

190/95

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ISRAEL AND THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES AND THE AREAS UNDER PALESTINIAN JURISDICTION:  
AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL CALLS ON PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY TO END TORTURE FOLLOWING DEATH IN DETENTION.

One day after his arrest on 27 September 1995, Azzam Muslah, a 52-year-old Palestinian died in custody apparently as a result of torture in the Palestinian self-rule area of Jericho.

"The Palestinian Authority should take immediate steps to end the torture which may have caused the death of five Palestinians over the past 16 months," Amnesty International said.

Members of the Palestinian Preventive Security Services (PSS) apparently took Azzam Muslah from his home in the village of 'Ain Yabrud near Ramallah, outside the territory now under the jurisdiction of the Palestinian Authority. During the day of 28 September, his family went round detention centres in Jericho to find out their relative's whereabouts. Without any result, the family returned home at 10 pm.

The following morning, at 2am, the body of Azzam Muslah was taken to the home of the village *mukhtar* (head). The body's head reportedly was bruised and bloodied. The Jericho Hospital informed his family that Azzam Muslah was already dead when he had been brought to the hospital.

Up to now no autopsy is known to have been performed. A spokesperson for the PSS apparently denied on 29 September that Azzam Muslah had been detained by them. On 30 September, the same spokesperson is reported to have said that the victim poisoned himself in his cell. No further details have been made available.

This is the fifth death in custody in circumstances which suggest that torture or ill-treatment played a part in the death since the Palestinian Authority was set up in May 1994:

- Farid Hashem Abu Jarbu' died on 6 July 1994 in Gaza Central Prison 10 days after his arrest;
- Salman Jalaytah died in Jericho on 18 January, three days after his arrest;
- Muhammad 'Atwa 'Abd al-Majid al-'Amur died in Gaza, two months after his arrest;
- Tawfiq Subaih 'Awdah al-Sawarkah died in Gaza shortly after having been arrested on 27 August 1995;

A sixth death occurred in custody when Yusuf al-Sha'rawi was killed in Gaza on 26 May, allegedly by the accidental discharge of a gun during his interrogation.

Amnesty International has received a number of reports of torture or ill-treatment of Palestinians in the areas under the jurisdiction of the Palestinian Authority. Other Palestinians have been arrested in the West Bank and, like Azzam Muslah, transported to Jericho to be detained and often tortured. The organization has also received reports of extra-judicial punishments, such as kneecapping, carried out by Palestinian security services on Palestinians in the West Bank.

The Palestinian Authority announced an investigation and the arrest or suspension of members of the security services involved in some of the cases of death in custody. However, no result of any autopsy or investigation into deaths in custody, torture or other ill-treatment has ever been made public. The interrogators arrested after the death of Farid Abu Jarbu' have reportedly been released and reinstated in their posts.

Amnesty International welcomed the announcement of investigations into past deaths in custody but now wants to see the results of these investigations.

"The Palestinian Authority has an obligation to its citizens and to the families of victims to ensure that full investigations are carried out and their results published," the human rights organization said.

"The Palestinian Authority should now make it clear to all those concerned that no one is above the law and no one can carry out such grave violations as torture with impunity."

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