

URGENT ACTION

RELEASE TERMINALLY ILL PALESTINIAN PRISONER

Walid Daqqah is a terminally ill Palestinian prisoner who was diagnosed with a rare case of bone marrow cancer. His health condition has been exacerbated by numerous instances of medical neglect in prison. In March, he completed a 37-year sentence for his involvement with an armed group that had abducted and killed an Israeli soldier in 1984. However, in 2018, an Israeli court sentenced him to a further two years in prison, delaying his release until March 2025, a date which he may not live to see. On 7 August, the Israeli District court rejected his petition for early release on medical grounds. The Israeli authorities must immediately release Walid Daqqah on humanitarian grounds and allow him to spend his remaining time with his family.

TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER

The President of the State of Israel

Mr. Isaac Herzog

3 Hanassi Street,

Jerusalem 92188, Israel

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Dear President Herzog,

*I am writing to urge you to exercise your power to commute the sentence of **Walid Daqqah**, a terminally ill Palestinian prisoner, and to release him immediately on humanitarian grounds. Pending his release, I urge to ensure that he is provided with the adequate and specialised medical treatment to which he is entitled, in accordance with Rule 24 of the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for Treatment of Prisoners, and which the Ayalon prison clinic is, according to expert medical opinion, ill-equipped to provide.*

In 2022, Walid Daqqah was diagnosed with Myelofibrosis, a rare form of bone marrow cancer, which was exacerbated by numerous instances of medical neglect in prison. According to two separate medical evaluations of Walid Daqqah's case, he faces a real and imminent danger to his life and his health condition is extremely complicated. According to one of his doctors, "his days are short and there is real danger to his life".

Walid Daqqah has already completed his original 37-year prison sentence for his involvement with an armed group that had abducted and killed an Israeli soldier in 1984. However, in 2018, the Beersheba District Court sentenced him to a further two years in prison for trying to get mobile phones into prison. This means that he will not be released before March 2025, a date which he may not live to see, effectively condemning him to die in captivity behind bars. His petitions for early release on medical grounds were rejected. An appeal to the Israeli Supreme Court is the last legal resort available, but time is a luxury that his condition may not allow. Forcing a dying prisoner's family to engage in a daunting legal and bureaucratic battle is unnecessarily and gratuitously cruel. Walid Daqqah should not spend his little remaining time behind bars, but rather with his family and loved ones.

In light of the imminent danger to his life, I urge you to apply your power to pardon Walid Daqqah on humanitarian grounds and allow his immediate release from prison. Pending his release, I also urge you to ensure that the Israeli prison authorities provide Daqqah with his right to the adequate and specialized healthcare that he requires. Walid Daqqah has already spent most of his adult life behind bars and lost his father while in prison. If he has a year or two to live, let him spend them with his wife Sanaa and their only daughter Milad.

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Walid Daqqah is a 62-year-old Palestinian citizen of Israel. He is a writer and father to a three-year-old daughter. On 25 March 1986, Israeli forces arrested Walid Daqqah, then 24. In March 1987, an Israeli military court sentenced him to life imprisonment after convicting him of commanding the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP)-affiliated group that had abducted and killed Israeli soldier Moshe Tamam in 1984. Walid Daqqah was not convicted of carrying out the murder himself, but of commanding the group, and his conviction was not based on Israeli criminal law but rather on British emergency regulations dating back to 1945, which require a much lower standard of proof for conviction. Israeli military courts have a well-documented history of failing to ensure the right to a fair trial. Additionally, Walid Daqqah was subjected to torture and other ill-treatment while under interrogation.

In 2012, Walid Daqqah's life imprisonment sentence was capped at 37 years, after then-president Shimon Peres accepted his request to cap the sentence. However, in early 2018, five years before the end of his sentence, he was sentenced in a separate case to an additional two years in prison for attempting to get mobile phones into prison to help other prisoners get in touch with their families.

Walid Daqqah's health deteriorated throughout the years, due to medical neglect by the Israeli Prison Service (IPS). In 2020, he experienced blood-related health issues, and in December 2022, Walid Daqqah was diagnosed with a rare form of bone marrow cancer, necessitating an urgent bone marrow transplant. In February 2023, Walid Daqqah suffered from a stroke, but was only moved to a civilian hospital a week and a half later. The delay in providing Walid Daqqah with the emergency treatment he required resulted in a host of other complications including pneumonia, kidney failure, drop in blood cells, and required him to undergo a surgery to remove most of his right lung. He is currently held in Ayalon prison clinic (Formerly Ramleh prison clinic), which is unequipped to deal with his condition, according to independent medical opinion reviewed by Amnesty International.

Walid Daqqah's case illustrates the systematic practice of medical neglect by the IPS and Israeli authorities, which blatantly violate Israel's international obligations related to respecting the right to health of Palestinian prisoners and providing care for those experiencing illness. As of 2022, the number of sick Palestinian prisoners in Israeli prisons is around 600, with over 200 prisoners with chronic diseases and 24 prisoners diagnosed with cancer and other serious illnesses, according to the Palestinian prisoners' rights organization, Addameer.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: Hebrew and Arabic

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 11 October 2023

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

NAME AND PRONOUN: Walid Daqqah (He/him)