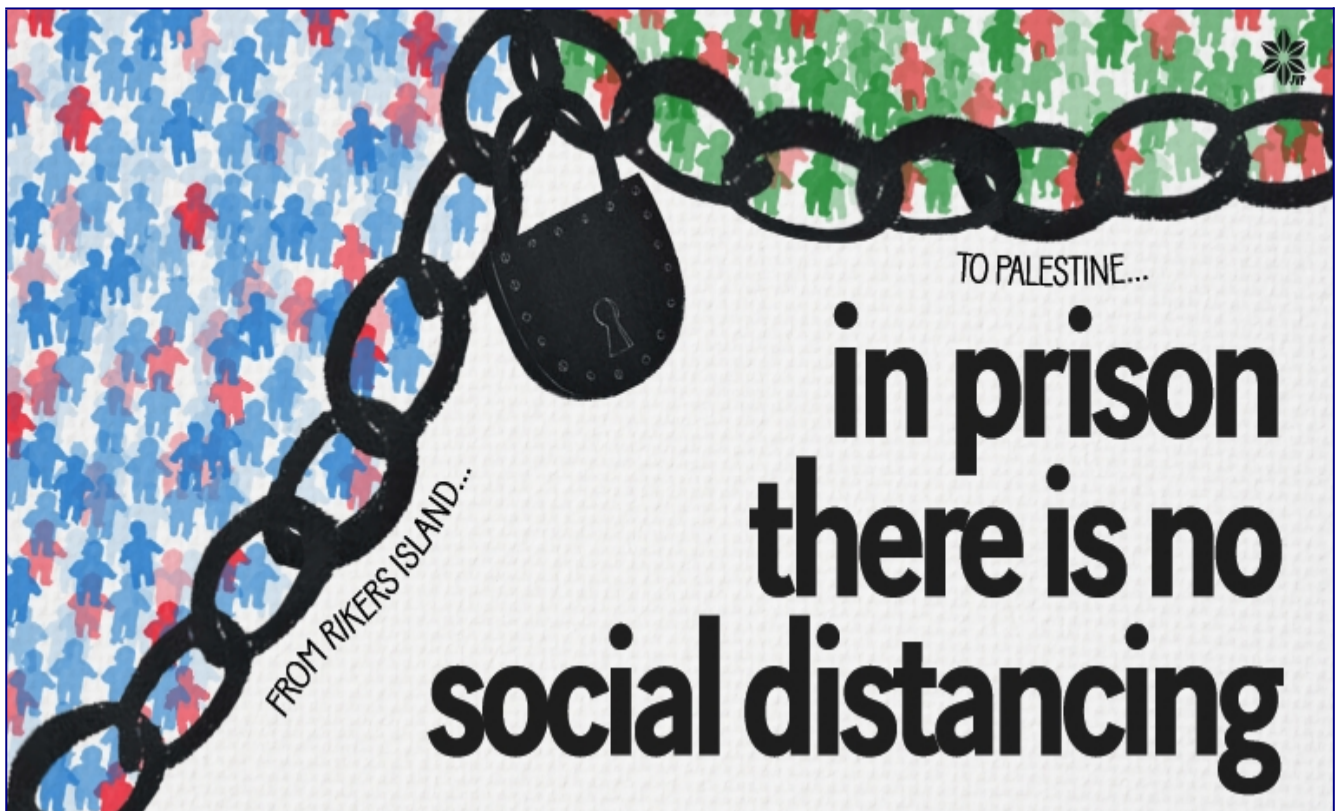


Dear ---,

In prisons and jails in the U.S. and Palestine, our most vulnerable – the elderly, the ill, and those with weakened immune systems – are being handed a new and unjust prison sentence: coronavirus exposure.

The horrific conditions that are so common for incarcerated people in both the U.S. and Israel – rampant overcrowding, insufficient access to showers and sinks, a shortage of soap and cleaning supplies, a lack of nutritious food, and limited medical care – make prisons and jails a tinderbox for the spread of COVID-19. **At Rikers in New York City, the infection rate is 87 times higher than the national average – and conditions in other jails and prisons are likely not far behind.** Without immediate action, things will only get worse.

We're calling on the U.S. and Israeli governments to help stop the spread of COVID-19 by freeing those most at risk for severe illness.



[Join us on Friday, April 17, Palestinian Prisoners Day, to demand freedom for incarcerated people, from Rikers Island to Ofer Prison in Palestine.](#)

We'll hear from **Marc Lamont Hill, Randa Wahbe of Addameer, Ahed Tamimi and other activists and leaders.** We'll join an international Twitterstorm to highlight the need to stop the spread of coronavirus in prisons and prevent what is likely to be a death sentence for vulnerable communities.

A few weeks ago we hosted Arab Barghouti – the son of imprisoned Palestinian leader Marwan Barghouti – in conversation with Patrisse Cullors, a prison abolitionist and co-founder of Black Lives Matter. [1] **Cullors stated that “every incarcerated Black person is a political prisoner,” and Barghouti echoed the sentiment, since the same could be said for every incarcerated Palestinian.**

U.S. jails and prisons hold more people than intended, with some states at 150%+ capacity. Nearly a quarter of the incarcerated population have not been convicted of a crime – they're simply unable to pay cash bail.

According to Addameer, a Palestinian prisoner support NGO, more than 700 ill or injured Palestinians are in Israel's prisons, including 200 prisoners with long-term or debilitating chronic disease. Today more than 400 Palestinian prisoners are being held in what's called “administrative detention,” a status that allows prisoners to be held without charge for

indefinite periods of time. More, Palestinian children as young as 12 are routinely jailed by Israel. They are frequently physically abused and psychologically tortured. As of March, over 180 children were being held.

Among the first cases of documented coronavirus was 19 year-old Nour Eddin Sarsour, who was held for two weeks in Ofer Prison and exposed to COVID-19 by a guard.

[This is a disgrace and a mounting public health crisis. That's why we're asking you to take action and join a call addressing this emergency. Sign up for our Zoom rally on April 17 at 1pm.](#)

I am sure you are doing what you can to keep yourself functioning and supporting your loved ones. We really appreciate your willingness to show up for others and speak up for justice and freedom for our most vulnerable right now.

Thanking you again for all you do.



Granate Kim
Communications Director

1. www.facebook.com/186525784991/

Jewish Voice for Peace is a national membership organization inspired by Jewish tradition to work for the justice, equality, and dignity of all the people of Israel/Palestine. [Become a JVP Member today.](#)

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