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**Oral Statement
to the UN Commission on Human Rights on Israel and the Occupied Territories**

Israel: flouting UN obligations in the name of security

In a statement read on Israel and the Occupied Territories today before the Commission on Human Rights in Geneva, Amnesty International reiterated its concerns that over the past year, Israel has, in the name of "security", flouted its obligations in human rights treaties it has freely ratified and has ignored recommendations made by United Nations treaty bodies.

Although the number of Palestinians imprisoned or administratively detained by the Israeli security services has decreased in recent years, more than 1,600 Palestinians are still arrested each year. They have been routinely tortured or ill-treated during interrogation. At least 80 of them are held in administrative detention without charge or trial.

In addition, about 130 Lebanese nationals remain detained without charge or trial for up to 13 years in Khiam detention centre in Israeli-occupied south Lebanon.

In July 1998, the Human Rights Committee examined Israel's human rights record including its use of administrative detention. The Committee found that the present application of administrative detention is "incompatible with articles 7 and 16 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights". These articles prohibit torture and ill-treatment and guarantee the right of every person to recognition before the law.

The Committee expressed specific concern that Lebanese held in administrative detention "do not personally threaten state security" but are kept as "bargaining-chips". This fact, which constitutes a violation of human rights, has been acknowledged by the Israeli Supreme Court.

Moreover, the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention concluded last year that the detention of the 21 Lebanese held as “bargaining chips” was arbitrary. Nevertheless the Israeli government renewed their administrative detention.

Examining Israel’s second periodic report in May 1998, the Committee against Torture again concluded that interrogation methods, such as violent shaking, or hooding and shackling detainees to low chairs with loud music playing, constituted torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment and thus contravened Article 1 of the Convention against Torture. Nevertheless, in January this year, Israel’s State Attorney stated before Israel’s High Court that these methods were legal.

Many of these human rights violations are officially authorized at the highest level and indeed effectively legalized.

More than 100 Israeli civilians have been killed in suicide bombings by armed Palestinian groups over the last five years. But such abuses by non-governmental groups can never excuse human rights violations by governments in its territory and subject to its jurisdiction.

Without human rights there can be no genuine security and no sustainable peace. Amnesty International requests the Commission to call on the Israeli government to immediately cease violations of basic human rights and to apply fully United Nations human rights treaties, as well as the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949, in the Occupied Territories.

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