

PUBLIC

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Torture and ill-treatment / Legal concern

9 February

Israel/Occupied Territories **Jihad Husni Mohammed Shehadeh, physics student, Palestinian**

Jihad Husni Mohammed Shehadeh, a Palestinian detained without charge or trial by Israel since August 1997 for his alleged links to *Hamas*, is currently being interrogated and tortured, by Israel's General Security Service (GSS).

Jihad Shehadeh has been under interrogation since 7 February 1999 when he was transferred from prison in Israel to Hasharon interrogation centre, also in Israel.

The method of torture used on Jihad Shehadeh has included *shabeh*, where the person's hands and legs are tied to a chair in an uncomfortable position and sleep deprivation. Except for periods of interrogation, Jihad Shehadeh was hooded in this position with loud music playing, from the afternoon on 7 February until the following morning when he was taken to meet his lawyer.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Jihad Husni Mohammed Shehadeh was arrested in August 1997 under an administrative detention order - a procedure by which detainees are held without charge or trial for a renewable period of up to six months on the orders of a military commander. His administrative detention order is due to expire in one week.

For years, Amnesty International has expressed concern that secret Israeli guidelines (authorized by the so-called Landau report in 1987), allow for the use of torture or ill-treatment, which it refers to as "moderate physical pressure". Similarly, since October 1994 a special ministerial committee said that "increased physical pressure" can be used during interrogation.

GSS officers who have testified in court admit to using prolonged sleep deprivation, forcing detainees to sit or stand in painful positions for long periods of time and squatting (*gambaz*) for up to two hours at a time. Violent shaking (*tiltul*), which may cause brain damage, has also been used but must be authorized by the head of the GSS.

A UN Special Rapporteur on Torture has referred to many of these practices as "methods of torture" as defined in the UN Convention against Torture. The Israeli government, however, denies they constitute torture.

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

- asking the Israeli authorities whether *shabeh* has been used on Jihad Husni Mohammed Shehadeh and reminding them that this practice constitutes torture, in breach of the Convention against Torture to which Israel is a State Party;
- asking that the use of any interrogation methods which constitute torture or ill-treatment cease immediately;
- calling for the release of Jihad Husni Mohammed Shehadeh if he is not to be promptly charged with a recognizably criminal offence and given a fair trial according to international standards;
- reminding the government of Israel of its commitment to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in particular Article 5: "No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment".

APPEALS TO:

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Salutation: Dear Prime Minister

Mr Tzahi Hanegbi
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Ministry of Justice
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COPIES TO: diplomatic representatives of Israel accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.