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## **Israel/Occupied Territories/Palestinian Authority: Five years after Oslo, durable peace must be based on justice**

During the five years since the Oslo Agreement, human rights have been consistently sacrificed by Israel and the Palestinian Authority in the name of "security", Amnesty International said in a new report issued today.

"Sustainable peace can only be built on a foundation of human rights," Amnesty International said. "The acceptance of a peace without human rights has been the backdrop for the failure of the peace process and the miserable state of human rights in the region."

In this 40-page report, Amnesty International looks at detention of political prisoners, torture and unlawful killings of civilians over the past five years since the signing of the Oslo Agreement on 13 September 1993. It describes the progress and changing nature of the violations over the past five years. The balance-sheet is grim.

- More than 10,000 Palestinians have been arrested by the Israeli security forces and routinely subjected to torture under interrogation;
- Israel's Supreme Court accepted and legitimized the use of torture and administrative detention without trial;
- The principle of allowing Israeli security forces to kill suspected "terrorists" anywhere in the world has been endorsed by a commission of inquiry;
- Since 1994, the Palestinian Authority has detained hundreds of Palestinians opposed to the peace process without charge or trial;
- The Palestinian judiciary has become marginalized and hundreds were subjected to unfair trials and torture. Twenty detainees died in custody.

The United States and other third countries supporting the peace process in the Middle East have condoned and sometimes even encouraged violations, Amnesty International said.

Suicide bombings causing the deaths and wounding of more than 100 Israeli civilians have provided the pretext for many of the human rights violations described in this report. The Palestinian population has been the main victim of these violations.

For long periods roadblocks, mostly erected by Israeli security services, which separate town from town and village from village become part of the life of each citizen of the Palestinian Authority which fully controls only 3% and partially controls 27% of the territories occupied by Israel in 1967. Many cases of unlawful killings and beatings by the Israeli security services took place at such roadblocks.

Methods of the systematic and effectively legalized torture include violent shaking; detainees being forced to squat for long periods, or sit or lie stretched over chairs or tables; prolonged sleep deprivation; continuous hooding, all accompanied by incessant blaring music. The excuse is Israel's need for "security".

Israel has carried out political assassinations for more than 30 years; a commission of inquiry into an unsuccessful Israeli attempt to extrajudicially execute Khaled Mesh'al, a *Hamas* leader, in Jordan stated that it "did not question the policy" which set up the assassination attempt. Again the excuse is "security".

Under the Palestinian Authority pressure from outside to stamp out the sources of "terrorism" has led, often with the apparent encouragement of the United States and Israel, to waves of human rights violations. Once again the excuse is "security".

Not all violations have been dictated by the security agenda. Torture is frequently used against those suspected of "collaborating" with Israel. More than 200 of these prisoners remain detained without charge or trial.

Nor has the story been all bleak. In Israel, national and international protests led to the temporary withdrawal of two bills which would have given formal legal sanction to the use of physical force during interrogation and a third bill denying redress to victims of human rights violations.

Under the Palestinian Authority, the use of torture diminished after strong internal and international pressure in 1996. The Palestinian legislative council has played an important role in pushing for the Palestinian Authority to be accountable for human rights violations. However, torture continues to be used by certain Palestinian security services with impunity.

Other human rights violations not included in this report, such as border closures which prevent freedom of movement; confiscation of land; destruction of houses; confiscation of Jerusalem identity cards, have profoundly affected the lives of Palestinians.

"Fifty years on, the message of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that respect for human rights 'is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world' has been ignored by Israel, the Palestinian Authority and the international community," Amnesty International said.

"The fifth anniversary of the Oslo Agreement presents an opportunity for Israel, the Palestinian Authority, as well as the international community, to reflect on the human rights violations of the past five years in the region, acknowledge that serious mistakes have been made and commit themselves to ensure that there is full respect for human rights in the future."

## **BACKGROUND**

On 13 September 1993 the Israeli Government and the Palestine Liberation Organization signed the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements (Oslo Agreement). Under the arrangement Israel was to transfer administrative responsibilities to a Palestinian Authority, to be established in the Gaza Strip and the Jericho area in the West Bank. The transfer of authority (which did not actually take place until May 1994), was to start a five-year transitional period to a negotiated permanent status agreement.

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