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## **Israel/Jordan: Amnesty International condemns attempted killing by Israeli intelligence**

The Israeli Government's attempt to kill Hamas leader, Khaled Mish'al, in Amman on 25 September follows a pattern of extrajudicial killings or attempted killings ordered or condoned by successive Israeli Governments, Amnesty International said today.

"Even if the person targeted is suspected of ordering or participating in violent acts, such killings are an unacceptable violation of fundamental human rights -- including the right to life," the organization said.

On 25 September 1997 two Israeli secret agents, attacked Khaled Mish'al in Amman, Jordan. They reportedly injected him with a poison which would have given the impression that he had died of an illness. The Israeli Government on 5 October admitted its responsibility for the attack; saying he was involved in planning Hamas attacks on Israeli civilians.

On 7 October, the Israeli Prime Minister, Binyamin Netanyahu, set up a Committee of Inquiry, which includes a former head of Israeli intelligence (Mossad). At the same time, he defended the assassination attempt, saying that Israel was fighting a "just war". Public Security Minister, Avigdor Kahalani, insisted the furore would not keep Israel from future attempts to kill suspected "*guerilla leaders... wherever they are*".

"Statements by Israeli Government ministers do not bode well for the Committee of Inquiry which may end up considering the failure rather than the illegality of the botched Amman attack," Amnesty International said. "Extrajudicial killings in any form are totally unacceptable and we call on the Israeli Government to cease them."

Amnesty International opposes unreservedly the killing of civilians by armed opposition groups. More than 100 civilians have been killed over the past four years in attacks by *Hamas* and Islamic *Jihad* in Israel or the Occupied Territories. Nevertheless, governments must in all circumstances maintain full respect for international human rights standards, particularly the rights to life and security of person, in taking action against perpetrators of these attacks.

According to international human rights instruments, such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), a person's inherent right to life cannot be derogated from, even "*in time of public emergency which threatens the life of the nation*". If persons are suspected of being involved in criminal activity, a government is under an obligation to charge them and bring them to trial. This attempt to execute Khaled Mish'al was in flagrant violation of his internationally-recognized rights to life and security of person, as well as his right, if accused, to receive a fair trial, including the presumption of innocence and the right to a defence.

Amnesty International has also opposed similar practices by other governments such as Peru, Iran and Libya.

### **Background**

Since the attack Israel has released the *Hamas* leader, Shaikh Ahmad Yassin, serving a life sentence since 1988. Israel has also released 20 Jordanians who were serving prison sentences and has apparently agreed to release 50 more Palestinian detainees. On 6 October Jordan released the two Israeli agents from its custody and they were transferred to Israel. Canada recalled its Ambassador in protest at the use of forged Canadian passports.

Until the Oslo Agreement of 1993, those reportedly killed by Israeli agents were mostly leaders of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). For instance:

**Mahmud Saleh**, PLO representative in Paris, was killed in Paris on 3 January 1977.

**Abu Jihad**, (Khalil al-Wazir), in charge of the PLO military arm, was killed by an Israeli assassination squad on 16 April 1988 at his home in Tunis.

In recent years, those killed have been suspected leaders of *Hamas* and Islamic *Jihad*. They include:

**Fathi Shikaki**, an Islamic *Jihad* leader, gunned down on 26 October 1995 in his hotel in Malta.

**Yahya Ayyash**, suspected of having made the bombs used by suicide bombers, killed by a mobile booby-trapped telephone in Gaza on 6 January 1996.