

ISRAEL/OCCUPIED TERRITORIES Iyad Habib Mohammad, aged 24, student

Student Iyad Habib Mohammad has been in incommunicado detention for 37 days, since he was arrested by the Israeli General Security Service (GSS) on 26 January 1999 on his way home from university. Amnesty International fears he may be tortured or ill-treated during interrogation by the GSS.

Iyad Habib Mohammad, an electrical engineering student in his final year, is president of Birzeit University's Student Council. Since his arrest, he has been denied access to his lawyer, Adv. Elia Theodory of the Human Rights Action Project of Birzeit University (HRAP), by four consecutive prevention orders. Adv. Theodory was recently told that a fifth prevention order had been issued denying access to legal counsel until 4 March, despite two petitions to the Israeli High Court of Justice requesting that he be allowed to see a lawyer.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Israel is the only country in the world which has effectively legalized the use of torture or ill-treatment in its interrogation of detainees, principally Palestinians arrested for political reasons. In the 1987 Landau Commission Report into the GSS, Israel accepted the use of "a moderate measure of physical pressure". Since 1994 a ministerial committee has allowed increased physical pressure. The Israeli High Court of Justice accepts the arguments of the GSS and will not issue injunctions forbidding the use of physical force.

Methods of torture used during interrogation against hundreds of detainees per year include sleep deprivation for days while held in painful positions (*shabeh*); squatting like a frog for more than two hours at a time (*gambaz*); violent shaking for five minutes at a time (*tiltul* - one detainee died from this in 1995); and confinement in a space the size of a cupboard. In addition to this detainees' heads are covered with stinking hoods. Loud music blares out continuously to further disorientate them.

Although the United Nations Committee against Torture described, in 1997 and 1998, these interrogation methods as torture, forbidden to all states in all circumstances, the Israeli authorities continue to use torture routinely on the vast majority of those arrested.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express/airmail letters in English or your own language:

- urging the Israeli authorities to guarantee that Iyad Habib Mohammad will not be tortured or ill-treated during interrogation, and to ensure that he is granted prompt access to his family, doctors and lawyers;
- reminding the Israeli Government that the interrogation methods they employ are considered by the UN Committee against Torture to be in breach of the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment;
- reminding the Israeli Government that the Convention Against Torture, ratified by Israel in 1991, states that: "No exceptional circumstances whatsoever, whether a state of war or a threat of war, internal political instability or any other public emergency, may be invoked as a justification of torture".

APPEALS TO:

Mr Binyamin Netanyahu

Prime Minister
Office of the Prime Minister
3 Kaplan Street
Jerusalem 91919, Israel
Telegrams: Prime Minister, Jerusalem, Israel
Telexes: 25279 mpres il
Faxes: + 972-2-566-4838
Salutation: Dear Prime Minister

Mr Tzahi Hanegbi
Minister of Justice
Ministry of Justice
29 Salah al-Din Street
Jerusalem 91029, Israel
Telegrams: Justice Minister, Jerusalem, Israel
Faxes: + 972-2-6285-438
Salutation: Dear Minister

Mr Ami Ayalon
Head of the General Security Service
C/o the Office of the Prime Minister
3 Kaplan Street
Jerusalem 91919, Israel
Telegrams: Ayalon, Head GSS, Prime Minister's Office, Jerusalem, Israel
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Salutation: Dear Mr Ayalon

COPIES TO: diplomatic representatives of Israel accredited to your country.

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PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat,
or your section office, if sending appeals after 14 April 1999.