

# Criminalizing Free Expression in Israel

By [Stephen Lendman](#)

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*In February, Association for Civil Rights in Israel executive director Sharon Abraham-Weiss blasted Netanyahu for “lashing out against the media,” saying it’s “an almost regular occurrence,” a matter “of genuine concern.”*

He’s waging war on free expression and the rule of law. Repressive legislation portrays “(s)ocial and human rights activi(sts) as traitors,” wanting them “forcibly eliminate(d) from the Israeli discourse...”

Free expression is the most fundamental of all rights. Without it, all others are threatened. Israel increasingly compromises media freedoms. They end where alleged national security begins, notably for Palestinians – targeted by phony accusations of involvement in “incitement” or ties to terrorist organizations, meaning occupation harshness opponents.

Bloggers and social media users are treated like fifth column threats, required to submit material for screening before posting. Failure is criminalized.

Regime critics and human rights defenders are considered traitors. They risk prosecution and imprisonment for doing the right things.

Weeks earlier, Israel’s Facebook bill passed its first reading. If enacted, it’ll force Facebook and other social media sites to remove content Israel considers “incitement” – meaning whatever regime officials claim, including legitimate criticism, part of their war on speech, academic and media freedoms.

Israel routinely detains Palestinians for social media and other public comments, charging them with involvement in “terrorism.”

Arab Israeli poet Dareen Tatour was imprisoned multiple times for criticizing repressive regime policies, including for her poem titled “Resist, My People, Resist Them” in response to Israel’s brutal murder of three Palestinian children.

Her poem “A Poet Behind Bars” was translated into more than 10 languages, in part saying she wrote about Israeli injustice, “wishes in ink, a poem I wrote...The charge has worn my body, from my toes to the top of my head, for I am a poet in prison, a poet in the land of art.”

“I am accused of words, my pen the instrument. Ink – blood of the heart – bears witness and reads the charges.”

Listen, my destiny, my life, to what the judge said: A poem stands accused, my poem morphs into a crime. In the land of freedom, the artist's fate is prison."

Palestinians and Israeli Arab citizens are persecuted for criticizing Zionist ruthlessness, challenging occupation harshness, imprisoned for demanding long denied justice.

On Saturday, Israeli forces arrested and detained Palestinian author Khalida Ghusheh – for her novel titled "The Jackal's Trap," discussing Palestinian collaborators, her book scheduled to be published in October.

On International Women's Day, commemorated every March 8, the Samidoun Palestinian Prisoner Solidarity Network honored Palestinian women imprisoned by Israel for political reasons, no others, including mothers taken from their husbands and children, as well as young girls forcibly taken from their families.

Since occupation began in June 1967, over 15,000 Palestinian women and young girls were imprisoned, over 1,400 since 2000.

Over 40% of Palestinian men and boys spent time in Israeli prisons. "(W)ives, sisters and mothers of Palestinian prisoners are leaders of the campaigns to support them," said Samidoun.

"As we mark 100 years of colonization in Palestine and 100 years of Palestinian resistance, women have always been an integral and leading part of the Palestinian revolution."

"Samidoun Palestinian Prisoner Solidarity Network salutes the movement of Palestinian women and their leadership in the ongoing and daily struggle for national and social liberation."

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