



Publication date: ___09 July 2026___

Urgent Open Letter

Immediate implementation of the Supreme Court decision and restoration of regular, effective ICRC access to Palestinian detainees and prisoners in Israeli places of detention

To: The President and Director-General, International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)

From: Red Ribbons Campaign for the Release of Palestinian Hostages and Prisoners Held in Israeli Prisons

Purpose of this letter. We ask the ICRC to use all appropriate humanitarian means within its mandate to secure prompt, regular and meaningful access to Palestinian detainees and prisoners in Israeli custody. The legal responsibility to permit such access rests with the authorities exercising custody.

Dear President and Director-General,

1. Why this intervention is urgent

The Red Ribbons Campaign issues this letter in the interests of human dignity, transparency and the protection of persons deprived of liberty. It is open for endorsement by Palestinian, Arab and international individuals and organisations who support its humanitarian and legal aims.

We recognise that the ICRC cannot compel a detaining authority to admit its delegates, and that its ability to protect detainees depends substantially on neutrality, independence and confidential humanitarian dialogue. This letter does not ask the ICRC to depart from those principles. It asks the ICRC to use its humanitarian mandate with the urgency required and, so far as consistent with confidentiality and the protection of detainees, to communicate whether effective access has been restored.

The ICRC has publicly stated that, since 7 October 2023, it has not been able to visit Palestinian detainees in Israeli places of detention. It has repeatedly called for notification of detainees' whereabouts, access to them, humane treatment and family contact, and has stated that it stands ready to resume regular detention visits.

On 3 June 2026, the Supreme Court of Israel ruled that the blanket ban on ICRC visits to Palestinian detainees and prisoners lacked an adequate legal basis and had to be revoked. The decision now requires prompt and substantive implementation: an acknowledgement of the ruling without actual access would not meet its purpose.

The Campaign and its signatories have received reports and testimonies raising grave humanitarian concerns about treatment, health, detention conditions, family contact and the whereabouts of persons in custody. Those reports are not findings by the ICRC or by a court. They nonetheless require urgent, independent and confidential humanitarian verification.



2. Legal and humanitarian framework

The International Court of Justice held on 19 July 2024 that Israel's continued presence in the Occupied Palestinian Territory is unlawful. That Advisory Opinion does not itself determine every individual detention case. It does, however, reinforce the necessity for strict compliance with the protective rules of international humanitarian law in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

Where Article 143 of the Fourth Geneva Convention applies, it provides that representatives or delegates may go to all places where protected persons are held, have access to all premises occupied by them, and interview them without witnesses. It permits a prohibition on visits only for imperative military necessity and then only exceptionally and temporarily; the duration and frequency of visits may not be restricted.

Rule 124 of the ICRC's study of customary international humanitarian law states that, in international armed conflict, the ICRC must be granted regular access to persons deprived of their liberty to verify their conditions of detention and restore contact with their families.

The ICRC's own established practice identifies five basic conditions for credible detention visits:

- access to all detainees within the ICRC's field of interest;
- access to all premises and facilities used by and for detainees;
- authorisation to repeat visits whenever necessary;
- private interviews with detainees selected by ICRC delegates; and
- a comprehensive detainee list, or authority for the ICRC to compile one.

A visit limited to selected facilities, selected detainees or supervised interviews is not a substitute for meaningful ICRC access. Independent humanitarian monitoring requires private interviews, repeat visits and the practical ability to follow up on concerns.

The principle that humanitarian access cannot be made conditional on reciprocal conduct is illustrated by H.C.J. 794/98, Cheikh Abdal Karim Obeid and Mustafa Dib Mar'i Dirani v Minister of Security (23 August 2001). Against the background of withheld information concerning Israeli captives, the Supreme Court held that the humanitarian consideration in favour of ICRC visits ultimately prevailed and required arrangements enabling those visits. The case confirms that security and humanitarian considerations must be assessed lawfully and that prolonged restrictions cannot simply become routine.

3. Our urgent requests

1. Urgent practical engagement. That the ICRC use its established dialogue with all relevant Israeli authorities to secure the prompt practical implementation of the Supreme Court's decision of 3 June 2026.

2. Full and regular access. That the ICRC seek access meeting all five of its established criteria, including access to all relevant detainees and places of detention, private interviews, repeat visits and accurate information concerning identity, legal status and whereabouts.



3. No substitute for genuine access. That the ICRC make clear, in its dialogue with the authorities, that restricted access to selected facilities, selected detainees or monitored interviews does not satisfy the essential conditions for independent humanitarian monitoring.

4. Information and family contact. That the ICRC continue to seek complete and current information concerning every Palestinian detainee and prisoner in Israeli custody, including location, legal status, health and transfers, and work to restore or preserve family contact wherever possible.

5. Humanitarian verification. That the ICRC conduct its assessment independently and confidentially, including by considering reports of ill-treatment, medical concerns, inadequate food or hygiene, isolation, overcrowding and restrictions on contact, without prejudging any allegation before it has been properly verified.

6. Measured public confirmation. That the ICRC provide a written response to the Campaign within 14 days of publication and, so far as compatible with confidential humanitarian engagement, confirm whether access that meets its five basic criteria has resumed or remains incomplete. We do not ask the ICRC to publish confidential correspondence or information that could prejudice detainees or its humanitarian work.

4. Why implementation matters

Regular and independent detention visits are not a symbolic exercise. They are a practical safeguard against isolation, ill treatment, concealment of whereabouts, and deterioration in physical or mental health. They also permit confidential engagement with the authorities responsible for custody and, where necessary, sustained follow-up.

No person held in custody should become invisible. Effective scrutiny, accurate information, humane treatment and compliance with applicable legal safeguards protect detainees, their families, the rule of law and the integrity of all institutions concerned.

Should meaningful access remain incomplete, the signatories reserve the right to draw the question of non-implementation to the attention of relevant United Nations human rights mechanisms, diplomatic representatives and other appropriate international stakeholders. The immediate objective, however, is practical access and protection, not public confrontation.

5. Conclusion

We respectfully urge the ICRC to act with the urgency this situation requires and to use all appropriate humanitarian means to secure real, regular and effective access to Palestinian detainees and prisoners in Israeli custody.

This letter is addressed to the ICRC because it has a unique humanitarian role. It does not displace or reduce the responsibility of the Israeli authorities to implement the Supreme Court's decision of 3 June 2026 and to comply with the applicable safeguards of international humanitarian law.

We ask for a written response within 14 days of publication.



Authorities and public source material

The following sources are included for transparency and verification. They are not intended to require the ICRC to depart from its confidential humanitarian methods.

1. [International Committee of the Red Cross, “Frequently asked questions on ICRC and Palestinian detainees” \(the ICRC’s published account of the absence of detention access since 7 October 2023 and its readiness to resume visits\).](#)
2. [Supreme Court of Israel decision of 3 June 2026. Contemporaneous reporting of the decision and its scope: Reuters, “Israeli Supreme Court strikes down ban on Red Cross prison visits” \(4 June 2026\).](#)
3. [International Court of Justice, Advisory Opinion of 19 July 2024, Legal Consequences arising from the Policies and Practices of Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem.](#)
4. [Geneva Convention \(IV\) relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, 1949, Article 143.](#)
5. [International Committee of the Red Cross, Customary IHL Study, Rule 124: ICRC Access to Persons Deprived of Their Liberty.](#)
6. [Cheikh Abdal Karim Obeid and Mustafa Dib Mar’i Dirani v The Ministry of Security, H.C.J. 794/98, Supreme Court of Israel, 23 August 2001 \(unofficial English translation reproduced in the ICRC Casebook\).](#)
7. [International Committee of the Red Cross, “How does the ICRC work in detention?” \(the ICRC’s five non-negotiable operating conditions for detention visits\).](#)

Campaign website: www.redribbonscampaign.com