

WORLD NEWS

Palestinians celebrate as prisoners are released by Israel under Gaza ceasefire deal

BY [SAM METZ](#) AND [JALAL BWAITEL](#)

Updated 3:39 AM CEST, October 14, 2025

[Leer en español](#)

BEITUNIA, West Bank (AP) — Cheers erupted among Palestinians on Monday as Israel released nearly 2,000 prisoners under a [Gaza ceasefire agreement](#) that saw them exchanged for [Israeli hostages](#) freed by Hamas.

Large crowds greeted the freed prisoners in Beitunia in the Israeli-occupied West Bank and in Khan Younis in Gaza, flashing V-for-victory signs as they descended from International Committee of the Red Cross buses. In Beitunia, they were given traditional keffiyeh scarves as a show of nationalist pride. Some were lifted onto people's shoulders. Others sank into chairs, exhausted.

"It was an indescribable journey of suffering — hunger, unfair treatment, oppression, torture and curses — more than anything you could imagine," said Kamal Abu Shanab, a 51-year-old from the West Bank town of Tulkarem who was released after more than 18 years in prison.

His face was gaunt. He said he lost 139 pounds (59 kilograms) in prison.

"We don't recognize him. He's not the person we knew. Our uncle doesn't look like our uncle," said his niece, Farah Abu Shanab.

A military court in 2007 convicted Abu Shanab of "military trainings, voluntary manslaughter and membership in an unrecognized organization," according to Israel's list of exchanged prisoners. He was arrested that year during an Israeli raid targeting members of the armed wing of Fatah, the political party that runs the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank.

RELATED STORIES



Hamas wants these high-profile prisoners freed in exchange for Gaza hostages



Israel rejects freeing Marwan Barghouti from prison



What to know as Israel and Hamas exchange hostages and prisoners and Trump visits the Middle East

Those freed include around 1,700 of the several thousand Palestinians that Israeli troops seized from Gaza during the two-year war and have held without charge.

Also among those released were 250 Palestinians sentenced to prison terms, most of them convicted for deadly attacks on Israelis dating back decades, as well as others convicted on lesser charges, according to Israel's Justice Ministry. Of those, Israel exiled 154, sending them to neighboring Egypt, where officials said they will be sent to third countries.

The rest were returning to homes in east Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza.

A profound moment

The releases have powerful resonance on both sides.

For Israelis, they're deeply painful, since some of those released were convicted over attacks that killed civilians and soldiers. For Palestinians, the issue of prisoners is politically charged. Nearly everyone has a friend or family member who has been jailed by Israel, particularly young men.

While Israel views the prisoners as terrorists, many Palestinians consider them as freedom fighters resisting a decades-long Israeli military occupation. Reports from [the U.N.](#), rights groups and detainees detailing conditions while held — including isolation, beatings, insufficient food and illness — have made prisoners prominent symbols of their people's political struggle.

Israel says it adheres to its prison standards under law and investigates any reports of violations.

In Khan Younis, thousands of people cheered and celebratory gunfire rang in the air. The freed Palestinians filed out wearing gray jumpsuits and entered the hospital for medical examinations.

Israeli forces detained thousands of Palestinians during the war in raids on shelters and hospitals and at checkpoints stopping families as they fled their homes amid military operations.

Families often had no idea their relatives had been detained, and it often took months to determine if they were in Israeli custody, if confirmation came at all. Most were held under laws passed in Israel at the start of the war that allowed Palestinians to be detained for months as "unlawful combatants" without judicial review or access to lawyers.

Monday's release still leaves about 1,300 Palestinians from Gaza in Israeli custody, according to a count of detainees in September by the Israeli human rights group HaMoked.

Warnings not to celebrate

Celebrations in the West Bank occurred despite Israeli warnings against doing so. A flier circulated saying anyone supporting what it called "terrorist organizations" risked arrest.

Palestinians gathered on hills overlooking Ofer Prison. An armored Israeli vehicle drove up and fired tear gas and rubber bullets. As drones buzzed overhead, the crowd scattered.

Israel's military did not respond to questions.

Who is on the list

According to a list issued by Hamas, the Gaza detainees freed include two women, six teenagers under 18 and around 30 men over 60.

The list of 250 convicted prisoners freed, ranging in age from 19 to 64, includes 159 affiliated with Fatah, and 63 associated with Hamas. The remainder are unaffiliated or belong to other groups.

Many were arrested in the early 2000s, which saw the Second Intifada break out, a Palestinian uprising fueled by anger over continued Israeli occupation despite years of peace talks. Palestinian armed groups carried out attacks that killed hundreds of Israelis, and the Israeli military killed several thousand Palestinians.

Some were convicted in military trials that rights advocates say often lack due process. Others have been incarcerated for months or years without trial in what is known as administrative detention. Israel says the practice, widely criticized by Palestinians and human rights groups, is needed to prevent attacks and avoid sharing sensitive intelligence.

The Hamas list did not include [roughly half a dozen highest-profile prisoners](#), including [Marwan Barghouti](#), Hassan Salameh, Ahmed Saadat and Abbas Al-Sayyed. Barghouti is widely seen as a potential successor to Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas.

A list of released prisoners issued by Israel includes the following:

Raed Sheikh

A 51-year-old Palestinian police officer and Fatah member, Sheikh was sentenced to multiple life terms in 2000 for his role in the killing of two Israeli soldiers who were attacked by a mob at a West Bank police station, including one thrown from the station's window.

Mahmoud Issa

A 57-year-old Hamas commander imprisoned for life in 1993 — before the Oslo interim peace accords — Issa was among those convicted of kidnapping and killing a 29-year-old Israeli border police officer that year. Much of his more than three decades behind bars were spent in solitary confinement, conditions that have made him a symbol among prisoners' rights advocates.

Shamasneh brothers

The two brothers — 56-year-old Mohammed and 62-year-old Abdel Jawad Shamasneh — were sentenced in 1993 to multiple life terms for their role in a stabbing attack that killed Israeli hitchhikers whose bodies were later found in a Jerusalem riverbed in 1990 during the first Palestinian intifada.

Iyad Fatafta

A 47-year-old Fatah member serving a life sentence, Fatafta was one of two men [convicted of murder](#) for stabbing American tourist Kristine Luken and a friend who was hiking with her and survived.

Associated Press writer Lee Keath in Cairo contributed to this report.