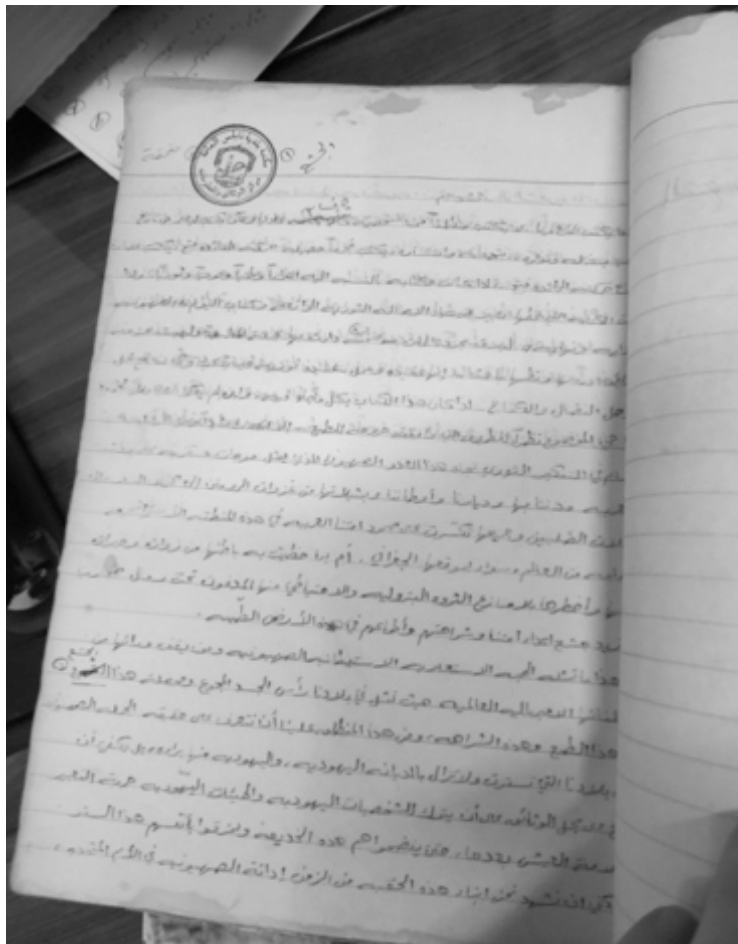
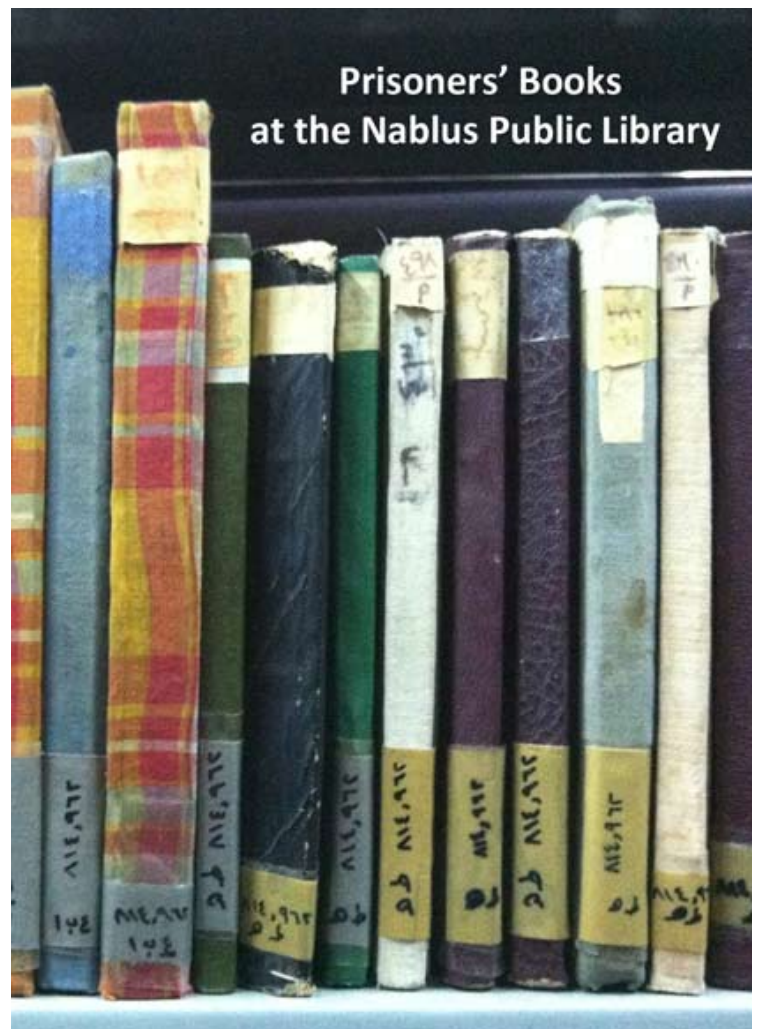


Seal: "Nablus Municipality Public Library, Archive and Information Center"

Librarians and Archivists to Palestine
librarians2palestine@gmail.com
 2014



In Nablus, the Librarians and Archivists to Palestine delegation visited the Prisoners' Book Section of the Nablus Municipality Public Library. The collection includes approximately 8,000 books and 870 handwritten notebooks from two Israeli prisons, Nablus and Jnaid, both located nearby. These two prisons were in operation from 1967 to 1996 and were closed down after the Oslo negotiations. At that time the Palestinian Authority donated the library collections from these prisons to the public library in Nablus. The spines of the books are labeled with either blue or brown tape, indicting which prison the books originally came from.

Librarians and Archivists with Palestine is a growing network of self-identified information workers who are working in solidarity with our Palestinian colleagues to end the Israeli occupation through the lens of access to information and cultural heritage.

Quotes from:

Al-Azraq, Khaled. "Israeli Prisons as Revolutionary Universities." *The Electronic Intifada*, December 9 2009.

Sources and Further Reading:

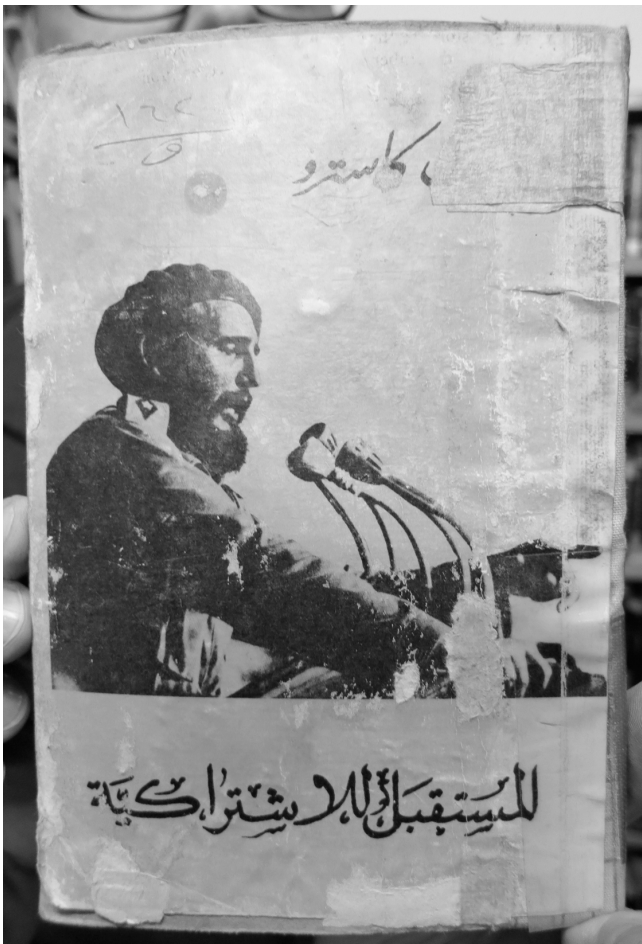
Adalah. "Demanding Israel Prison Service Reverses its Ban on Books in Prisons." *Adalah* website.

Association for Human Rights in Israel. "Supreme Court: Prisoners Should Have Access to Books." *Association for Human Rights in Israel*, April 2 2012.

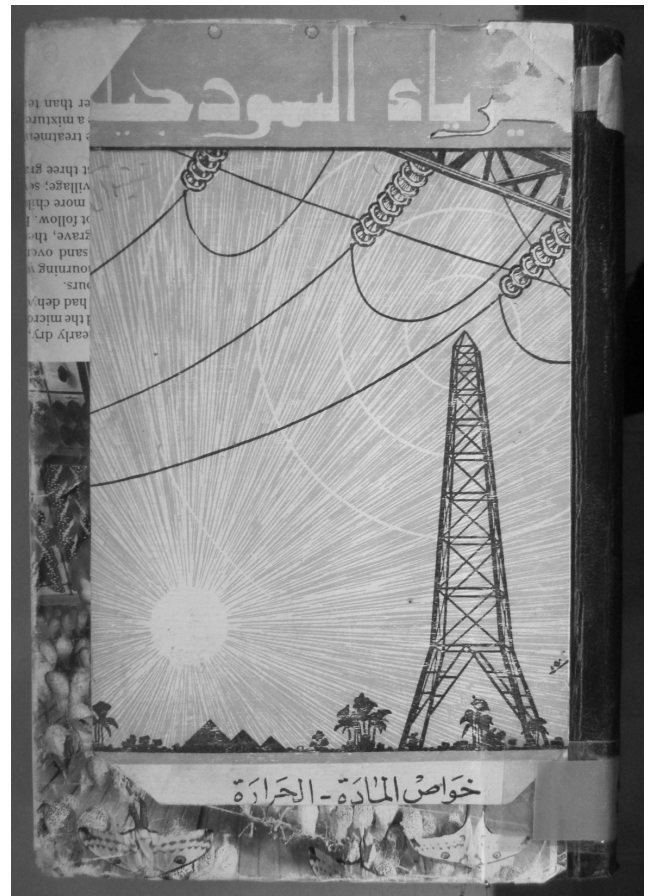
Di Cintio, Marcello. "The Prisoners' Library" *Elsewhere*. June 28, 2012.

Lorber, Ben and Khalil Ashour. "'A Needle in the Binding': The legacy of Palestinian prisoner self-education in Israeli prisons." *Mondoweiss*, November 29 2011.

Thanks to Randa Wahbe from *Addameer* for information about the current state of access to books in Israeli prisons.



Fidel Castro, *The Socialist Future*



Mustafa Kamil, *Special Principles of Material and Heat*

Currently, access to books for Palestinian detainees in Israeli prisons is difficult. The Israeli Prison Authority prevents “security prisoners” (almost exclusively Palestinian political prisoners) from using prison libraries or enrolling in educational courses. Hunger strikes in 2012 re-established the rule that prisoners’ families can bring one or two books per month, although prisoners must return the same number of books each month (i.e. prisoners can have a maximum of two books at a time). In some prisons books are still banned, so access to books is variable depending on the prison and the prison director. A 2012 High Court ruling declared that formal education at the Open Hebrew University is a privilege and not a right, so prisoners remain banned from formal education.

Many Palestinians have been detained by Israel as political prisoners, and as a result prisoner issues are given a lot of prominence in Palestinian society. The books in the Nablus Municipality Public Library give insight into the intellectual interests of Palestinian political prisoners; including books on Marxism, Socialism, independence and anti-colonial movements, and literature from Gabriel Garcia Marquez to Tolstoy. These books played a critical role in the cultural and political life of prisoners in Israeli detention. Former prisoner Khaled al-Azraq explains: “I was first imprisoned in 1982 at the age of sixteen. In prison I found what I was not expecting to find: I found inside the prison what I could not find outside of it. In prison I found Palestine's political, national, revolutionary university. It was in prison that I realized that knowledge is what paves the road to victory and freedom.”

Prisoners organized classes, seminars, workshops and competitions to educate each other on a wide variety of topics. Prisoner librarians circulated and exchanged books every day, as well as providing a list of all the available titles. Prisoners also prepared and distributed magazines, with original articles handwritten in notebooks. Khaled al-Azraq again explains, “Prisoners passed on what they knew and had learned in an organized and systematic fashion. Simply put, learning and passing on knowledge and understanding, both about Palestine and in general, has been considered a patriotic duty necessary to ensure steadfastness and perseverance in the struggle to defend our rights against Zionism and colonialism.”



Special issue of *The Dog*, a satirical political journal published in Damascus (1924-1972), handwritten and mimeographed.

Family members of prisoners were allowed to buy two books a month for those in detention, from a short list of titles approved by the prison administration. The list of approved titles greatly expanded after a visit by the Red Cross in late 1972, eventually including the books about Marxist and Socialist thought which became so important in the education of political prisoners. Books were also smuggled into prisons when specific titles were not on the approved list.



Notebook, Portraits of the Bitter Life of those Behind Bars



The books display the loving repairs made by prisoners. Spines have been repaired with cloth, covers replaced with magazine cutouts. Inside the books, prisoners' annotations, drawings and other marginalia can be seen.

