



Palestinian activist offers view on situation in Israel

By Sean Barron (Contact)

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Detainees can be held for months without being charged, the guest speaker said.

LIBERTY — Imagine being detained for several months without formal charges, then being told that a release date is imminent, only to discover at the last minute that the detention has been extended.

That's the scenario many Palestinian political prisoners face while in administrative detention, said a human-rights activist during his lecture Saturday at the Arab-American Community Center of Greater Youngstown.

Several dozen people attended the presentation by Ala Jaradat, program manager of the Addameer Prisoners' Support and Human Rights Association. Sponsors were the community center, at 15 Belgrade Ave., and the U.S. Palestinian Community Network.

The 17-year-old nongovernmental association focuses on human-rights issues by offering free legal aid and support while advocating for the rights of Palestinian prisoners. Addameer also is dedicated to ending torture through legal procedures, monitoring and solidarity campaigns, its mission statement says.

Jaradat, a former political prisoner who lives in the occupied West Bank city of Ramallah, shared his experiences of campaigning for the freedom and rights of political detainees, as well as his work against torture, arbitrary detention, isolation and other types of persecution.

His local appearance was part of a national tour, "Israel's Palestinian Prisoners, America's Other Guantanamo: A Report on the Conditions of Palestinian Political Prisoners." The tour is to cover about 15 cities, he said.

Jaradat noted that detainees can be held from one to six months on secret information based on Israeli Army military orders. Such orders cover countless aspects of Palestinians' lives, including where they can live, whether they can access their land and what types of businesses they can operate. They also make illegal, for example, student unions and some literature and other publications, he said.

"There are so many reasons that could be behind their arrest and detention," he said.

Many detainees prepare for what they think is their release, then find that their incarceration has been renewed without warning. In other cases, they are allowed to return home but know they can be detained again at any time, he said, adding that there's no limit to the number of times a person can be under administrative detention.

Jaradat also showed a video that detailed the stories of several people who had been held or had loved ones

under detention.

The majority of those detained are men, though some are as young as 12, noted Jaradat, who said that as a child, he saw his own father and several relatives arrested and held.

Since 2000, more than 80,000 Palestinians have been subjected to various forms of detention, Jaradat pointed out.

In addition, interrogations can last up to six months with no charges being filed, and torture often is used, he said.

For more information on the campaign against torture and arbitrary detention, visit www.addameer.info.