



# Camden Abu Dis Friendship Association

جمعية صداقة  
كامدن أبوديس

*Promoting human rights and respect for  
international humanitarian law*

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Dear \_\_\_\_\_

## **“Adopted” prisoner**

Thank you for saying you would “adopt” a prisoner from Abu Dis. This is to send you details of the prisoner adoption campaign and of the prisoner we would like to you to adopt.

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## **What is the point of prisoner adoption?**

We are organising a prisoner adoption campaign

- to highlight the issue of Palestinian political imprisonment and to pressure for its end
- to send some support to individual political prisoners and to their families
- to help with letters from abroad and other questions to the Israeli authorities, when requested to do so.

We focus on particular groups of people from Abu Dis who are in Israeli jails, at the moment focusing on:

- children (people under 18 and also people who were under 18 when imprisoned)
- students (letters from students in Camden)
- teachers (letters from teachers in Camden)
- women (if there are women in prison)

In addition to this we have adopted some adult prisoners who are very ill or in isolation and need particular help.

## **Adopting a prisoner means**

\*\* We tell you the story of the prisoner and information about how they are being held, etc

\*\* We ask you to write to them in the prison on a regular basis to give them support – and also to remember special days – the prisoner’s own anniversaries (arrest etc), Eids (festival days), the national day for Palestinian political prisoners on 17<sup>th</sup> April. Prisoners tell us that these letters can be very meaningful to them.

\*\* We ask you also to write to the prisoner’s family. We will only choose prisoners whose families are happy with this idea.

\*\* In specific cases, we will ask you to write to the authorities as a concerned outsider (examples could be, when the family is not allowed to visit, when there is no date for a trial, when someone has been in solitary confinement, etc).

\*\* We ask you to be part of our bigger effort to draw attention in the media etc to the situation of Palestinian political prisoners.

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## **Palestinian prisoners in Abu Dis - What usually happens**

During the years of the Occupation, hundreds of people from Abu Dis (and hundreds of thousands from Palestine as a whole) have been arrested, usually for peaceful resistance against the Occupation, such as demonstrations. Among these there have been many children and some women.

### **Child prisoners from Abu Dis**

It is a very common experience under Israeli occupation for young boys to be arrested. Often people feel that the army provoke trouble, for example making a heavy presence around Abu Dis Boys’ School and Abu Dis Youth Club. Sometimes boys throw stones but often they and their families are sure they have not done anything at all. Usually when arrested they are eventually forced to sign a confession to throwing stones or molotovs (note people in Abu Dis say that if the number of molotovs confessed to were true, it would be raining molotovs – but there are not often molotovs in Abu Dis).

When a boy is arrested, this usually happens in the middle of the night, and Israeli jeeps with a number of soldiers enter a house and search it. There are different patterns of course, but this is often typical: the boy is usually taken in an army jeep to the police station in Maale Adumim settlement for

interrogation. He can be kept there for a couple of days, though sometimes he is then taken to the interrogation centre at Atzion settlement near Bethlehem.

The boy stays under interrogation until he signs a confession. Very often he is treated very badly, sometimes physically beaten, often taunted and provoked. This continues until he signs a confession, which is written in Hebrew (which is not his language and the boys don't understand it). Sometimes boys have been forced to sign blank pages.

Then the boy is usually taken to an Israeli prison, very often the tents in Section 8 of Orfar Prison in the settlement of Orfar, on the land of Beitunia near Ramallah. Recently the prison management have put children into Section 8 but they do not have proper supervision – they have a very difficult time there. They stay there until they have their charge agreed, and this is through a process of plea bargaining between a solicitor and the military authorities. Court appearances are often delayed in the process of the plea bargaining.

Eventually the boy will be sentenced, and he will typically get a period in prison plus a fine. Non-payment of the fine may increase the sentence. It is worth noting that the system for Palestinians is a military system and the sentence also depends on the whim of military judges.

There are many issues for prisoners – the conditions inside of course, whether their families can visit them, whether their families can contact them, medical care if it is needed, and whether, if medical care is needed, families are informed. We are collecting some of the stories of prisoners on our website.

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## **More information**

There is further information on Abu Dis prisoners at <http://www.camdenabudis.net/prisoners.html>

Every month CADFA puts together a human rights report about the situation in Abu Dis with information about Israeli violations including the situation of prisoners. You can find these reports at <http://www.camdenabudis.net/HRreports.html>

Our website prisoners page also has links to some of the organisations that specialise in human rights work with Palestinian prisoners:

Al Haq, Addameer, Mandela-Palestine, Defence for Children International

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## **What we ask you to do – (1) letters to your prisoner and his family**

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Below, we tell you some information about “your” prisoner (p6)

We ask you to

- (1) **Please write a short note to the family of the prisoner** to introduce yourself as a concerned international person, so they know they have some support
    - *The best thing is to send this letter on the email. Post does not work well in the West Bank. Where we can, we give you an email address for the family, but where there is no email, please send it to CADFA and the letter will be printed off in Abu Dis and delivered.*
  
  - (2) **Please write a short note or card to your prisoner** to be sent to him inside the prison. Introduce yourself as a concerned international person, so he knows he is not alone. Give general news and good wishes.
    - *If you want to send a letter or card –*
      - (a) *You can send it to the Red Cross (ICRC address below)*
      - (b) *Or if the prisoner is in Jail in Israel, you can send it by post to the prison address. We are told that letters with foreign stamps are usually delivered to prisoners.*
    - *Or you can send an email to Abu Dis, via the family or CADFA (see above) to be delivered via a lawyer (when one is appointed), who can then take it for the prisoner when he visits him.*
  
  - (3) **Please make a note of special dates coming up, and also a regular time, say once a month, when you will send a card or letter to your prisoner.**
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### **Please do not pay prison fines**

We know that families have sometimes asked adopters to pay the prison fine of their son in prison. However we ask you not to pay fines, and this is for two reasons:

- (a) the various prisoner support groups do not want us to be paying these fines – they argue that it legitimises them and we end up just paying money to the Israelis;
- and
- (b) it sets a precedent of expectation among the families of other prisoner adopters, who of course hear about it and think that this might be what prisoner adoption is about. However the aims of prisoner adoption remain to cut the isolation and to campaign on the issue, not to pay fines.

## **What we ask you to do – (2) letters to the Israeli authorities.**

IN SOME CASES ONLY we will ask you to write a letter or email to the Israeli Authorities telling them that there are particular issues about this case that have come to your attention. This might be if a prisoner is unwell, has been badly treated, is in isolation, is not getting a court date, for example.

If you do do this, please keep copies of your letters and please let us know of any response or outcome – this will help us in the case of your prisoner and also in future cases.

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**While you are a prisoner-adopter, please keep in touch with us** about this and tell us what is helpful for you.

Please get in touch with us at any point for further advice – also if you decide you want to stop the adoption.

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## **What to expect**

In our first year of prisoner adoption, we have learned that **often there is no answer from prisoners or their families**. We know from talking to people in Abu Dis that this is not because the letters are not appreciated! From inside the jail it is hard to write letters. Even if prisoners write to their own families, they have to send letters through the Red Cross and they can take months to arrive. So please don't expect answers. **But KEEP GOING**.

You may not get answers from prisoners' families either. Often they are under great stress, and language and uncertainty make it hard for people to answer.

This in turn can make adoptions break down as the adopter feels there is no point. But **it is a good thing to keep going**. We do know that from the other end, people are happy when they get the messages and sad when they stop.

Please contact us if you are feeling alone with this, and **DO keep sending regular messages to your prisoner** – he will appreciate it.

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## Support we will give you

We will

- **choose a prisoner** who as far as we know fits our criteria (above)
- **tell you** as much as we know about him/ her
- **tell you** how to start off writing letters
- **follow up every so often** to encourage you to write again
- **We will also invite you to regular letter-writing meetings** when you can write to your own prisoner and possibly to others and meet others who are doing the same
- **help with translations** if you need us to
- **give you any news** we have of your prisoner
- work with you to update the **website pages on prisoners** to make them more informative and useful
- have **meetings on the issue of prisoners** to give information and draw attention to the issue
- **work with you to raise the issue of Palestinian political prisoners more widely in the media**

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## Useful addresses

### Letters to prisoners

- **Address the letter to the prisoner:**

Name / prison number if any / prison

- **Put the envelope inside an envelope to the Red Cross, addressed:**

ICRC mission  
Nabi Shu'eib st. 8  
Sheikh Jarrah district  
PO Box 20253  
91202 JERUSALEM

### Letters to the Israeli Authorities – DO STAY POLITE AND FACTUAL

Prisons come under “defence” when they concern Palestinians

Currently the Shabas website ("Israel Prison Industries") is in Hebrew only but it may soon be in English and then may be possible to write directly to them from the website. Meanwhile, write to

The Office of the Defence Attache  
2A Palace Green  
Kensington  
W8 4QB

Or by email: [defence@london.mfa.gov.il](mailto:defence@london.mfa.gov.il)

## **Your prisoner**

Adopter –

Adoption started -

Prisoner's name –

Date of birth –

Date of arrest –

School and class when arrested (if relevant) -

Age when arrested (if under 18) –

Health problems / special circumstances known if any -

Prison number –

Charge –

Sentence –

Where he is held –

Where to write to your prisoner –

Where to write to his family –

Any issues to raise now with the Israeli authorities -

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More details:

Everything put down as far as we know it, based on information sent to us from Abu Dis.

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