before court appearances, restricting various rights, and enforcing stricter penalties. The updated military orders also impose restrictions on court presence during hearings, family visits, lawyer visits, and non-adherence to international standards concerning the living space assigned to each prisoner, according to Addameer.

The detention of woman human rights defender Diala Ayesh is emblematic of a significant and alarming trend that resulted in the imprisonment of thousands of Palestinians across the occupied West Bank, East Jerusalem, and within Israel, including numerous cases of human rights defenders, journalists, and activists since 7 October 2023, with prevailing ill-treatment and harsh conditions in Israel's prison facilities. This adds to worrying reports of [enforced disappearance, detention and ill-treatment](#) of Palestinian human rights defenders, including healthcare workers and journalists, in the occupied Gaza Strip. Since 17 December 2023, human rights defender [Ahmed Muhanna](#) has been held in incommunicado detention with his fate and whereabouts remaining unknown.

Front Line Defenders is deeply concerned about the detention of the woman human rights defender Diala Ayesh and the significant trend of detaining Palestinian human rights defenders by Israeli authorities. Front Line Defenders is also gravely concerned about the lack of fair trial guarantees according to international standards and the reported ill-treatment of the woman human rights defender, as it believes this to be a form of intimidation carried out against her in reprisal for her legitimate and peaceful work in the defense of human rights.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Israel to:

1. Immediately and unconditionally release women human rights defender Diala Ayesh along with other detained Palestinian human rights defenders;
2. Ensure that Diala Ayesh's physical and psychological integrity are protected and guaranteed while in prison in accordance with international standards;
3. Ensure that Diala Ayesh has access to her family and lawyers;
4. Cease targeting all human rights defenders in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and guarantee in all circumstances that they are able to carry out their legitimate and peaceful human rights work without fear of reprisals and free from all restrictions, including judicial harassment.