

The rights to dignity and bodily integrity – in interrogation facilities also

A few facts...

- Detainees in interrogations facilities in Israel undergo torture.
- They are deprived of sleep
- They are shackled with handcuffs in painful positions with a sack over their head.
- They are forced to crouch in a frog position for long hours.
- They are strung up by the arms with their toes barely touching the floor.
- They are shaken, despite the fact that shaking can result in brain damage and death.
- Some two year ago, the detainee 'Abd al-Samad Harizat died as a result of being violently shaken his interrogators.
- People interrogated under torture sustain lifelong physical and mental disabilities.
- Israeli law prohibits the use of force in interrogation.
- Israel does deny that methods such as shackling, shaking, sleep deprivation and hooding are used against the detainees.
- A special ministerial committee renews every three months the authorizations it has given to the Israel Security Agency (ISA) to use extreme methods of interrogation.
- The Supreme Court has been avoiding decision on the issue of torture.
- The Supreme Court occasionally allows the ISA to use torture.
- Israel justifies systematic torture based on the "ticking bomb" argument.
- This argument is devoid of any moral or legal basis.
- To date, Israel has never cited a single case where the circumstances match the "ticking bomb" scenario.

What can be done now?

Torture is taking place in the heart of Israel, in the Russian Compound prison in Jerusalem, in Ashkelon and in the Kishon prison in Haifa. The torturers lead completely ordinary lives. They can be neighbors in your building. The public chooses to ignore the issue; jurists and physicians look the other way. It is easy for everyone to believe the argument of "security needs". Security needs – they come before morality and human rights.

- Write protest letters to the Prime Minister, the Minister of Justice, to members of the Knesset and to the press.
- Encourage involvement of organizations you belong to – the Israel Bar Association, the Israel Medical Association.
- Ask people you know who at the ISA, what they do at work.

On the road to change

We have filed dozens of petitions to the High Court of Justice (HCJ) against torture. None of which was decided according to its merits. Usually the petition led to the easing of interrogation methods in the specific case.

We have filed dozens of petitions to the HCJ against the prevention of meetings between detainees and their attorneys.

The meeting ban isolates the detainee from the outside world; the isolation is used to apply further pressure on him.

The meeting ban also blocks any external scrutiny of the interrogation methods.

We have submitted dozens of complaints of torture during interrogation to the Police Investigation Unit. In none of which were steps taken against the interrogators.

We have petitioned the HCJ to indict the interrogator responsible for the death of 'Abd al-Samad Harizat.

HaMoked: Center for the Defence of the Individual founded by Dr. Lotte Salzberger, is a human rights organization, a non-partisan and non-profit NGO which was established in 1988.

The organization acts against Israeli human rights violations in the West Bank, Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem. In its nine years of operation, HaMoked has assisted over 11,000 people whose basic rights have been trampled. HaMoked acts through legal and administrative channels, until each complaint has been fully dealt with.

Aside from its work on individual cases, HaMoked works on the policy level to raise public awareness and to seek solutions to problems relating to certain subsections of the population (i.e. issues of residency, family unification etc.).