

AI Index: PRE 01/571/2013  
29 October 2013

## **Israel must implement recommendations of UN human rights review**

The Israeli authorities must thoroughly engage with and implement the recommendations made during an examination of its human rights performance today, said Amnesty International.

This afternoon, Israel will undergo its Universal Periodic Review (UPR), the United Nations Human Rights Council's review process. It had previously refused to participate in a session scheduled for 29 January 2013 and threatened to boycott the October session.

“The fact that Israel's human rights performance is finally going to be reviewed today is positive news. However, it is not enough for Israel to simply attend the session; it must engage with the process and accept and implement accepted recommendations to improve the situation of human rights on the ground,” said Peter Splinter, the organization's representative to the United Nations in Geneva.

Among the issues that Israel will be asked questions about are discrimination against the Bedouin minority and against other Palestinians, the use of torture, accountability for the Israeli armed forces' actions in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, administrative detention, the treatment of Sub-Saharan African refugees and asylum-seekers, violence against women and the detention conditions of juveniles.

The Israeli authorities finally agreed to take part in the UPR following discussions with European and other states. Amnesty International welcomes the demonstrations of commitment to the universality of the UPR by the states that pressed Israel to undergo its examination. The organization also appreciates the efforts of the Human Rights Council President and the Council's Secretariat in this regard, and hopes that Israel's re-engagement signals genuine commitment to respecting its international obligations.

“At the root of the UPR are the convictions that every state has human rights obligations and must be subject to international scrutiny of its human rights record,” said Peter Splinter.

“It is disappointing that Israel's participation in the process was made the subject of political bargaining. Israel's response to its examination under the UPR must be done in a positive spirit of demonstrating commitment to the improvement of the human rights situation in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories.”

“Amnesty International, along with all who have a stake in the universal respect for human rights, will be watching with interest on Tuesday afternoon,” said Peter Splinter.

The questions Israel will face, posed by states such as the United Kingdom, Slovenia and Norway, echo concerns already raised by UN treaty bodies and by human rights organizations contributing to the review. They are considered pressing issues for rights holders under Israel's jurisdiction and control including the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT). The international community is in agreement that Israel's human rights obligations apply to the OPT despite Israel's rejection of this. Israel's UPR state

report omits any update on human rights in the OPT.

Israel should be prepared to answer questions on its conduct in the OPT and in armed conflict as well as within Israel.

For example, as of the end of August 2013, 134 Palestinians were still held as administrative detainees. Among them is the Palestinian academic Ahmad Qatamesh who has been held for nearly two-and-half years solely for the peaceful expression of his political views, without charge or trial and without intention to bring him to trial. Amnesty International believes he should be released immediately and unconditionally.

Israeli investigations into war crimes and possible crimes against humanity have been inadequate. To mention but one example, Fayez Salha, lost his wife Randa Salha, four children and sister-in-law Fatma when Israeli forces bombed their home in Beit Lahia, Gaza Strip, in the night of 9 January 2009 during Operation “Cast Lead”. Only women and children were in the house at the time. On 7 February 2013, the Beersheva District Court dismissed the civil case brought by the Salha family. This rejection comes after the criminal investigation by the military had been closed three years before without anyone being brought to account.

Less than four years after Operation “Cast Lead”, another armed conflict caused more than 160 casualties in the Gaza Strip and six in Israel.

Fourteen countries, including Saudi Arabia, China and Chad are undergoing a review of their human rights records this month.

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