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Report: Norway diplomats urge Oslo to criticize Israel over torture

By The Associated Press

Norway's embassy in Tel Aviv has urged the government to criticize Israel for the alleged use of torture in prisons, the state radio network NRK reported Thursday.

The network said it had obtained a secret diplomatic document from the embassy urging action by expressing our concern that torture is still practiced in Israel.

According to Norway's NRK, the concern stemmed from a report by the Public Committee Against Torture in Israel, an Israeli human rights group, claiming that prisoners were sometimes beaten during interrogation, held in painfully tight handcuffs and suffered isolation, threats, humiliation and sleep deprivation.

Norway's Deputy Foreign Minister Raymond Johansen said he was aware of the document, but had not decided whether to act upon the recommendation.

"We have a number of difficult cases to raise with the Israeli authorities, not in the least in relation to the Israel-Palestinian conflict," Johansen said on NRK. "Every government must exercise good judgment in which matters to raise at any given time."

He said Norway does consider torture and abuse to be serious

issues, but you always have to make a choice.

The Israeli Embassy in Oslo said it could not immediately comment on the report because the ambassador was in a meeting.

Norway has sought to be a peacemaker in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, having secretly brokered the now-tattered 1993 Oslo Agreement Peace accords between the sides.

According to NRK, the secret diplomatic document says the interrogation methods are seen as legal by Israeli authorities.

NRK said the human rights group report was based on interviews with 82 former prisoners.

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