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High Court of Justice (archive photo)
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Report: High Court permits torture of Palestinians

Public Committee Against Torture in Israel says there is 'no effective barrier – not legal and certainly not ethical – that stands in the way of using torture'; Shin Bet in response: Interrogations help prevent thwart terror attacks

Aviram Zino

The Public Committee Against Torture in Israel (PCATI) on Wednesday slammed the High Court's approval of the use of controversial methods to interrogate Palestinians deemed as "ticking bombs," saying the ruling was interpreted by the Shin Bet as a green light to torture almost every Palestinian detainee.

[For full report click here](#)

A report released by the PCATI showcases detailed accounts of nine Palestinian detainees it claims were tortured by physicians and medical staff members in hospitals, Shin Bet interrogators, military judges and advocates, prison wardens, police officers and even senior Justice Ministry officials.

According to the report, the idea of a "ticking bomb" was first coined as a literary concept by French author and journalist Jean Lartéguy in his book "Les Centurions," 1961, which relates to the French occupation of Algeria, "which was no less brutal than the Israeli occupation of Palestinian Territories."

"It is entirely possible that the practice of torture is an effective measure for obtaining information that may save human life (the Public Committee Against Torture opposes torture absolutely, regardless of such claims), but the testimonies of the nine terror victims exemplify the extent to which the torture mechanism is rooted in the treatment of Palestinian detainees, and the exceedingly bureaucratic way in which torture is carried out, in an organized, almost blasé manner," the report said.

"We have no way of knowing what information was in the possession of the Israeli security apparatuses that led to the use of such sadistic torture, but it is doubtful that any of the victims fits the very terrible scenario of a 'ticking bomb'."

'Ethical boundary is blurred'

PCATI said in the report that it is no longer possible to limit the practice of torture to exceptional cases.

"Today in Israel, there is no effective barrier – not legal and certainly not ethical – that stands in the way of using torture. A secret service organization such as the GSS (Shin Bet) decides independently to use torture and, afterwards, investigates itself as to whether the use of interrogation was justified.

"The Justice Ministry – from the Attorney General through the State Attorney's Office and the nameless GSS Ombudsman of Interogees' Complaints – gives systematic and blind backing to the interrogation methods of the GSS. The legal system tends to avoid torture victims' complaints," the report said.

PCATI director Hannah Friedman said in the report's closing paragraph that "when the nations of the world decided in the wake of the world wars of the last century to prohibit the use of torture absolutely and with no reservations, this was an attempt to denote an ethical boundary between the nations of the world and the old, cruel, racist, un-discriminatingly murderous world – to declare that there are deeds that democracies and decent people do not commit.

"Torture victims, in their painful testimonies, serve to warn us that this ethical boundary is blurred in our society. A state that views itself as a democracy committed to the protection of human rights cannot allow torture that is derived from the darkness of the Middle Ages," she said.

The Shin Bet security agency said in response that its interrogations were "conducted

according to the law. All detainees have the right to file a complaint with the courts or the Red Cross and these will be examined by the Ombudsman of Interogees' Complaints."

"It must be stressed that the information derived from these interrogations helped prevent and thwart acts of terror against Israeli citizens."

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