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NEWS RELEASE

Israel: Official inquiry sanctions government killings

Amnesty International today criticized the conclusions of an official inquiry into the Mossad's botched assassination attempt of *Hamas* leader Khaled Mish'al for endorsing political killings by the Israeli Government.

"As we predicted, the committee of inquiry has concentrated on the reasons why the attempted assassination failed rather than the illegality of the botched killing. Now it has given the green light to state-sanctioned murder," Amnesty International said.

On 25 September 1997 two Israeli secret agents attempted to assassinate Khaled Mish'al in Jordan by injecting poison into his ear. An official commission of inquiry, set up by the Israeli Government after the assassination failed, delivered its conclusions yesterday.

"The commission of inquiry stated that it does not question the Israeli Government's policy of using extrajudicial executions in order to combat 'terrorism'. It even calls on the Israeli government to '*discuss [such a policy] ..., define its scope and establish ground rules for its implementation*'," Amnesty International commented.

Following the publicizing of the conclusions of the committee of inquiry, the Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu confirmed that Israel's policy was "*to strike at terrorism wherever necessary*".

Amnesty International reiterates its demand to the Israeli Government to abide by its commitments under international law to respect the right to life and immediately cease the use of extrajudicial executions, whoever may be the target. According to international law, the right to life cannot be derogated from even in times of a public emergency which threatens the life of the nation. Persons accused of carrying out such attacks must be charged and given a fair trial.

Amnesty International also opposes and rejects the killing of civilians by armed opposition groups. More than 100 civilians have been killed during the past four years in attacks by *Hamas* and Islamic *Jihad* in Israel and the Occupied Territories.

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