

24 January 2001

AI Index MDE 15/004/2001 - News Service Nr. 14

Israel/OT: Impunity for Killers of Palestinians

"The sentence handed down to Nahum Korman sends out a powerful message - that Israelis can kill Palestinians with impunity," Amnesty International said today. The human rights organization was commenting on the decision of the Jerusalem District Court to sentence Nahum Korman, a 37-year-old Israeli citizen, to six months community service for the killing of an 11-year-old Palestinian child, Hilmi Shawasheh. He was also ordered to pay 70,000 shekels to the victim's family.

The punishment is in sharp contrast with the six and half year sentence given to Su'ad Hilmi Ghazal, a Palestinian from Sebastia village near Nablus who in December 1998 at the age of 15 and whilst suffering psychological problems, injured an Israeli settler by stabbing him. Immediately after her arrest, despite being a minor, she was held incommunicado without access to either a lawyer or her family for 27 days, for 17 of which she was held in solitary confinement. Since then, Su'ad Hilmi Ghazal, whose mental health deteriorated as a result of the ordeal, has been held for two years in the women's section of Neve Terze prison in Ramle.

"These two contrasting sentences reflect a deeply rooted culture of discrimination against Palestinians, which permeates the Israeli justice system," Amnesty International said. "People have a right to be treated equally under the law, regardless of which community they come from, yet this clearly does not apply in Israel."

Both Nahum Korman and Su'ad Hilmi Ghazal were sentenced on 21 January 2001.

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