



Lemkin Institute
*for Genocide Prevention
and Human Security*

Statement Calling for the Release of Marwan Barghouti from Israeli Prison

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The Lemkin Institute for Genocide Prevention and Human Security is appealing to the Trump Administration and the Government of Israel for the urgent release of Marwan al-Barghouti from Israeli prison. Despite broad international recognition of his role as a legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, the Israeli government has thus far rejected calls for his release, calling him “a symbol of terrorism.” Barghouti is one of the few figures in Palestine who has the public trust necessary to represent Palestinians in the long and hard political process that will be necessary to bring lasting security to both Israelis and Palestinians in the region. Any real effort towards peace will require Barghouti’s immediate release.

The Lemkin Institute welcomes US President Donald Trump’s recent openness to the idea of pushing for Barghouti’s release. Such pressure may be the only means to secure Barghouti’s freedom and would build trust in the region, reflecting the US President’s personal commitment to a peace agreement. We urge the Trump Administration to view Barghouti’s continued imprisonment not only as a personal injustice, but also as a significant political barrier to reconciliation between Palestinians and Israelis. The refusal by the current Israeli government to release him reflects its unwillingness to engage in good faith in the current peace process.

Barghouti has been serving five life sentences since 2002 for charges he has consistently denied. While in prison he has campaigning for the rights of Palestinians and for prisoner rights. Despite many calls for his release, particularly in relation to the recent hostage exchange between Hamas and Israel, Israel continues to imprison him.

Because of Barghouti’s status as the “Palestinian Mandela,” his release became a central topic in recent ceasefire negotiations. Hamas included Barghouti’s release as one of their top demands, viewing his freedom as both a symbolic and moral triumph as they continue to seek the release of numerous other Palestinian prisoners. Israel does not want to release Barghouti precisely because of his prominent status and powerful symbolic meaning for Palestinians. Furthermore, Netanyahu’s support for

his release could trigger significant domestic political blowback within Israel, as Israeli cabinet members are staunchly opposed to his freedom. Pressure from a third party, such as the United States, could reduce the domestic cost of any plan to release Barghouti.

Recently, World Jewish Congress President Ronald Lauder privately lobbied for Barghouti's inclusion in the latest Israel-Hamas prisoner exchange, acknowledging that his release would be a critical step toward peace and stability.

Former Israeli security officials, including ex-Shin Bet chief Ami Ayalon, have also supported Barghouti's release, affirming that he is the only Palestinian leader capable of uniting Palestinians and advancing a mutually agreed-upon path towards coexistence.

Despite these pleas from staunch supporters of Israel, Benjamin Netanyahu used one of Israel's five vetoes during the ceasefire negotiations to reject the inclusion of Barghouti's name on the list of Palestinian prisoners to be freed. The Trump Administration, very unfortunately, decided at that time not to get involved.

The Lemkin Institute is concerned about Barghouti's safety and health in detention. Barghouti is 66 years old and has spent much of his imprisonment in solitary confinement. Amnesty International has documented serious concerns regarding Barghouti's treatment, including reports of torture and ill-treatment during interrogation. These findings demonstrate that his detention is not only a legal matter but also a grave human rights issue, affecting his dignity and well-being.

Barghouti's experience in Israeli prison mirrors the experiences of thousands of other Palestinian prisoners, who are subjected to harsh treatment while in detention and whose families endure immense suffering as they are systematically denied the fundamental rights to visit, provide food, or deliver clothing to their incarcerated loved ones. These families often face years of separation without any means of communication or support. The prisoners themselves face harsh conditions, including overcrowding, inadequate nutrition, and medical neglect. Human rights organizations have documented instances of torture and starvation within Israeli jails, highlighting the severe and inhumane treatment faced by Palestinian detainees.

In the face of these hardships, Marwan's wife, Fadwa Barghouti, wrote a poignant message to her husband, which encapsulates the unwavering commitment of Palestinian families to the struggle for justice. Despite the family's pain and suffering, Fadwa's message conveys a sense of hope and determination, reflecting the collective strength of those who continue to advocate for justice and freedom:

"A sacrifice for Gaza, a sacrifice for Palestine, a sacrifice for our people.

"Yes, Marwan, it's hard and it hurts — your six grandchildren, who have never seen you, always ask about you.

“Our children grew up with this pain. But I know you, and I know that what eases your suffering is seeing the destruction, devastation, and crimes against our people in Gaza come to an end.

“I see you now, in solitary confinement, in a dark cell without food, air, or sunlight for two years. And yet, you rejoice — even alone — at the end of the massacre.

“You imagine those returning along Al-Rashid Street, and you wonder how to ease their unbearable pain and torment as they face loss, rubble, and countless dangers.

“You bid farewell to the freed prisoners, comfort and pat the shoulders of those still trapped in this hell.” You think — even in silence — on behalf of a people who yearn for freedom and struggle for it: how to pave the road toward liberty and a dignified life, how to take the initiative to safeguard our rights and cause, how to lighten the burden and hardship of our families’ days.

“You resolve to uphold the unity of our people and our land, to give every child a space for life and hope.” You remember your comrades on this path, and you speak with them in your mind — both the living and the martyred.

“As for your life partner, I still remember your words from 41 years ago very well. You told me, “Palestine comes first, until liberation — our share of life comes after.” And you were right.

“I replied to you then, “Is Palestine yours alone?” And I’m still trying to keep that promise, despite all the pain it carries.” Ordinary life still waits for our people’s moment of freedom.

“Despite the mountains of pain, we are still true to the promise. Despite all the suffering, the heart of a mother within me feels a deep sense of peace and carries the dream of a new dawn for all mothers.” We are waiting for you — I, your family, and your people who love you and whom you love.

“You were, and still are, of the people and for the people, my beloved.

“And we shall meet soon...”

The Lemkin Institute for Genocide Prevention and Human Security calls upon the Trump Administration to place pressure on Israel to release Marwan Barghouti immediately and unconditionally. We further call on governments, international organizations, and civil society worldwide to:

- Call for the immediate and unconditional release of Marwan Barghouti;
- Closely monitor Barghouti’s conditions of detention and hold accountable any mistreatment, abuse, or rights violations experienced by him and by all other

prisoners serving life sentences, allowing access by international monitors where necessary;

- Ensure Barghouti's safety after release;
- Promote and support a political framework that enables leaders like Barghouti to actively participate in building a just, sustainable, and peaceful resolution for the Palestinian and Israeli people;
- Push for the release of the estimated 9,000 other Palestinians languishing in Israeli jails.