



Israel's Prisons Exposed

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Dimitri Lascaris (DL): Good day. This is Dimitri Lascaris coming to you from Montreal, Canada on July 14th, 2026 for Reason2Resist. Today, we are very pleased and frankly relieved to be joined again by our dear friend and legendary woman of resistance in my view, Rehab Nazzal. And I'm sure that many other people who support the Palestinian cause share that view, Rehab. We're very gratified to have you back on the program today.

Rehab Nazzal (RN): Thank you.

DL: So Rehab, first of all, as our audience may know, those who haven't seen any of our prior interviews of Rehab, I'll just clarify that she's normally based in Bethlehem in the occupied West Bank. But she's currently in Canada and has been for a couple of weeks to pursue professional academic projects. And maybe you could just take a moment, Rehab, and tell us why you've come to Canada for a temporary period.

RN: Well, as you know, I am teaching now in Bethlehem, but I came to Canada. My family is here. And it's over 30 years, relations I have here in the arts sector in particular and the academic world. I am here to work on a film. Hopefully by the end of next month, it will be ready. It's about Gaza, children as well. And then I am going back to teaching at Dar Al-Kalima University in Bethlehem.

DL: And the main subject of our discussion today is going to be an absolutely abominable recounting, which Rehab is going to offer us of the torment that a Palestinian refugee family from the occupied West Bank has endured for years. It's a story that has not received anywhere near the kind of coverage that it deserves. And so we're going to get down into the appalling details of that story. But before we do that, I would first of all want to just remind our audience if you find this video to be informative please like and share it. If you are not already a subscriber to Reason2Resist, please become one and help us to expand the reach of unapologetic on-the-ground resistance journalism. And with that, could you just take a few minutes and generally describe to us before we get into the experience of this family what life was like for you during the prior several months when you were in the occupied West Bank and before you came to Canada?

RN: The situation in the West Bank is devastating, the least to say. I've been saying this since October 2023 that while the attention is focused on Gaza, the Israelis are inflicting horrors on the Palestinians in the West Bank – confiscating land, creating more colonies and arming settlers and settlers violence is unprecedented that we are enduring. The people, the land, the animals – anything they attack. They steal livestock from the herding community, they displaced over 25 communities, they destroyed three refugee camps in North and West Bank. You have entire towns and villages just gated with metal gates, over 1,000 checkpoints that strangles the Palestinians movement, students, farmers. It's horrific, simply. And Israel would not be able to do this if it was held accountable for its continuous crimes, including the ongoing genocide in Gaza. They're doing what they're doing in the West Bank with complete impunity. Jenin, and you visited Jenin. Jenin had no colonies when you visited. After they destroyed the refugee camp, exhausted the city of Jenin and the surrounding villages – and I'm talking about 30 villages around Jenin – daily raids almost they assassinated resistance fighters and in complicity with the PA as well.

Now, after they killed the resistance fighters or imprisoned them, now they are building colonies, confiscating land, destroying hundreds and hundreds of dunams of land that's planted with olive trees. So the situation even in the north is horrific. And in the south, in Al-Khalil, Hebron, also it's horrific. There are the communities, the Bedouins, the city itself. The mosque inside the city is being turned into something similar to the al-Aqsa mosque. I mean, we can talk for hours about the situation in the West Bank, but... We're there. We're not going anywhere. We're resilient. We will continue to endure. And patience is one thing. The solidarity from the global community is absolutely vital for ending the horror of this apartheid settler colonial regime.

DL: Now, we have Canada and some other western countries in recent months that imposed sanctions on what they describe as extremist settlers, as if there's such a thing as a non-extremist settler. However, they have imposed no sanctions on any Israeli military or political leader, even though Netanyahu is under indictment by the ICC. They haven't sanctioned him. They haven't sanctioned any of the military industrial corporations of Israel. They have not imposed real bans on the purchase of weapons from Israel or the sale of weapons to Israel. My question to you is: have you seen any evidence at all that these limited sanctions on these so-called extremist settlers have had any impact on their behavior?

RN: Absolutely not. It's the other way around. The violence of settlers is increasing, escalating daily. And I think there was an American diplomat recently and he testified, himself, how he endured and experienced the settlers and the occupation forces because they work side by side together. No, there is no effect whatsoever. It's the whole system that should be sanctioned, not individuals.

DL: Which is precisely what they've done to Russia and Iran, amongst many other states, North Korea. They don't hesitate to relentlessly sanction the whole system, but when it comes to Israel, it's Kabuki theater. Now, let us get into this story, the outlines of which you've shared with me, offline. And this concerns a family of Palestinian refugees by the name of

Zawahreh, and they come from, I understand, and I may be mispronouncing this, the Dheisheh Refugee Camp in Bethlehem. So please tell us about this horrific, mind-boggling story which has received virtually no attention in the Western media.

RN: Absolutely. And it should. I urge everyone to pay attention to the story of this family. The Zawahreh family were expelled in 1948 from their homes during the Nakba. And they settled in the Dheisheh Refugee Camp in Bethlehem. I met with them and we became friends in 2015, just 10 days before I was shot by an Israeli sniper in Bethlehem, in the same site, exactly the same place, the Israeli forces killed Moataz Zawahreh, 29 years old, who was protesting peacefully, unarmed. He was killed. And I witnessed, and I went to the hospital when he was pronounced dead. I attended his funeral. I went his family's home. And since, we became friends. And the plight of this family, I know it resembles many families, many Palestinians' families, but after killing Moataz, his brother at the time was in administrative detention, Ghassan Zawahreh – who I want everyone to know this name, and to do what they can to save his life. His life now is in danger. Ghassan Zawahreh was imprisoned for 19 years. 12 of these were administrative detention, without charge or trial. They would release him one week, two weeks, a month or two, then re-arrest him again. He was 16, the first arrest. And now he's 44. He has four children that barely spend any time with him. Ghassan was free from administrative detention in October, but they raided his home. They wanted to arrest him.

DL: You're referring to October of 2023?

RN: 2023, during the revolution of Gaza.

DL: Right.

RN: And he fled his home. They kept raiding his house, his brother's house, his mother and fathers, destroying the homes. I witnessed everything. They bring batons and destroy the cabinets, the sinks, the tables, the TV – everything in these houses. Everything. Three houses I witnessed. They wanted him. Then they arrested his brother, who has nothing to do with anything. He arrested him. They arrested him for two years to pressure him to surrender to them. He was arrested by the PA and kept in the PA prisons. But the Israelis kept visiting them, raiding their home. The captain responsible for the Dheisheh refugee camp, I forgot his name, he would call them around the clock, that issue was their concern. They told the father and the mother, "if you don't bring him, we will bring bulldozers next time and demolish all of your house". And they were serious. The father took his son from the Palestinian authorities prison and handed him to the Israelis. He didn't want to, but he understood, his family and his brothers and his children cannot be in the street so he handed him to the Israelis. That same night the father died of heart attack, of pain, of sadness. And the mother who I knew since 2015, one of the strongest women I've ever met, she is not the same since. This was in February last year when they took him and handed him to the Israelis. The Israelis broke his ribs by torture the first time they got him, the first minute they got him and they threw him with the prisoners who had scabies and he got scabies. They would pay a

large amount each time to lawyers to go to just visit him, just visit him for a few minutes to make sure he's alive, he's okay.

DL: Who is paying for the lawyers?

RN: The family, 2,000 to 3,000, they pay for a lawyer just to go for a few minutes and just hear from him and tell him about his family. And they were expecting that he would be released this past June. But instead, he was transferred from Ramon Prison to the Negev Prison in the south. The first day, what's called the Metzada unit, Israeli special unit, they attacked the prison. They often train inside the Negev Prison. And from the opening of his cell they shot the prisoners inside the cell. They injured three and Ghassan was one of them. Then they opened the cell, everyone on the floor, they shot Ghassan again in his leg from the back, in his knee. The bullet went through and he was left bleeding. They beat him while he's on the floor, especially on his sexual organs. He lost consciousness for 10 days. He was left bleeding in pain until no longer he was awake. They transferred him to Soroka Hospital on the 17th of June. And there they found his testicles swollen and the blood flow is not there anymore. They made him sign that it's necessary to remove his testicle and they removed the right one. And they stitched the wounds in his knee. After two hours, they took him back to the cell.

Now his mother is concerned about his life. And this is not something isolated from what's happening to other prisoners. Yesterday, we learned that Marwan Barghouti was shot inside the prison. Yesterday, Dr. Hussam Abu Safiya, there is a global campaign to release him. So, it's systemic, as you can tell, this Israeli policy, these practices of eliminating Palestinian political prisoners. So we need every voice, every voice to speak loud, to release these prisoners, to allow their families to see them. They haven't seen them, some of them since five years. You pay a lawyer to go and tell you they're still alive. That's all. They tortured and killed over 80 inside the prison since October 2023. Starvation-inducing diseases, torture, rape, and now it's well-documented and known. The journalist from Tulkarm who was arrested and raped, he spoke about it. I met several of the released prisoners from Jenin and Bethlehem. My friend Khaled from Bethlehem in the Dheisheh camp, he's an activist. He's the head of a community center. He organizes dabke and sports and social events for the community. They arrested him and sealed the community center. Six month administrative detention. And I went to visit him after his release. He was a different person of starvation. Then, he dared to open the community center. They arrested him and released him, almost dead, seven days in the hospital and he passed. This is assassination, what's happening.

DL: I would just want to add some observations here from a legal perspective, my friend. So people, and this is one of the challenges that those of us confront in the West when we talk about Palestinian prisoners. It's important for people to understand – Rehab referred repeatedly to something called "administrative detention". The Israelis under their military laws, which are an utter travesty from the perspective of due process, can indefinitely detain, imprison Palestinians in horrific conditions without even bringing a charge against them. That's what administrative detention means. Not only do they not have a conviction entered

against them, they don't even have charges pending against them. And they could be kept in these horrific conditions for years with no charge.

Secondly, the ones who are charged are charged under military law and procedure. Which is, from the perspective of the standards of due process we have here in the West, a complete farce, and so any convictions that are entered by a military tribunal in the occupied territories or Israel are completely and utterly worthless. They mean nothing. No one should assume that someone who has been a Palestinian, who's been convicted under the military laws of Israel is in fact guilty of anything. At the end of the day, all of these prisoners should be assumed to be innocent of any crime. And let's remember also that even if they have engaged in violence against the occupier, that is their right. They have a right to take up arms against the occupier. And Israel treats every single Palestinian, even when a resistance fighter targets military personnel, as terrorists. They don't distinguish between those who attack settlers and those who attack uniformed soldiers of the Israeli military. They deem them all to be terrorists.

So I needed to say that because I think we have a tendency in the West, which is understandable, but highly regrettable, to treat prisoners, Palestinian prisoners, with less of a priority than we treat Palestinians who are not imprisoned. In fact, it is the imprisoned Palestinians who are the most vulnerable and the ones who are suffering the most. And I cannot stress that enough. And they're the ones who are being subjected to the worst forms of injustice. So we will provide the name of this persecuted man. The horrors that he's been through should be known to the whole world. We'll put that in the description of the video. Rehab, how can people help here? And what else, any other thoughts that you might have about the situation of prisoners in these dungeons?

RN: Make their stories known. Advocate with your governments, with your representatives, in the media, on social media – expose the system. And you spoke about administrative detention. It's a British system that Israel pursued. So we endured it even before Israel in the 1930s. My father was arrested under this "administrative detention". We need lawyers if lawyers can assist, if they can help. As you said, I mean, amidst a genocide, the question of prisoners, the suffering of prisoners and the endurance of their families is not taking any priority. But it should. If you remember the Guantanamo Bay prisoners or even Abu Ghraib, the American tortures of Abu Ghraib prisoners in Iraq – it created a change, actual political change, the circulation of the news and images.

So we need to expose this criminal brutal regime. These prisoners are humans who have children, who have mothers, who have brothers and sisters. And absolutely not all of them are involved in the resistance. No, not even in throwing stones, not even in protecting an olive tree. They can attack you for a post on social media, for example. And there are many who are all in there by association, like Ghassan's brother. He has a small shop. He sells food. He has nothing to do with anything. Two years! And when he got out he lost almost 20 kilograms of his weight and he was sick. These are death camps, torture camps. We have to expose this regime. And we have to help these prisoners in any way we can.

DL: Indeed. I want to ask you one last question that I have before I let you go, and that's about Marwan Barghout. I had not actually heard that he had been shot until you just mentioned it now. I've been traveling, so I'm not entirely up to speed on recent news in Palestine, but I read that he intended to run in the upcoming election in Palestine from prison. Is that accurate? Am I correct in understanding that the Israelis shot him in prison after he made that announcement?

RN: I'm not sure the association between that, his intention to run. I read, like you, about his intention to run, because he's so popular among the Palestinians. But about shooting him, and because this was within two or three weeks that we heard between Ghassan and now Marwan, it seems there is a pattern of attempts to assassinate Palestinian prisoners, prominent prisoners, activists inside the prison. His wife held a press conference, that's where I learned about it, when she also warned that his life is being targeted inside prison. To tell you the truth, for me myself, the last thing I'm concerning myself with is the presidential election. The last thing of my concern, absolutely. I mean, the land, because I travel within the West Bank constantly, and I see the changes, and the violence, and I see those caravans being brought on stolen land, while Palestinians in Gaza are in tents. And Israel won't allow caravanes to get to Gaza to house these displaced people for the third year in a row. While you see the caravans on the hilltops of violent settlers, armed settlers – sometimes when you look at them blocking the road, and it happened to me, you wonder from which planet are these people? They're stripped entirely from any humanity or morality. They just want to kill and steal. And I mean, they are empowered and enabled by the government of Israel, Ben Gvir on top of them and Smotrich, of course.

DL: Right. The so-called far-right ministers in the Netanyahu cabinet – they're all far-right. There's no such thing as a non-extremist minister in Netanyahu's cabinets. That's an insult to our intelligence. In any case, thank you so much for sharing with us this horrific news of what is being done to this man and his family. And we'll do everything we can to draw attention to it. In the meantime, please do stay safe, and thank you so much for your ongoing, incredibly courageous defense of the Palestinian cause.

RN: Thank you. Thank you so much for all your effort and activism. Thank you.

DL: We're signing off today from Montreal and Ottawa Canada for Reason2Resist.

END

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