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[State-sanctioned torture in Israeli detention](#)



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RAMALLAH — PA Minister of Prisoners' Affairs Issa Qaraqe released new information Monday revealing cases of child torture under Israeli interrogation.

The announcement came one day ahead of the release of an Israeli rights group document charging Israel with “state sanctioned ill-treatment of interrogees” in at least one detention facility in Petah Tikva, in central Israel.

Qaraqe outlined the case of 13-year-old sixth graders Muhammad Tare Abdul Latif Mukhaimar, and Muhammad Nasser Ali Radwan from the central West Bank town of Beit Ur At-Tahta. Both were detained by Israeli forces in July, he said, and related their stories of torture to officials.

Mukhaimar and Radwan said they were taken by Israeli border guards patrolling sections of Highway 443, a previously settler-only road which was installed with additional checkpoints when an Israeli court decision mandated that it be opened for Palestinian use. When he was forced into a patrol car, Mukhaimar said he was kicked in the legs and beaten with rifle butts until he fell to the floor. The boy said he was then blindfolded and moved to the detention center.

According to the joint B'Tselem and HaMoked report, testimonies from 121 detainees “indicate a clear pattern of activity by the authorities,” which “constitutes cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment.”

Taken to the same detention facility detailed in the report, Mukhaimar said he and Radwan were locked by border guards naked in the facility bathroom and kept there for two days with the air conditioning on.

He was so thirsty, he said, that he and Radwan drank the toilet water. Whenever they became sleepy guards would bang on the door to the room and wake them up, he added.

“The most awful thing that happened, was when the soldiers went to the bathroom, they peed on us and did not use the toilet,” Mukhaimar said, adding that one of the soldiers videotaped the incident.

The two said that after at least 48 hours in the washroom, they were transferred to the Binyamin settlement detention facility, where they were questioned from 10 p.m. until 3 a.m. They were then transferred to the Ofer prison for three months then to Remonim prison. They remain in custody pending trial.

Testimonies from the two children were in line with revelations in the report from the rights groups, which said violations against detainees “begin from the moment of their arrest and continue until the detainee’s transfer from the facility.”

According to the collected testimony, “violations include cruel detention conditions in sealed cells, in isolation and disgraceful hygienic conditions, continuous cuffing of detainees’ hands in the interrogation room in a way that makes it impossible for them to move, sleep deprivation, and other methods that harm the detainees physically and mentally.

“Nine percent of the witnesses related that the interrogators used physical violence against them in the interrogation room.”

The report noted that “the use of any one of these means, certainly their combined use, constitutes cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment, and in some instances, torture. All are strictly forbidden under international law and Israeli law.”

Qaraqe said the ministry will file a complaint against the Israeli soldiers involved in the torture of Mukhaimar and Radwan, and their ill-treatment was denounced in the Monday cabinet meeting of the Palestinian Authority.

A statement from the cabinet said “the repressive practices and measures by the occupation authorities” against children were in “violation of international law, human rights conventions relating to children.” Ministers called on rights institutions and the UN to “shoulder its legal and humanitarian efforts to protect our children and our prisoners from brutal Israeli practices against them in prisons and detention centers.”

State sanctioned ill-treatment

Findings of the rights group report, however, indicated there was little hope for justice at the Israeli courts.

Since 2001, the report noted, “Palestinians interrogated by ISA agents have filed 645 complaints to the Ministry of Justice regarding the manner in which they were interrogated. Not one of the complaints led to a criminal investigation against the interrogator.”

The rights groups said the continued use of torture and ill-treatment against Palestinian detainees is justified by the state “by claiming the actions are necessary to thwart serious acts of terrorism.”

However, analysts with the groups said “This claim does not warrant violation of the absolute prohibition on torture and cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment,” and added that “Israel’s attempts to divert the public debate to what it refers to as the ‘ticking-bomb dilemma’ is artificial.”

Analysts cite the testimonies of detainees like Mukhaimar and Radwan who were not suspected of serious offenses. Some of the witnesses interviewed for the report were accused of acts political or religious in nature, it said, and prison sentences ranged from a few months to two years at most.

“The ill-treatment of the detainees continued after their interrogation ended,” the report continued, “refuting the claim that the means of interrogation chosen were intended to thwart acts of terrorism.”

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