

## 'A major crisis' brewing inside Israeli prisons Warn Rights advocates

AFP, Geneva

In the shadow of the war raging in Gaza, record numbers of Palestinian detainees are filling Israeli prisons, where they face "systemic abuse" and torture, rights advocates warn, calling for international action.

Members of several Israeli NGOs travelled to Geneva this week to raise concerns before the United Nations about a major "crisis" inside the country's prisons.

"We are extremely, extremely concerned," said Tal Steiner, the executive director of the Public Committee Against Torture in Israel (PCATI).

"What we're looking at is a crisis," she told AFP.

She said nine people had allegedly died behind bars since October 7, according to Israeli sources. And "there are almost 10,000 Palestinians in Israeli custody right now... a 200-percent increase from any normal year".

The NGOs also voiced alarm at reported conditions inside the military camps holding those detained inside Gaza.

At least 27 Palestinians have reportedly died in such camps since October, Steiner said.

There was no access to the camps, nor had her organisation, or foreign journalists, been permitted to enter Gaza to speak with those released, she said.

But reports relying on testimony from former camp inmates suggest that detainees are often held "in open-air cages", where "they are handcuffed and blindfolded 24 hours a day".

Prisoners reportedly had to sleep on the floor of the cages in the cold, were beaten, and deprived of medical care.

While there are no official numbers, NGOs estimate that around 1,000 people are currently detained in the camps.



Palestinians transport a victim pulled from the rubble of a family home following Israeli bombardment west of the Nuseirat refugee camp in the central Gaza Strip yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

## Gaza now 'a nightmare' for mothers, kids: UN

AFP, Gaza

The humanitarian situation in Gaza is a "nightmare" for mothers and babies, with doctors reporting small and sickly newborns, stillbirths and women forced to undergo C-sections without adequate anesthesia, a UN official said Friday.

"I'm personally leaving Gaza this week terrified for the one million women and girls of Gaza... and most especially for the 180 women who are giving birth every single day," Dominic Allen, UN Population Fund (UNFPA) representative for the state of Palestine, said in a video news conference from Jerusalem.

"Doctors are reporting that they no longer see normal sized babies," Allen said after visiting hospitals still providing maternity services in the north of Gaza, where the need is especially great.



"What they do see though, tragically, is more stillborn births... and more neonatal deaths, caused in part by malnutrition, dehydration and complications."

The numbers of complicated deliveries are roughly twice what they were before the war with Israel began -- with mothers stressed, fearful, underfed and exhausted -- and caregivers often lacking necessary supplies.

"We have had reports of insufficient

anesthetic being available" for Caesarean sections, "which again is unthinkable."

"Those mothers should be wrapping their arms around their children," he said. "Those children should not be wrapped in a body bag."

"It's a nightmare which is much more than a humanitarian crisis," he said. "It is a crisis of humanity... beyond catastrophic."

What he saw while driving through Gaza, he said, "really broke my heart."

Everyone he passed or spoke to, Allen said, "was gaunt, emaciated, hungry" and exhausted from the daily struggle to survive.

At one military checkpoint, he said, he saw a boy who appeared to be about five years old walking with his hands held high, clearly frightened, as his slightly older sister followed behind, holding a white flag.

## 7 soldiers killed in attack on Pak security post

AFP, Islamabad

Seven Pakistani soldiers and six assailants were killed yesterday in an attack on a security post close to the border with Afghanistan, according to the military.

Members of an armed group attacked the security post near Mir Ali in the early hours of yesterday, the army's communication service (ISPR) said in a statement.

"The terrorists rammed an explosive-laden vehicle into the post, followed by multiple suicide bombing attacks, which led to (the) collapse of (a) portion of a building," the statement said, adding that five soldiers were killed.

Clashes followed, and during an exchange of fire a 39-year-old lieutenant colonel and a 23-year-old captain died, the ISPR added.

All six assailants died in the attack. North Waziristan, where yesterday's attack took place, has historically been a hive of militancy and was the target of a long-running Pakistani military offensive and US drone strikes during the post-9/11 occupation of Afghanistan.

Analysts say militants in the former tribal areas have become emboldened since the Taliban's return to power in neighbouring Afghanistan in 2021.

## Mike Pence won't endorse Trump

AFP, Washington

Former US vice president Mike Pence said Friday he would not be backing Donald Trump as his old boss runs for a second term in the White House.

"It should come as no surprise that I will not be endorsing Donald Trump this year," Pence said in an interview with Fox News.

The pair became estranged after Trump tried to pressure Pence to help him overturn his 2020 election defeat to Joe Biden, repeatedly attacking him on social media when he wouldn't go along with the scheme. After various attempts by Trump and his allies to subvert the election results failed, the then president directed a mob of his supporters to march on the Capitol, where they ransacked the building as some chanted "Hang Mike Pence!"

Pence told Fox News that Trump was "pursuing and articulating an agenda that is at odds with the conservative agenda that we governed on during our four years."

The 64-year-old's comments come days after Trump secured enough delegates to clinch the Republican nomination to challenge Biden in November.

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