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QUESTION OF PALESTINE
REPORT OF THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE TO
INVESTIGATE ISRAELI PRACTICES AFFECTING
THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF THE POPULATION OF
THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES

SECURITY COUNCIL
Thirty-second year

Letter dated 30 June 1977 from the Permanent Representative of the
Sudan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to forward herewith the text of an article entitled "Israel tortures Arab Prisoners" and a related editorial which appeared in The Sunday Times of 19 June 1977, with the request that they be circulated as an official document of the General Assembly, under items 30 and 57 of the preliminary list, and of the Security Council.

I would appreciate it very much if the attention of the President of the Security Council could be drawn to the subject-matter.

(Signed) Mustafa MEDANI
Permanent Representative of the Sudan
Chairman of the Arab Group

* A/32/50/Rev.1.

ANNEX

A. Article published in "The Sunday Times" (London)
on 19 June 1977

Israel tortures Arab prisoners

Special investigation by INSIGHT

Israeli interrogators routinely ill-treat and often torture Arab prisoners.

This central conclusion emerges from a five-month inquiry into Israel's occupation of the West Bank and Gaza. The methods used vary. Often there is just prolonged beating - which could imply that there are merely a number of "rogue cops" exceeding orders.

Insight has evidence, however, of techniques which go well beyond this, and place Israel's practice firmly in the realm of torture. Prisoners are often hooded or blindfolded or hung by their wrists for long periods. Many are sexually assaulted. Others are given electric shocks. At least one detention centre has (or had) a specially constructed "cupboard", about two feet square and five feet high, with concrete spikes set in the floor.

All Israel's intelligence services are implicated, and it is implausible that knowledge of these practices is confined to the interrogators.

Torture is sometimes used to obtain information, and it also evidently helps to pacify the occupied territories. But one of its main purposes is to try to justify Israel's claim that it administers the West Bank and Gaza through the rule of law. The Israelis claim that Arabs accused of "security offences" are properly tried. They are, however, often convicted on their confessions and our investigation indicates that many of these confessions are extracted through ill-treatment extending to torture.

Israel has consistently denied allegations of ill-treatment and torture. Nine days ago Gabriel Padon, Press counsellor at the Israeli embassy in London, said on BBC Radio's World At One:

"Every case of alleged torture or mistreatment is investigated very thoroughly by the police and by the courts... Some cases have occurred where the police was found to have used excessive zeal in interrogation..."

"An Insight Inquiry" - The Insight team has carried out a detailed inquiry in Israeli-occupied territories into Arab allegations and official Israeli denials of the use of torture. It concludes in part: "Torture of Arab prisoners is so widespread and systematic that it cannot be dismissed as 'rogue cops' exceeding orders. It appears to be sanctioned as deliberate policy."

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"Israel is a country of the rule of law. There are procedures which are the same procedures that are used in Britain in interrogation. There is absolutely no truth in the charges of torture, burning, electric shocks and all these. This is /a/ very good propaganda slogan but that is about as far as it goes."

Insight has questioned 44 Arabs who claim to have been ill-treated or tortured. Most of them still live in the occupied areas and some are willing to be named. We have tape recorded 110,000 words of testimony, and obtained corroboration wherever possible. Because the findings contradict official denials the evidence is set out in considerable detail in this issue of The Sunday Times. The report begins on page 17.

The practices we have examined have occurred throughout the 10 years of Israeli occupation; our evidence spans this period, the last base being in December 1976. There is no reason to believe it has ceased: the allegations are continuing.

Prime Minister designate Menahem Begin is today signing a coalition agreement with two religious parties ending a month of fierce political haggling over the formation of the first Likud-led government in Israel's 29 years of statehood.

Begin, 63, will then inform President Ephraim Katzir of the successful completion of his Government-forming efforts, a week ahead of schedule. He will seek a confidence vote in the Knesset (parliament) on Monday.

Early on the morning of 24 February this year, a transfer took place at the Allenby Bridge, the main crossing point from the Israeli-occupied West Bank to the East Bank of Jordan.

An Israeli army jeep drove to the centre of the bridge and pulled up. Several Israeli soldiers climbed out, followed by an International Red Cross delegate from Jerusalem, a young Swiss named Bernard Münger. Together they helped a frail figure from the jeep and laid him on a stretcher. His name was Omar Abdel-Karim. He was a Palestinian carpenter from the village of Beit Sahur, just below Bethlehem. He was 35 years old, but he looked an old man.

On the Jordanian side of the bridge a small group awaited Abdel-Karim. It comprised his brother; a Jordanian army liaison officer; and Jean Courvoisier, head of the International Red Cross delegation in Jordan's capital, Amman. The Red Cross men, Courvoisier and Münger, picked up the stretcher and carried it to an ambulance of the Jordanian Red Crescent (which operates in Jordan in liaison with the International Red Cross).

As Münger walked back to the Israeli jeep, Abdel-Karim tried feebly to wave goodbye. When an army man asked his name, his lips barely moved. To his brother's distress, Abdel-Karim appeared not to recognise him. "I thought he was going to die", Courvoisier told friends later.

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Abdel-Karim lived. At midday, he was admitted to the King Hussein hospital at Salt, 25 miles from the bridge on the road to Amman. The case notes of his initial examination recorded that he was thin and weak. He complained of pains in the chest and found it hard to breathe out. He had an infection of the urinary tract. He talked of severe head pains and showed signs of giddiness. And his difficulty in moving tended to confirm his complaint that his joints, especially his knees, were painful too. Chest X-rays then showed that Abdel-Karim's ribs had at some point been fractured. The houseman also noted that Abdel-Karim was in a highly nervous state - and prescribed tranquillisers.

Abdel-Karim continued to bear the marks of having come through some traumatic experience, however. When his wife Nijmi came to see him, he stared at her. "Who are you?" he asked. It was some time before he showed signs of remembering her.

With the aid of antibiotics, multi-vitamins and a high-protein diet, Abdel-Karim has slowly recovered, though two months later, he could still barely walk.

He had been arrested, said Abdel-Karim, by the Israeli security forces four months before and accused of belonging to the fedayeen, the Palestinian resistance and terrorist movement. He had then, he said, been tortured. And the tortures he recounted were so brutal, so prolonged and, above all, so organised and applied as to leave no doubt - if his story were true - that systematic torture is an Israeli practice.

We were expecting Abdel-Karim's arrival. We had learned of his case in January, while he was still in Israeli custody; and before his release we had talked with his wife, his lawyer and the mayor of his village.

For five months, we have been inquiring into allegations of systematic torture by Israel of Arab prisoners. Such allegations have been persistent for almost a decade, ever since the first weeks of the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza strip after Israel's victory of June 1967. The United Nations, Amnesty and several individuals, have, at different times, made detailed examinations of the evidence and have, in varying degrees, been disapproving of Israel. But virtually all previous inquiries have been vulnerable to criticism because they were conducted outside Israel and the occupied territories, without attempts at on the spot verification. Even a special committee of the United Nations, a body not loathe to criticise Israel, has admitted its inability "to reach a conclusive finding, since this would only be possible after a free investigation inside the occupied territories".

For this Insight inquiry we have worked inside the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, taking statements and examining stories there and going into neighbouring Arab countries, when necessary, to check those claims further. We have questioned 49 Palestinian Arabs, who have been in the custody of the Israeli security forces. Almost all are still living in the occupied territories. Forty-four of them alleged, in varying detail, that they had been tortured.

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In 22 of the cases, the Arabs involved have agreed to be named, even though they still live under Israeli military rule. In reaching our conclusions we have given greater weight to these cases. The remaining cases where Palestinians have asked to remain anonymous, we have treated with great caution, though consistent patterns emerge from these, too. Our conclusions are:

(1) Israel's security and intelligence services ill-treat Arabs in detention.

(2) Some of the ill-treatment is merely primitive: prolonged beatings, for example. But more refined techniques are also used, including electric-shock torture and confinement in specially-constructed cells. This sort of apparatus, allied to the degree of organisation evident in its application, removes Israel's practice from the lesser realms of brutality and places it firmly in the category of torture.

(3) Torture takes place in at least six centres: at the prisons of the four main occupied towns of Nablus, Ramallah and Hebron on the West Bank, and Gaza in the south; at the detention centre in Jerusalem, known as the Russian Compound; and at a special military intelligence centre whose whereabouts are uncertain, but which testimony suggests is somewhere inside the vast military supply base at Sarafand, near Lod airport on the Jerusalem-Tel Aviv road. There is some evidence too that, at least for a time, there was a second such camp somewhere near Gaza.

(4) All of Israel's security services are implicated: the Shin Beth, roughly Israel's MI5 and Special Branch in one, which reports to the office of the Prime Minister; Military Intelligence, which reports to the Minister of Defence; the border police; and Latam, Israel's "Department for Special Missions", both of which report to the Police Minister.

(5) Torture is organised so methodically that it cannot be dismissed as a handful of "rogue cops" exceeding orders. It is systematic. It appears to be sanctioned at some level as deliberate policy.

(6) Torture seems to be used for three purposes. The first is, of course, to extract information. The second motive, which seems at least as common, is to induce people to confess to "security" offences, of which they may, or may not, be guilty. The extracted confession is then used as the principal evidence in court: Israel makes something of the fact that it has few political prisoners in its jails, only those duly convicted according to law. The third purpose appears to be to persuade Arabs in the occupied territories that it is least painful to behave passively.

It may be, therefore that the 22 Arabs we name are at risk of reaction in Israel. The 22 knew and accepted this. We see no way to protect them except by publicity, so we publish as an appendix to this report, their names and home towns.

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The problems of checking

The case of Omar Abdel-Karim, the man sent over the Allenby bridge, is typical for two reasons. His allegations differ little from those in scores of previous cases. And the difficulties of checking what he says are, as we shall show, no different either. First, his story, recorded during eight hours of questioning in mid-April. The phrase "he says" should mentally be added to each assertion that follows:

Omar Abdel-Karim was arrested on October 3, 1976, as he was crossing eastward over the Allenby bridge, on his way to see his brother's wife in Amman. He was driven to the Russian Compound, known to Arabs as "Moscobiya" - the detention and interrogation centre in Jerusalem which houses Shin Beth and Latam and occasionally the border police.

Among the interrogators who questioned him the same evening were two whom he came to know as "Edi" and "Orli". They accused him of being one of the fedayeen. When he denied this, they beat him on the soles of his feet. Later, for about 15 minutes, he was hung up by his wrists. Then he was sent to a cell in the main prison block at Moscobiya. His feet were swollen; he crawled there.

He was in Moscobiya for seven days. In later interrogations, he lay prone on the floor and, while one man stood on his legs, another pulled his arms back. Another time, a stick was twisted through his handcuffs, cutting the blood supply to his hands. He still denied involvement with the fedayeen.

After a week, he was transferred in a closed lorry to another location - he thought Sarafand. So far his treatment might just be described as "brutality" rather than torture. But the new centre was more purposeful. Except during interrogation sessions, he was continuously hooded by a black canvas bag. Fresh interrogators took over, though Orli was also there.

Electricity was now used. Two thin, black leads were taped to Abdel-Karim with sticking plaster. These went into a black box, presumably a transformer, and from it a thick white wire was plugged into a wall socket. A button on the box switched the current on. "It felt as though my bones were being crushed", Abdel-Karim said. "The most painful was when they attached the wires to my testicles. When the current was applied, I felt it through my whole body. After the shocks ended, I felt pain in all my joints. Every muscle ached and I felt that my nerves were exhausted."

Abdel-Karim says electricity was used at "eight or nine" sessions. But he says he continued to maintain his innocence. After 11 days he was moved again, to the prison at Hebron on the West Bank.

Edi and Orli were still with him, but yet more interrogators now joined in. On his first day at Hebron, one named "Ouzi" kicked his face; when blood from Abdel-Karim's nose spotted his boot, Ouzi made him lick it off. Abdel-Karim recalls the boot: "Thick, with a kind of grid on the soles, like a commando's."

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He also identifies one interrogator as "Abu Ghazal", a man with an "Aleppo rose" on his cheek, a pitting peculiar to the Middle East. Abu Ghazal swung him round the room by his hair and, when it came out, forced him to eat it. "It stuck all down my throat. It made me want to throw up." Then he had to drink salty water. Finally, Abu Ghazal and a second interrogator forced a bottle up Abdel-Karim's rectum.

That was the first day. The second day, he says he was again suspended by his wrists from a pulley and beaten. "I felt something break in my chest. Then I fell unconscious. When I came to I was on the floor and they were throwing water in my face."

It was on the third or fourth day that Orli brought Abdel-Karim's wife Wijmi to the prison. "When she saw me in such condition, she started screaming. Orli grabbed her by the hair. He started slapping her face until blood came from her nose and mouth ...". Abdel-Karim said he would confess.

"Orli said: 'Now we are friends.' He pulled out a cigarette and handed it to me. I took the cigarette and started smoking and he said: 'Now talk.' So I had to start lying. I had nothing to tell and I had to save my wife. I said I had bombs and I hid them in my lavatory. When I said this my wife said: 'No, I was the one who put them there.' In fact there was nothing we had done but she said she had done it to save me, and I said it to save her."

Abdel-Karim was taken back to his home at Beit Sahur where sewage trucks sucked out the cess-pit by his house. They found nothing. When it was realised he had lied, Edi repeatedly banged Abdel-Karim's head against a rough wall. Pieces of plaster fell out and Orli told him to swallow them, which he did.

"If I had anything I would give it to you", Abdel-Karim kept telling his interrogators. They did not believe him. He was kept under a cold shower; jammed into a barrel of freezing water; and suspended from his wrists once more while the interrogator Orli squeezed his genitals. "The mind cannot imagine how that hurts. It was so bad, it made me forget all the other pain."

The last assault Abdel-Karim remembers is being shut in a small cell into which some kind of gas was squirted through the judas-hole in the door. "I couldn't stop coughing. My eyes and nose were running. The whole world started turning round me." He remembers "a piece of glass like a finger" which was finally slid into each nostril to ease his breathing.

From that point, Abdel-Karim's alleged recollections are confused and fragmentary. We have established that at the end of November, for example, he spent a week in the main Israeli prison hospital at Ramleh. He says he does not remember this. Then on December 12, his wife Nijmi says, she and their 12-year-old son visited him back in Hebron and he did not recognise the boy. He says he does not remember this episode either. About this time, the Israelis took him to the Jordanian border; but the Jordanians refused to accept him because no arrangements

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had been made. Abdel-Karim says he just recalls something like that. Of his eventual journey to Salt in February through the mediation of the International Red Cross, he remembers very little.

IT IS AN APPALLING story, but how much of it is true? In the nature of torture, only two parties are present: torturer and victim. As Amnesty International has said: "The confrontation between the individual and the limitless power of the state ... takes place in the darkest recess of political power." Failing a confession by the torturers, we have to look for other things: corroboration of verifiable details; or the consistency of one account with others, in circumstances where collusion can be ruled out. By those tests, Abdel-Karim's story deserves credence.

We had learned of his case, as we said, even before his release. The independent interviews we conducted then went some way to corroborate his account.

Six weeks before Abdel-Karim's release, his wife Nijmi had told us - in an interview at Beit Sahur - how she had been arrested and taken to Hebron prison. She and her husband had been beaten in front of each other, she said. Her face had been slapped and her hair pulled. Her husband appeared "badly beaten on his face and his eyes were swollen. There were burns on the back of his hands and there were burns on his face as if made by an iron or an electric fire." (Abdel-Karim later showed us, among other marks on his body, a flat scar on the back of his right wrist. He said it had been caused by the application of electricity, unmodified by a transformer, in Hebron. "They taped the wires to me and then put the plug directly in the socket. It just blew me away, and they had to reattach it. Sparks came from my hand. The other equipment didn't cause sparks.")

Other interviews helped to corroborate Abdel-Karim's story. On November 14, his lawyer, Felicia Langer and her clerk Abed el-Asali visited Abdel-Karim in Hebron prison. Langer subsequently wrote an account of the visit:

He was brought to me supported by other prisoners because he was unable to walk by himself ... He was looking very bad, his face was completely yellow ... All the time he was pointing to his ribs, claiming he was unable to breathe out. One of his fellow prisoners told us that his ribs had been broken during interrogation ... Omar indicated to us that he had been tortured by electricity and while speaking of it he started trembling terribly ... It was as if his body was convulsed. ... He did not know his age, place of birth, address, or whether he had children. Just once during our visit, he let slip that his wife had been beaten in front of him, but then he stopped talking about it. It seemed to us that he was in another world.

In another interview six weeks before Abdel-Karim's release, Langer's clerk Asali confirmed her account, adding that they had seen Abdel-Karim suddenly start

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laughing and kiss a prison guard. "He said that the guard was the only one who didn't torture him ...". (Asali did not mention burns on Abdel-Karim but he did claim to have seen "blue marks and red marks like blood near his ear.") It was also in mid-January, again six weeks before his release, that we interviewed the mayor of Abdel-Karim's village, Hanna al-Atrash. He told us then how the Israelis had spent several days draining the sewers around Abdel-Karim's house. His account of the episode agrees in general with that given to us later by Abdel-Karim - who could in no way have colluded with him.

The mayor also told us that in late November, having heard from Felicia Langer of Abdel-Karim's state, he went to see the Israeli military governor of the Bethlehem district: "He said he didn't believe the story, but he would look into it." He later told the mayor that Abdel-Karim had been moved to a prison hospital.

The mayor also contacted the International Red Cross in Jerusalem: "I asked them to look into the allegations. Later the Red Cross delegate Bernard Mürger confirmed to me that they were true. He confirmed Felicia Langer's letter completely."

As a matter of policy, the Red Cross never comments publicly on cases. The chief Red Cross delegate in Jerusalem, Alfredo Witschi, said he could not confirm or deny the mayor's statement. "We make our reports to the authorities and request action", he said. Similarly in Amman, Jean Courvoisier would confirm only that he had met Abdel-Karim on the Allenby bridge.

We have established, however, that the Jerusalem Red Cross delegate Mürger first got access to Abdel-Karim at the end of November, about 55 days after his arrest. It was about then - and so possibly as a result of Mürger's intervention - that Abdel-Karim was moved to Ramleh prison hospital. He was X-rayed, but returned, after a week to Hebron. In the light of his later condition - which Mürger described to doctors in Amman as "lamentable" and to which the medical records at Salt bear witness - this seems a strange decision. It is not surprising that Abdel-Karim has the fondest memories of Mürger, whose continued efforts helped finally bring his release. "He saved my life", Abdel-Karim says.

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The Arabs under Israeli rule

ABOUT 1.7 MILLION Arabs live under Israeli rule. Half a million live within the pre-1967 borders, and are Israeli citizens. The other 1.2 million live in areas occupied by Israel during the 1967 six-day war - 800,000 in East Jerusalem and the West Bank (formerly part of Jordan), and 400,000 in Gaza (formerly administered by Egypt). A small number also live on the Golan Heights, captured from Syria.

Israel annexed East Jerusalem to "reunite" the divided city. The rest of the West Bank and Gaza are administered by military governors, and basic policy is made by Israel's Ministry of Defence - which has, for example, sanctioned about 80 Jewish settlements in the occupied areas.

A degree of normal civilian life is permitted: there are Arab newspapers (though subject to censorship), and last year municipal elections took place on the West Bank. Beyond this, political organisation and activity is banned.

Local justice is administered by Palestinian Arab officials, who apply Jordanian law on the West Bank, and British Mandate law in Gaza. (This is the same legal system applied there by Egypt from 1949 to 1967).

All "security offences", however, are handled by military courts staffed by Israeli judges and court officials. Most allegations of torture and ill-treatment involve border police and members of Israeli intelligence who arrest and interrogate suspected security offenders before bringing them before a military court.

Member of the fedayeen

BUT IF THERE IS independent corroboration for points of Abdel-Karim's story, there are also weaknesses which make it fall short of final proof.

In the first place, he was once a member of the fedayeen. Seven years ago, he served a 20-month sentence for possessing a revolver. His lawyer, Felicia Langer, though Jewish and a refugee from the Final Solution, is an active Communist, regularly denounced by the Israeli Government for political contacts with enemies of the state.

Secondly, the medical evidence is not conclusive. It rests ultimately upon the judgements and testimony of the director of the Salt hospital, Dr. Ahmad Hamzeh. But Dr. Hamzeh is scarcely neutral. In 1976 the Israelis deported him from the West Bank. His clinical judgements, too, are open to challenge. In finding Abdel-Karim's injuries "consistent with" his story of torture, Dr. Hamzeh placed some emphasis on his fractured ribs. Yet in February 1976, we have discovered, Abdel-Karim visited the Mount of David orthopaedic hospital in Bethlehem, complaining of pains in his back and chest. Hospital records show that an X-ray taken then also showed "evidence of multiple fractures in ribs". Medical experts in London say that even if

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Abdel-Karim's ribs had later been refractured, Dr. Hamzeh's X-rays might not have allowed him to distinguish between the two sets of breaks.

It might be said that, in a country of avowed political freedom, Felicia Langer's politics should not debar her testimony. It could also be said that old fractures were surely susceptible to fresh damage from beatings. Yet doubts remain. And while we could corroborate many points in their accounts, Abdel-Karim and his wife disagreed on one significant detail. He said that his wife was brought before him at Hebron about October 25 - and the detail of his testimony leaves little room for error. She had already told us that the date was October 15.

THIS EBB AND FLOW of evidence is typical of torture allegations; and it illustrates the persistent difficulties of proof. In Abdel-Karim's case, however, one piece of external evidence strongly suggests that something which the Israelis wish to hide did indeed happen to him. It comes from the Israelis themselves.

The day he was sent over the Jordan and up to Salt hospital, Dr. Hamzeh contacted Reuters and told them of Abdel-Karim's condition. A Reuters' reporter in Israel asked the West Bank military authorities for an explanation.

He was told that Abdel-Karim was a convicted Arab guerrilla and saboteur who had fallen ill in prison after serving three years of an 11-year sentence. He had asked the Israelis to let him go to Jordan for medical treatment, and they had agreed.

The story was a lie. Medical records in Bethlehem show, as we have said, that in February 1976 - a year before his release over the Allenby bridge - Abdel-Karim went, a free man, to the Bethlehem orthopaedic hospital, and made several further visits as an out-patient before his arrest. The mayor, Hannan-al Atrash, confirms that the arrest was in October 1976. Finally, we reproduce (page 17) the picture of Abdel-Karim and his wife taken on their 13th wedding anniversary. It was taken at the Photo-david studio in Bethlehem in the spring of 1976. The studio remembers taking it.

Mistaken identity can be ruled out. Few convicted "guerrillas and saboteurs" are invalided in mid-sentence over the Allenby bridge. Nor did the military authorities sound confused. The point, however, is not that they probably lied. The disquieting point is that the officer who told the lie must either have been ordered by his superiors to do so - or else lied on his own initiative, knowing he would not be punished if his superiors found out. Whatever happened to Omar Abdel-Karim, in other words, was part of an officially-sanctioned system.

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The judgement of the world

ON THE DAY after the United Nations had voted to establish the State of Israel in November, 1947, Chaim Weitzmann, Israel's first president and, to many, its founding father, wrote: "I am certain that the world will judge the Jewish state by what it shall do with the Arabs." The dilemma his prophecy encapsulates leads directly to the situation revealed by our investigation.

Israel is a Jewish state, determined to remain so. Yet it rules 1.7 million Arabs - for a decade 1.2 million of these have been under military occupation.

The reasons why Israel has since 1948 steadily increased its dominion over Arabs and their land go back into the infinite regress of cause-and-effect, charge and counter-charge that makes up modern Middle Eastern history. That is outside the scope of our inquiry. The fact is that most Israelis see no choice but to continue military occupation; while some Israelis actively want to do so, on the grounds of historic Jewish rights to the land.

Because Israel is so dependent on what Weitzmann saw as the judgement of the world, it must try to ensure the judgement is favourable. The conflict between this international need and the domestic reality of military rule and Arab resistance expressed sometimes through terrorism seems to us the most concrete explanation of why torture has become, on the evidence, an accepted Israeli practice.

There are, of course, many who will passionately reject our evidence as literally unthinkable. Many more will find in the idea of a persecuted race becoming in turn the persecutors a paradox so distasteful as to demand better evidence than perhaps would be needed against other countries. Even more will point out that Israel claims - and undoubtedly feels itself - to be at war for its life; and that the Arabs' record on civil liberties is, to say the least, poor.

The point, of course, is that Israel itself does not, in theory, accept the unspoken implications of their argument.

Israel does not admit that torture is justified by its situation. It denies that torture is ever used. Nor does Israel justify failures in civil rights by comparisons with Arab deficiencies. On the contrary, it is fundamental to Israel's ethos and to its claims for international support that it is part of the West - thus to be judged by Western standards. Israel claims as "a fact" - in the words of an official Israeli observer to a United Nations Human Rights Commission meeting in March 1973 - "that the human rights of the civilian population /in the occupied territories/ have been and are fully respected and protected The realities are those of an open society, tranquil and relaxed."

After a decade of military occupation, Israel has felt able to state, in its official handbook:

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"The administered areas are tranquil and thriving today Arabs and Israelis who until 1967 had lived in mutual separation and estrangement, are today enjoying the beginnings of a peaceful and fruitful co-existence."

Since our thesis is precisely that the international need to maintain that position goes far to explain the use of torture, it is necessary to begin by outlining Israel's response to the problems of "co-existence".

ON THE WEST BANK, Palestinian reaction to the Israeli occupation has run through three phases. Phase One: active resistance from mid-1967 to the end of 1969. By the end of 1969 raids on border settlements had almost died out.

Phase Two from mid-1970 brought relative quiescence. With the crushing of Palestinians in the "Black September" struggle in Jordan, and the death of President Nasser, the activists looked abroad: to the Munich Olympics of September 1972, for instance.

Phase Three can be traced back to the Israeli raid on Beirut in April 1973, when it seized thousands of documents. On the basis of these, the West Bank, and, significantly, Galilee, within Israel's old borders, saw fresh waves of arrests of suspected fedayeen activists or sympathisers. The unrest these sparked - largely in the form of civil disorders and demonstrations by high school students - has ebbed and flowed but never really died. With continued Israeli settlement on the West Bank, and Palestinian suicide raids like those on Kiryat Shmona, Maalot and Beit Shean, feeling between the two communities has steadily worsened.

In Gaza, the sequence has been different. With 300,000 refugees crammed into camps alongside 100,000 native Gazans, the area is one of the most overcrowded in the world - and perfect guerrilla country. Active resistance continued there until mid-1971 when it degenerated into a mini civil war between rival Palestinian factions. Israel bulldozed wide roads through the camps as the first step towards their pacification and control. By mid-1972 the fedayeen were crushed.

Israel has never denied that its battle against the Palestinian resistance has involved tough measures. It has demolished homes (16,212 between July 1967 and August 1971 according to an independently-kept log) and deported "known agents of subversion" (1,130 to Jordan since 1967 according to Jordanian police records). But it points out that the Arabs have free municipal elections and enjoy better standards of living than Arabs in Egypt, Syria and the Lebanon, and that it uses punitive measures with restraint.

AGAINST THIS background, Israel has confronted the hardest problem for any occupying power, its treatment of resisters and terrorists. In 1976, it claimed to have broken up 91 sabotage rings and arrested 807 people connected with them.

Even before its 1967 victory, Israel had prepared an administrative structure for territories to be occupied - and a system of military courts. But the round-ups

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of late 1967 and early 1968 swamped the system. Faced with similar problems in the Mandate days, the British resorted to detention camps - one near Tel Aviv; one in the desert near Gaza. (Arabs and Jews alike still refer to them as "concentration camps"; conditions were apparently dreadful.)

The idea of the Jews of all people reviving "concentration camps" was rejected in emotional debates in the Israeli parliament. There was no alternative to overcrowding the jails of Israel and the occupied territories with detainees. In the months after the 1967 war, the number held without trial passed 2,000. By early 1970 it was still 1,923.

But, slowly, the military courts caught up. Gradually, almost all Arabs picked up in new sweeps - and most of those held from the early days - were convicted by the military courts of "security offences" ranging from membership of an illegal organisation, distributing leaflets, or daubing slogans, to possessing arms or committing sabotage or murder.

Ten years after the occupation, Israel has (on the latest published figure) only 37 detainees. But nearly 60 per cent of all prisoners in jail in Israel or the occupied areas are Arabs found guilty of security offences - some 3,200 out of 5,800.

Thus Israel can demonstrate to itself and to the world that it has no political prisoners - only convicted terrorists. As Israel's ambassador to the United Nations, Jacob Doron, asked in a speech last November: "What is wrong with the holding of trials and the conviction of those found guilty after due process of law?" The answer is: when those public convictions are gained by means of secret torture.

The military courts are the fulcrum of Israel's claim to rule the occupied territories according to the rule of law. We have talked with six lawyers - two Israelis and four Palestinians - who regularly appear in them to defend those accused of security offences. For the record, their names are: Felicia Langer, Lea Tsemel, Wasfi O. Masri, Anton Jaser, Elias Khoury and Fayez abu Rahmeh. Their unanimous opinion is that the military courts collude in and knowingly conceal the use of torture by Israel's intelligence and security services. The mechanism is, in its way, elegant, almost syllogistic. Most convictions in those courts are based on confessions by the accused; most of those confessions, the lawyers are convinced, are extracted by ill-treatment or torture; almost without exception the courts reject that contention.

A security suspect in the occupied territories is usually arrested by Israeli soldiers or border police, accompanied mostly by one or more men in civilian clothes. Most Palestinians we spoke to referred to the plain-clothes men as Shin Beth, Israel's internal security service. (In fact, we have learned they are just as likely to belong to Israel's military intelligence.)

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The suspect can be held for up to 18 days before being taken before a military judge. He can order further detention of up to six months. In this time the suspect is interrogated. When eventually he is brought to trial - up to a year later - the prosecution is almost invariably equipped with a statement, signed by the suspect, confessing to at least some of the charges.

Israel says that all confessions are voluntary. The six advocates we have spoken to do not believe this. Wasfi O. Masri, a 60-year-old lawyer from Nablus, and a senior judge under Jordanian rule said: "In 90 per cent of cases I have, the prisoner had told me that he was beaten and tortured. Of course it is very difficult to prove because they don't have witnesses to see them beaten. But I am certain that it happens."

The military courts usually have three military judges - of whom only one must have been qualified, through six years at the Bar, to become a civilian judge. The Military Regulations they apply are based to some extent on regulations drawn up by the British in 1945 - to counter mainly Jewish terrorism.

But it is not in the courts that the crucial manoeuvre takes place. The courts do indeed allow defence counsel to challenge the validity of confessions. When that occurs, a "little trial" (in Hebrew, a zuta) is held.

This is what happens. The defendant tells the court that he was ill-treated or tortured. The prosecution then produces the policeman or army officer who took the confession. According to the young Israeli-born advocate Lea Tsemel, the officer tells the court: "I sat with the suspect, we had coffee together, I gave him cigarettes, he talked freely, and everything was normal." And this officer is almost always telling the truth.

The catch is that the policeman may indeed have taken the statement. But he did not conduct the interrogation. Many of the former prisoners we questioned said that after they had agreed to make a statement they were passed from interrogators to the police, together with a note of the offences they were admitting. The new officer then composed the statement for the court.

Several had tried to change their minds about confessing. One, Shehadeh Shalalkeh of Ramallah, protested for instance, that he could not read his supposed confession because it was in Hebrew. (This is a common complaint.) "The officer left the room and two men in civilian clothes came in. I told them I wanted to know what I was signing. They said, 'we haven't got time for all that' and they started beating me. So I said 'okay, okay, I'll sign'."

It is almost impossible for defendants to bring their real interrogators to court, because they use Arab names - "Abu-Sami," "Abu-Jamil," "Abu-Daoud" - or nicknames like "Jacky," "Danny," or "Ari". Even if the defendants did succeed, the result was the same. Lea Tsemel told us how she had finally brought to court an interrogator her client had described. "He just looked at the defendant and said he had never seen him before in his life."

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Successful challenges to the validity of confessions are rare. Wasfi O. Masri is much admired by other advocates for having persuaded military courts to rule out confessions in five cases - from a total he estimates as "thousands". Lea Tsemel said she had "almost succeeded once".

Her real role, she explained, was plea bargaining. One of her clients was the only survivor of a band of infiltrators who had been shot down by an Israeli patrol. "He told me he had suffered very bad torture and he wanted to protest in court. The prosecution offered a deal. If I did not contest his confession they would ask for a maximum of 18 years. As he could have got life, I advised him to agree."

A Palestinian advocate from Gaza, Fayez abu Rahmeh, told us that he had decided not to take any more security cases: "I told the Israelis, I have had enough. I told them they should just go back to internment and end this farce."

The question, therefore, is what happens in those secret interrogation sessions?

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The story of Ghassan Harb

Ghassan Harb is a 37-year-old Palestinian intellectual and journalist from Ramallah, on the West Bank ten miles north of Jerusalem. On the night of April 21-22 1974, he and his wife were staying with his father-in-law there. Shortly after midnight, they were woken by half a dozen Israeli soldiers and two men in civilian clothes. One of the civilians told Harb to get dressed.

"What is the matter?" Harb asked.

"You will find out," the man replied. Harb was handcuffed, blindfolded and bundled into a vehicle which took him to Ramallah prison.

What happened to Ghassan Harb over the two months that followed has already excited international attention. When his case was raised at the United Nations last year, Israel's ambassador there, Jacob Doron, dismissed it as "typical of the kind of atrocity stories spread against the Israeli administration by certain elements".

What he meant was that Harb was a Communist. It is true, however, that both sides, Israel and its accusers, have distorted the Harb case - in part because the key witness, Harb himself, was unavailable. For two-and-a-half years after that midnight visit, Harb was detained without trial.

Only on January 18 this year was he released and sent home. Soon afterwards, we recorded for the first time his own account of his experiences. Harb struck us as an excellent witness: careful, restrained, questioning his own impressions and anxious to find points that might be verified. This, in essence, is his story:

For the first 50 days, nothing happened to him. He was punched and kicked on his arrival at prison and, still blindfolded, heard others getting the same treatment. But then, after three nights in a small cell with six other prisoners, he was moved to a larger room containing 40 men. As the days passed, the others - most of whom had been arrested on the same night as himself - were taken for questioning. After six, seven or sometimes 15 days they would return "in very bad condition", he says. "They had been beaten. You could see the marks on their faces and chests." Strangely, they appear to have talked very little. It was not until June 12, 51 days after his arrest, that Harb's own turn came.

He was blindfolded again and made to lie down in what he thinks was a jeep for a journey of two or three hours. When the jeep stopped at last, and Harb got out, still blindfolded, a heavy cloth bag was put over his head. After perhaps 30 or 40 minutes just standing there with his hands in the air - "when there are bad conditions, perhaps a person thinks that the time is longer than it really is," Harb adds cautiously - he was taken into a room, and both blindfolds were removed. A man in civilian clothes addressed him in Arabic.

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"Do you know where you are?"

"No," Harb said.

"You are in Kasr el-Nihaye."

That is the name of a prison in Baghdad, the capital of Iraq, notorious for its tortures and secret executions. Harb knew he was not in Iraq. But he also knew what Kasr el-Nihaye means: The Palace of the End. And he knew what his interrogator meant.

Harb learned that he had been arrested because, as an admitted Communist, he was suspected of complicity in armed resistance on the West Bank. He had joined the Communist party as a schoolboy in Ramallah, then part of Jordan. The Jordanian Government had banned the party and in 1957 Harb was arrested. He was 17. With other party members he spent the next eight years in prison.

An amnesty finally released him and, during the 1967 war, Harb was studying economics at Moscow university. He returned to Ramallah in 1972, to work for the Arab newspaper El-Fajr, published in Jerusalem. He wrote and spoke against the Israeli occupation.

These activities may have irritated the Israelis but none of them was illegal. As Israel's ambassador, Jacob Doron, said: "Nobody is in prison because of their political beliefs." Israel permits Communists to stand for election in Israel itself.

On the West Bank, however, all political parties and their activity are banned, and known Communists are kept under surveillance. This has been especially so since 1973 when the West Bank communists and the Palestine Liberation Organization decided to form an alliance, which they called the Palestine National Front. Since Israel regards the PLO as a purely terrorist organisation it soon saw the Front in the same light. On the night of April 21-22, 1974, it moved against the Front. Harb was arrested.

At the United Nations, Ambassador Doron said afterwards that Israel had only "arrested those against whom there was evidence of criminal offences". But most of those arrested in the sweep were never charged. We know of nine men - one of them Harb, and eight of them avowed Communists - who were apparently taken to Israel's own Palace of the End. Three were deported to Jordan in 1975; two more were allowed to return to their West Bank homes in 1976; Harb and another were released this year; two are still in prison. None has ever been tried, let alone convicted.

That does not, of course, prove that none had committed an offence. The secretary of the Jordanian Communist party has been quoted as saying that his West Bank comrades had indeed been active. The fact remains that Harb denies involvement in any criminal activity, and no evidence has ever been produced.

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It is necessary to spell this out only because Ambassador Doron has dismissed the allegations which follow as "an attempt to arouse public opinion and to cover up the crimes committed". He, therefore, uses the assertion of unproved crimes to brush aside the allegations of torture.

The underlying issue remains: Even if Harb and his comrades were guilty, how were they treated in Israel's Palace of the End?

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Ordeal in the "cupboard"

On Harb's account, his first meeting with his interrogator there ended abruptly. "We know you are against the authorities; tell us everything you know," the interrogator said. Harb replied that he had no information. "All right," the interrogator said, "You don't want to speak." He gestured to the guards, who wore soldiers' uniforms. "Take him", he said.

In another room, Harb was made to strip, given a military-type overall, and photographed. Then he was brought back to his interrogator. He was to see him many times in the next 16 days.

"He was stout, rather dark-skinned but not black. Black hair, no moustache. His hair was a little curly. I don't remember if he had a parting or not." He was, Harb thinks, about 170 centimetres - 5 ft., 7 in. - tall, and between 32 and 40 years old. "He spoke Arabic with a Syrian accent." Harb recalls that he always wore civilian trousers and a short-sleeved shirt.

The first beating began at once. "He sat on a table, I was on a bench and he began to beat me. Fifteen minutes, 20 minutes, beating with his hand across my face," Harb says. (Again, Harb warns that he may exaggerate the time.) Only one question was asked: "Do you want to speak?" Harb repeated that he had nothing to say.

At the end of that first session Harb, blindfolded once more with the bag, was led away. His handcuffs were removed, he was stripped of his overall, his hands were refastened behind his back and, naked apart from the bag over his head, he was pushed into what he felt was a confined space. The door shut. Despite two air holes in the top of the bag, Harb feared he would suffocate, so by sliding his head against the wall he removed it. He found himself in a tiny, windowless cell, the only light coming from a crack under the door.

"It was really just a cupboard," he says. He thinks it was 60 cms (2ft.) square, and no more than 150 cms (5ft.) high. "I am 178 cms and I couldn't stand up in it." Nor was it possible to sit down.

But the most curious feature was the floor. It was concrete, and set into it at close but irregular intervals was a set of stone spikes. "They were sharp, and they had acute edges. They were perhaps one-and-a-half or two centimetres high. I could not normally stand on them. I could stand on them but with difficulty and pain. I would lift one leg and put the other down, and then lift that one when it got tired and put the other down, and so on."

Harb thinks he spent three or four hours in "the cupboard" on his first occasion - though he cautions this may be an over-estimate. But his release from the place brought no relief.

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The door opened. A soldier undid Harb's handcuffs to let him dress, then fastened his hands in front of him. Because Harb had pulled off his hood, he was slapped and blindfolded again, this time with "some kind of spectacles, cloth spectacles made of a black material". The bag was then put over these. Harb was led into what he thinks was an open courtyard, for further treatment.

"There were three or four of them. I judged that by their voices. They were beating me, and then they said: 'Now go down on your hands and knees.' There were little stones in the yard, and they were very painful to crawl on." (Particularly painful for Harb, he has bone deformities protruding from his knees.)

"That continued for about an hour, perhaps. I was crawling around on the ground and they were kicking me and beating me. While I was crawling around they rode on me, sat on me like a horse."

When Harb was at last brought to his interrogator once more, the man said: "Now see your condition." He then punched Harb repeatedly, while he and a second interrogator asked questions.

"They said: 'Do you know this person, that person ...' mentioning names. I said I didn't ... One of them said I was accused of military charges and I told them 'No, no'. He said: 'We know you are active in this field', and I said: 'All right, if you know I'm active show me some evidence. I know it isn't true. If you have some evidence, please show it to me.' He said, 'We know, we know', and he kept on beating me."

THAT WAS the first day. Eventually, according to Harb, he was locked into a cell and allowed to sleep. In the morning, the routine began again - and again almost without variation over the four days that followed. "Cupboard courtyard, interrogation, cell - though not always to rest. The routine could start at any time of day or night.

Sometimes during the beatings in the courtyard, Harb would be stripped: "They took me outside, took my clothes and there were four or five people. Now one kicks me, the other receives me, and gives me to the first - as a ball, kicking to and fro. Afterwards they let me crawl. I was still without clothes of course. Somebody sat on my back, and they were laughing."

On another occasion, Harb was made to crawl, bizarrely, into a dog kennel, less than two feet square. The dog was not in it, but Harb could hear it howling nearby.

Harb also heard the sounds of other prisoners: "On one occasion in the very early period they took me to the cupboard at night ... at perhaps nine or twelve o'clock. Then I was taken outside and I heard some voices, sounds of pain, crying, pleading. 'Oh my head.' 'Oh, my stomach.' 'You are killing me.' Of course I couldn't see who were the people who were groaning, but I heard it."

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Certainly, the centre appeared to be staffed to handle more than one inmate. Between June 12-16 - the five days of intensive questioning - Harb was interrogated by six or seven different men, all in civilian clothes. The "Syrian" was not always among them. Nor was violence always used - though when it was, it was severe. At one point, Harb says, his feet were beaten with a stick.

After those five days, however, his treatment eased. He was interrogated for another 12 days, but the sessions became more relaxed and discursive, and he was spared the "cupboard" and the courtyard. "I don't know if I had convinced them I had nothing to do with military charges", Harb says.

On what he calculates was June 28, Harb, still blindfolded, was driven from the centre to Yagur prison outside Haifa in northern Israel. Five or six other prisoners went with him. At Yagur, Harb began the detention from which he was released in January this year.

ISRAEL DENIES that Harb was tortured. Its most detailed rebuttal was given by Ambassador Doron in a speech at the United Nations last November, after a report by a "special committee" of the United Nations on the occupied territories had mentioned Harb's case among others.

The lawyer Felicia Langer had brought several of these cases to the United Nations; so Doron first attacked her credibility: "a member of the politbureau of the pro-Moscow Communist party" and "an active propagandist against the state ... devoted to the slander and denigration of Israel".

Harb, Doron continued had been detained for investigation of his "subversive activities on behalf of a terror organisation". As soon as his allegations of torture had become known, he had been examined by two doctors who had "found absolutely nothing wrong with him". An Arab delegation from his home town, Ramallah, had also been allowed to visit him; they too, Doron said, had been "satisfied that he had not been mistreated in any way". As to the substance of Harb's charges, Doron said that after "impartial inquiries" which the Israeli authorities had themselves instituted, he could state that no torture had taken place. "Nobody's held in prison blindfolded and tied up."

The other parties involved in those inquiries have different recollections. It was only a day or so after Harb had left the interrogation centre that his wife Afaf visited him in Yagur prison. She was, she says, horrified: "He looked terrible. He was pale and exhausted, and he had lost a lot of weight."

Her report of what she had seen and what her husband told her caused unrest in Ramallah. Harb's family is well known locally; and Harb's own writings and speeches had given him a reputation. Seeing this, the Israeli military governor of Ramallah ordered Harb's transfer from Yagur to the local prison.

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It was on his arrival there that Harb was examined by two Israeli doctors - perfunctorily, Harb claims. He was also interviewed by a delegate of the International Red Cross, to whom he made a formal complaint of torture. And, as Doron said, he was allowed to meet a local deputation: the deputy mayor of Ramallah and his own brother.

We have talked to both men. Contrary to what Doron claimed, both say they did think Harb had been mistreated. His brother says Harb looked ill, had lost weight and showed signs of ill treatment, including scars. The deputy mayor of the time, a lawyer named Alfred Kisek, recalled: "He told us he had been tortured. He didn't seem as bad as I had heard, but he looked ill and we believed that he had been ill-treated."

What of Israel's "impartial inquiries" into the case? Early in July, as unrest grew over the allegations put about by Harb's wife, the police minister, Shlomo Hillel, announced an inquiry - under a police officer. Harb was taken to Ramallah police headquarters to be questioned. It was, he says, a cursory affair. The resultant statement was no more than 500 words. (By contrast, the transcript of our detailed questioning of Harb totals 11,000 words.) The policeman also questioned Langer's six other complainants. By early August, he had presented his report. It dismissed the allegations.

Langer fought back. With another lawyer, Whalid Fahum, she filed a complaint in the Supreme Court in Tel Aviv alleging that the inquiry had been inadequate and the minister, Hillel, delinquent in his duty. Technically, therefore, the court could only examine the narrow procedural issue. But the lawyers, of course, hoped the court would consider the wider issue of the allegations themselves. And this the court duly did.

Its procedure was so strange, however, that at the very least considerable doubt must be cast on what it found. No witnesses were called. No fuller statements were taken. The court said it limited itself "to choosing between the conflicting claims of the prisoners and the investigators as submitted in writing". On the strength of medical reports which "did not show any signs of intentionally inflicted injuries" it chose to believe the investigators. On December 18 the complaint against Hillel was dismissed.

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The pattern of torture

The allegations of the 44 Palestinians who told us they had been ill-treated or tortured covered all of Israel's six main interrogation centres, shown on the map. Some general patterns did emerge: 19 told us, for example, that their genitals had been hit or otherwise abused. But from these accounts it was also possible to discern the apparent predilections of interrogators in different centres (and we found this picture confirmed by examination of some 50 statements from other sources).

At the "Russian Compound" in Jerusalem, interrogators tended to favour assaults on the genitals, besides endurance tests such as holding a chair with outstretched arms or standing on one leg. The speciality of the military centre known as Sarafand was to blindfold prisoners for long periods, threaten them or assault them with dogs, and hang them by the wrists. From Ramallah came many allegations of having been immersed in cold water for long periods - either in a shower, or in a pool in the centre of the prison courtyard. Ramallah was almost alone, on the other hand, in giving rise to no allegations of electric shock torture. From Hebron came several allegations similar to that of Omar Abdel-Karim - with whose account our story begins - of anal assault.

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The Arabs who gave their names

INSIGHT interviewed 44 Palestinians who alleged ill-treatment or torture at the hands of Israel's security services. Of those, 22 still living under Israeli jurisdiction, agreed to their names being published. They are: Ghassan Harb, Ramallah; Mohammed abu-Ghabyr, East Jerusalem; Jamal Freitah, Nablus; Yaldoun Abdul Waq, Nablus; Mahmud El-Mughrabi, Old City, Jerusalem (since being interviewed he has been re-arrested and is currently serving a six-month sentence in Dimoun Prison, Israel); Hasan Hammad, Old City, Jerusalem; Fshak Hilefawi, East Jerusalem; Samir Edkeidek, East Jerusalem; Omar Salameh Abdel-Karim, Beit Sahur, near Bethlehem; Joseve Odeh and his daughter, Leila, Jericho; Jamil abu-Ghabyr, East Jerusalem; Fawzi Abdel-Wahed Hijim, El Mugazi refugee camp, near Gaza; Zudhir Al-Dihi, Nablus; Nablan Kreishy, a student at Bir Zeit College near Ramallah; Shehadeh Abdel Hadi-Mohammed Shalaldeh, Ramallah; Isam Atif Al Hamoury, Hebron; Abed Al-Kareem Taha Al-Shalloudi, a student at the UNRWA Vocational Training Centre at Kalandia; Asad Sinnokrat, a student at Bir Zeit College; Misief Suleiman Atrash Abu-Atwan, Doura; Maifa Awawdeh, Doura; Fayez Toutunji, Old City, Jerusalem.

Three other Palestinians who though not alleging torture provided corroborative evidence also agreed to be named: Hassan El Mughrabi (father of Mahmud el Mughrabi), Old City, Jerusalem; Taha Massalha, student at the Hebrew University, West Jerusalem; Khalil Rasmawi, Beit Sahur, near Bethlehem.

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Four stories in support

WE KNOW, as we have said, of eight other Palestinian Arabs who appear to have been in the special interrogation centre at about the same time as Harb. Two are still in custody, but of the six who were freed we traced and interviewed four.

Mohammed abu-Ghabiyr,
Jamal Freitah,
Kaldoun Abdul Haq,
Husni Haddad.

Only Haddad was in exile in Jordan. (He died in Amman in May this year; we retain the tape of our interview with him.) The other three still live, like Harb, on the West Bank. None was ever charged.

In view of what they say, it is important to consider whether these four and Harb could have colluded their accounts.

Harb and three of them were certainly together for some days in Yagur, immediately after interrogation. But then they were split up, and only two served in the same prison (Haq and Freitah in Nablus). Haddad had not been in Yagur with the others, but he saw Harb for a few days in Ramallah when he was taken there for a hearing to extend his detention.

This gives the theoretical possibility that the five men could have conspired to fabricate a story. But only during those days at Yagur could a story have been cooked up - to be passed to Haddad later. And there are two further points. After his deportation to Jordan, Haddad had no chance to meet the others. Secondly, we first interviewed two of those still on the West Bank - Haq and abu-Ghabiyr - without any warning and before the final pair, Harb and Freitah, had been freed. We questioned them only days after their release.

In our view these facts and the weight of detail the men volunteered 30 months after their experiences argues reality rather than some long-remembered fabrication.

These are their stories:

• Mohammed abu-Ghabiyr, a shoemaker from Jerusalem, spoke of the interrogation centre as a "military camp" where the guards wore "soldiers' uniforms". He too was stripped, photographed and given a one-piece overall in camouflage colours. He too talks of being blindfolded with "a black bag made of very thick cloth" with two air holes in the top. He too was blindfolded the whole time except in his cell or under interrogation. Like Harb he described a "stony courtyard", and mentioned the presence of dogs.

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Harb, asked to estimate the layout and size of the centre, said that he could not do so, because he thought he had been led everywhere in circles. Ghabiyr, asked the same question, replied: "I couldn't tell. The problem was they used to walk me in circles. ..."

• Jamal Freitah, a labourer from Nablus, talked of "a prison uniform" and a "bag of black cloth" over his head. He spoke of crawling naked over gravel; during that ordeal, he added, his eyes were covered with an extra blindfold under the bag.

At least once a day, he said, he was put into what he called "the frigidaire": "It is about 60 cms by 60 cms by 160 cms high. The concrete in the floor was made in a way that it looks like small hills near to each other with very sharp edges. Everyone of them is like a nail."

• Kaldoun Abdul Haq, a partner in a Nablus construction company, spoke of being stripped, photographed and given "a camouflage overall" to wear. His blindfold was "a black sack made of cloth" with "two holes in the top to let air in". He talked of a courtyard - he called it "a place in the open air" - where, he said, he was hung by his arms from a hook in a wall. And he remembered a tiny cupboard - "the floor was covered with very sharp stones which were set in cement".

• Husni Haddad, at the time of his arrest a factory owner in Bethlehem, was given a khaki jacket and trousers rather than an overall. But the "black canvas sack" with the two holes was unchanged. So was "a sort of garden" with "gravel underfoot", where he was once made to crawl and kicked as he did. He too remembered a cell 50 cms by 50 cms by 150 cms, the floor of which had spikes "like people's thumbs" but with sharp edges.

Even mundane details in Harb's account were confirmed by Haddad. Both men said that the first interrogation room had instructional charts showing weapons on its walls. Both said that a strange noise disturbed their sleep. Harb talked of "sounds of engines, whirring". Haddad spoke of "a kind of hissing noise from an engine, or maybe a buzzing noise". The plastic plates, the absence of cutlery, the plastic bucket for a lavatory, the lack of lavatory paper ... scores of details match in the five accounts.

There were also inconsistencies. Haq, for instance, recalls the courtyard as being "like the soil" and denies there were stones or gravel. And the ill-treatment alleged varied in type and extent. Freitah alleged almost continuous beatings and abuse. Ghabiyr said he was hardly touched. (Perhaps the reason was that Ghabiyr has a history of tuberculosis and, at his arrest, was ill with a stomach complaint.)

Taking the evidence as a whole, however, we conclude that it amounts at least to a strong prima facie case that in 1974 Israel maintained an interrogation centre administered by the army, where suspects were hooded, continuously handcuffed, deprived of sleep and other human amenities, and systematically subjected to physical and mental suffering.

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Where does it all happen?

Where is this interrogation centre, this "Palace of the End"? The most likely answer is that it lies behind the high wire fence that all tourists see as they drive the last stretch from Jerusalem to Tel Aviv. The wire, the military checkpoints at a couple of entrances, and a few low scruffy buildings in the distance are virtually all that is visible of the 10 square miles of Israel's biggest army ordnance and supply depot, Sarafand. (The Jewish National Fund also uses part of Sarafand to house the equipment for roadbuilding in its new settlements in Israel and the occupied territories.)

Sarafand occupies a prominent place in Palestinian demonology. Scores of statements talk of it; and most of those who have been through the interrogation centre refer to it automatically as Sarafand. But that is an assumption on their part, as questioning soon shows.

There are, nevertheless, historical reasons why they could be right. Sarafand was built as the main British ordnance depot in Palestine before World War Two. When Britain then needed two camps to house Arab detainees during the riots of the late 1930s, one was built inside Sarafand. (The other was in Sinai.) So many of the old British mandate buildings were taken over, function and all, by the Israelis that Sarafand would have been a logical choice to house a new generation of Arab detainees.

For it is clear from detainees' accounts that the mysterious new interrogation centre run by the military came into operation after the 1967 war. And it was another three years or so before its buildings - ramshackle at first, as if disused for a time - had been renovated. (Some detainees, taken there at intervals, observed the process.)

The assertion that they were in Sarafand comes most confidently from those early alumni. Yet each in turn seems to have learned this only from inmates already there. Only one claimed to have seen a sign "Sarafand prison", and we thought this improbable.

In those early years, blindfolding was less rigorously enforced, and a few detainees caught glimpses of their surroundings. One recalls a eucalyptus tree. But after 1970, continuous blindfolding and isolation shut out even those fragments.

Detainees could still hear, of course, and many speak of aircraft overhead. Sarafand lies below a flight path into Lod airport five miles away. But while some spoke of low-flying heavy aircraft - which suggests an airport nearby - others said they had been high. (Because theirs is the less predictable testimony, the high-fliers seem preferable witnesses.)

So completely have the Israelis managed to isolate those under interrogation since 1970-1971, in fact, that the only evidence that the centre did not shift to some new locale then comes from two prisoners who, having been there before and after, that period are confident they were in the same place both times.

But when we tried to match those few early topographical details with those from Harb and the others arrested in 1974, we could not decide if they related to the same place. Nor was Harb or his comrades prepared to assert that they were in Sarafand.

"Others said it was Sarafand," Harb recalled. "But I don't know." Because it was so hot there, Harb tends to believe he was in "the southern part of Israel". (But he lived in the cool hills, and all the Israeli coastal plain is hot in June.)

Husni Haddad agreed with Harb. "I was a driver and I knew the roads," he said, and he thought that on the journey from his home in Bethlehem the jeep had turned south before reaching Sarafand. Haddad also said that near the end of his stay at the centre, the shutter outside his cell window slipped.

He saw fast traffic on a main road about 150 yards away, he said. That is roughly the distance from the road to the buildings visible at Sarafand. But Haddad thought that a high proportion of the cars he saw had light grey number plates, which indicates Gaza registrations. He believed, therefore, that the centre was somewhere close to the Gaza strip.

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Limits on the Red Cross

Israel commonly cites the International Committee of the Red Cross in its defence. At the United Nations last November, for instance, Ambassador Doron said: "Following his imprisonment, particulars of each security prisoner are sent to the International Committee of the Red Cross." This category of prisons, he said, "even enjoy some additional privileges, e.g. visits by the representatives of the ICRC ... on these occasions, they may talk with each prisoner without witnesses".

Ambassador Doron did not mention two important points. The Red Cross has indeed been able to visit prisons in the occupied territories since 1968. (Israel denies that the Geneva Convention applies, so it concedes the Red Cross no rights there; but it is allowed in.) Throughout those nine years, however, the Israelis have consistently forbidden the Red Cross to see prisoners undergoing interrogation. Nor did Doron say what we know from unimpeachable sources to be true: over the last nine years, when Red Cross representatives have got to prisoners in jails, they have heard story after story of ill-treatment and torture. And the Red Cross has filed hundreds of notices to the Israeli Government pointing this out.

The International Committee of the Red Cross has, of course, won its right to operate by promising Governments to remain silent. Its delegates, all Swiss, undertake never to talk of their work. We have, however, learned from impeccable sources of the problems the Red Cross faces in the occupied territories.

The Red Cross is not immediately notified of arrests. Often it is the families or lawyers of prisoners who contact the Red Cross - and usually they do not themselves know where the prisoners are now. The Red Cross then tries to trace and get to the detainees as swiftly as possible - especially if there are any grounds for suspecting ill-treatment. But the delegates face three obstacles.

They have access only to prisons, not to police stations or military camps. Nor do they have unrestricted access even to prisons. Attached to prisons in the occupied territories are sets of cells which the Red Cross cannot see. Some are outside the prison proper, attached to the local military governor's office. But inside Nablus jail, for example, the special cells - known there as "X-cells" - are to be found on the south side, near the solitary confinement cells.

These remain under the control of the security services, and the Red Cross has no access.

Nor, for the first eight years of occupation, could the Red Cross visit any prisoners in the holding and interrogation centre known as the Russian Compound in Jerusalem. And it has no access to the secret interrogation centre where Harb was held.

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Moreover, 48 hours before a prison visit, the Red Cross submits to the prison authorities a list of prisoners it particularly wants to see. It sometimes then happens that when the delegates arrive, they are told that the prisoner in question has just been moved to another jail. The delegates covering that jail promptly add the man to their list. If they in turn are told that the prisoner has again been moved - a process described to us as "playing paper games" - their concern inevitably increases.

So the Red Cross may only get to prisoners after a search and rarely if ever until interrogation is over. Several witnesses told us how Red Cross delegates greeted them when they finally met. "I've been looking for you everywhere," one delegate allegedly said. Another apparently remarked: "Now I have found you, you will be safe."

How often does the Red Cross then hear allegations of ill-treatment? The Red Cross, of course, will not say. But our impression is that while beatings are commonly mentioned, more elaborate ill-treatment is alleged by half the prisoners or less. Not all of these decide to make formal complaints.

Even a formal complaint is made - which the Red Cross then transmits without comment to the Israeli authorities - the Red Cross rarely learns officially if there has been any action as a result - or even if there has been an inquiry into the complaint. Over a period of six months delegates may notice that complaints about a particular form of treatment are diminishing; or discover that a particular interrogator has been transferred. That is all.

Only for five months, through the summer of 1969, did the Red Cross persuade the Israelis to let its delegates see some of those under interrogation - and then only in prisons, not military camps or police stations. But then the Israeli authorities changed their minds. The International Committee of the Red Cross subsequently reported: "Even though its delegates thought that there had been some improvement in interrogation conditions, the ICRC considered that the visiting procedure now laid down by the Israeli authorities no longer permitted it to ensure that interrogation methods at variance with humanitarian law did not occur."

That was in September 1970. Six years later, after reports in Israeli newspapers that the Red Cross was satisfied with conditions, the ICRC made another of its rare public statements. (The Red Cross says it does this only when it feels its policy of silence is being exploited or abused.) On January 12 this year, the Red Cross said that "a number of problems which have been raised regularly by the ICRC have not been solved." And it pointed out that it was still not permitted to visit "those undergoing interrogation".

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An assertion of power

Interrogation, of course, is only one of the ends of ill-treatment or torture. Ill-treatment may also deter a rebellious populace. For that, however, a degree of openness is required - a semi-public assertion of power. That is one possible explanation for what happens in the Russian Compound in Jerusalem.

The Russian Compound which sprawls over several acres in the heart of Jerusalem just north of the old city, derives its name from its original use as a hospital for Orthodox pilgrims. Inside its walls today are a prison, a repair depot for police vehicles, petrol pumps and two rows of single-storey barracks.

Much of the compound is open to the public: barrack number two issues driving licences and identity cards. But barracks four, six and eight house the Jerusalem outposts of Israel's civilian security services, including - in Barrack Four - the section called Miotim, the department of minorities. Its boss is an Iraqi Jew named Naim Shabo.

Unlike the rest of the captured territories, east Jerusalem has been not merely occupied by Israel but effectively annexed - and its 90,000 unwilling Arab citizens with it. Miotim's job is to cope with the "subversive elements" among them.

A few minutes after 3 p.m. last December 15, Hedva Sarid walked into Barrack Four. She is the secretary of the Israeli-born lawyer Lea Tsemel, whom she had arranged to meet there. "I looked for a secretary in the reception office, but nobody was there. Then I heard a shout - I think 'halam' /Arabic for 'immediately!'. The door of an office a little further down the corridor was half-open and I looked inside.

"There were some men - five, six or seven - around someone who I recognized as a client of ours. They were all talking to him at the same time. In the middle of shouting at him, one of them - a man with grey hair - swung his leg and kicked our client in the genitals. The client cried out and folded over. He held his genitals and he was crying.

"I started shouting at the men. They came and pushed me away and shut the door behind them. I saw the man with grey hair and I shouted at him: 'I saw you kick that boy. I want your number; that's illegal.'

"He said: 'I am the head of this department. My name is Naim Shabo. What do you want here?'" They pushed her out.

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Hedva Sarid is not the only person who claims to have witnessed violence in the Russian Compound. An American charity worker whose business sometimes takes him up there recalls seeing, last year, a man, clearly in a dazed state, brought out of Barrack Four, led around in the fresh air for a few minutes and then taken back inside. On another visit, he saw a man led across the compound bleeding from the nose and mouth.

Lea Tsemel's client, whom Hedva Sarid says she saw being kicked, was a youth called Mahmud el-Mughrabi. At 16, he had already been picked up a dozen times, and he was clearly regarded as a trouble-maker. Mughrabi gave us a detailed account of how he was beaten at the session Hedva Sarid interrupted. His story is in part corroborated by another prisoner, though Mughrabi's additional allegation of electric shock remains unconfirmed.

Mughrabi was one of 24 Palestinians we interviewed who had been interrogated in the Russian Compound - "Moscobiya" the Arabs call it. Twenty-two said they had been ill-treated or worse.

Like the allegations involving the prisons of Ramallah and Hebron or the secret interrogation centre, those relating to the Russian Compound consistently specify a range of abuses which is both limited and by and large peculiar to that place. At the Russian Compound, these centre on sexual assault.

Nine of those we interviewed spoke of having had their genitals beaten, squeezed or twisted. Consistently, they said this was done mostly from behind, while they stood, naked and with legs apart, facing a wall.

What is unusual is that Miotim makes little apparent effort to conceal at least these more common assaults. Indeed, it seems to go out of its way to demonstrate its power over east Jerusalem. While most of those in its hands are arrested in night raids, for example, many are simply summoned by pro forma letter. It talks of an interview, but Miotim's reputation among Palestinians is such that the recipients automatically expect worse.

Most of those summoned accept it is pointless trying to escape, though. So they turn up as requested, and frequently just disappear into detention. No notification is given to their families.

Mughrabi's experience, in other words, seems fairly typical of what Miotim has taught "trouble-makers" to expect. But the Russian Compound has, like the "Palace of the End", interrogation and confession functions as well. For what happens there to those suspected of knowledge or complicity in more serious offences seems to be altogether harsher.

In assessing those allegations, however, we were frequently driven back to gauging from long interviews what Amnesty calls the "credibility and motivation" of a witness. The testimony of Josef Odeh, for example, is terrible - though by

no means unique. It squares with the pattern thrown up by other testimony: and some corroboration is available. But the most impressive aspect was Odeh's manner in giving it.

Odeh's allegations go back to 1969 when his daughter Rasmiah, then aged 21, was given two life sentences for terrorist offences which included the planting of two bombs which killed 14 people.

Odeh says that it was around 1 a.m. on February 28, 1969, when Israeli soldiers burst into his home, then in Ramallah, and arrested him and his three daughters - one 23, one 17 and Rasmiah. They were taken to the Russian Compound.

His testimony bears out what the later prison sentences argue: that the Israelis were from the start, really interested in Rasmiah. According to Odeh's account, during his 20 days at the compound, the interrogators arranged a series of confrontations between members of the family, seemingly, as a pressurizing device.

Once, he said, he was kept in one room while Rasmiah was beaten nearby: "When they took me back ... Rasmiah couldn't stand on her own feet. She was lying on the floor and there were blood stains on her clothes. Her face was blue and she had a black eye. Then she was picked up by two soldiers, and at that moment I started crying and screaming and they blindfolded me and I think she was then taken away."

As his recital continued, Odeh became visibly distressed. He began to breathe rapidly and the muscles in the side of his neck were twitching. We asked him when he next saw Rasmiah, and he began to cry. At last he said to our interpreter: "I wish I had died rather than see this thing ... It's a question of honour ... It's all right, interpret, why not? What is there to tell? They held her down and shoved up a stick."

When he could go on, he said that he had been taken into an interrogation room to find Rasmiah naked and handcuffed. One of the interrogators, he said, "asked me to sleep with her, and I said: 'Don't even think of that. I would never do such a thing.' They were beating me and beating her and we were both screaming. Rasmiah was still saying: 'I know nothing.' And they spread her legs and shoved the stick into her. She was bleeding from her mouth and from her face and from her end. Then I became unconscious."

"AN IMPORTANT element in determining Amnesty's reaction to any evidence on torture," the organization has written, "is the government's readiness to investigate allegations and to punish any offenders."

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Israel's habitual response to allegations of ill-treatment or torture is to dismiss them as fabrications. Some, even many, may be - but not, we think, all. And, judged by that Amnesty criterion, Israel's denials are not always convincing. We have already outlined Israel's domestic response: the repeated failures of lawyers to persuade its courts to accept the allegations; the "impartial inquiries" where court procedures effectively bar the complainants from seeing, let alone challenging, official denials; in sum, a judiciary usually equivocal and often hostile to attempts to probe the truth.

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Israel's UN explanation

INTERNATIONALLY, Israel's response is exemplified by the assertions given at the United Nations last November by its ambassador there, Jacob Doron: "My country can proudly stand by its record of scrupulously observing the rule of law in the administered areas." Israel, he said, showed a "liberal and enlightened attitude, including the candid admission of any mistakes that may have been made and the efforts to correct them...."

Doron admitted those mistakes: "It is true that in one or two cases, which are completely exceptional, force has been regrettably used against prisoners. One of these exceptional cases unfortunately brought about the death of Ahmed Sheikh Dahdoul ..."

Dahdoul was beaten to death by soldiers in a military vehicle in March 1976 while being driven to Tulkarm police station 20 miles north-east of Tel Aviv. Doron described the aftermath: "The rule of law is strictly applied by the Israeli authorities ... no favouritism is shown by the authorities or the courts. The officer in question has since been found guilty and was sentenced to a long term of imprisonment."

When Dahdoul died, the Israeli authorities announced that he had done so of a heart attack. This was challenged by the Arab doctor who had treated him. Despite considerable uproar, the truth did not begin to emerge until four months later when the authorities suddenly told Dahdoul's lawyer - once again, Felicia Langer - that an officer would be charged.

No evidence has yet been publicly produced that any trial occurred. It was allegedly in a military court. But it was held in camera. Mrs. Langer was not permitted to send an observer, let alone participate. No action has yet been taken against the soldiers who actually did the beatings (though the Attorney General has recently announced that they will now be filed). Nor were any depositions ever taken from the other Arab prisoners in the truck with Dahdoul. The authorities merely announced that a major had been reduced to the rank of private and jailed for two years. To this day, Israel has refused to name the soldier or say where he is serving the sentence.

Last December, Dahdoul's family at last got an order from the high court for a transcript of the trial. Two months ago, the military court responded by saying that it would allow only Mrs. Langer to see a copy - and then only if she agreed not to copy it or to write anything about it. Mrs. Langer refused. The battle to see the record of this particular "candid admission" continues.

So do the allegations.

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B. Editorial from "The Sunday Times" of 19 June 1977

Israel and torture: A case for concern

SEVERAL pages of this issue of The Sunday Times are devoted to the results of our inquiries into alleged maltreatment by the Israeli authorities of Arabs in the occupied territories of Israel. Such coverage requires a special explanation. It is unpleasant reading; that is inescapable by the nature of the subject. It is long; that is inevitable if we are to set out the evidence properly and not merely publish assertions and denials.

The aim is to present the reader with the material on which we based our own judgment that Israel has been covering up ill-treatment and torture of Arab prisoners before they are brought to trial. As it is, we have published the minimum necessary for this purpose. We have in the form of transcripts of first-hand interviews ten times this amount of testimony with varying degrees of plausibility.

The subject merits such intensive treatment in our view, because respect for human rights must be indivisible, and because Israel occupies a special place in our world. Israel itself has always made justice, the rule of law and the fair treatment of Arabs central to its claim to nationhood. It was founded in idealism following oppression and this is one of the emotional obstacles: few people are prepared to believe that Israelis, as members of an ancient community which has for centuries been victim of persecution, are capable of persecuting others. There is all the more reason that when allegations are made and persist - there has been an increase in them in the past year - they should be taken seriously and examined in detail.

The detailed evidence The Sunday Times has collected will be made available to any properly constituted international inquiry - that farce of a body the UN Commission on Human Rights will not do. But of course the best result would be an end to the practices we describe. The Israeli authorities know we are publishing this inquiry, but we have not presented them with the details for three reasons. The first is that the bulk of the allegations is known to the Israeli authorities and/or the courts who have rejected them in circumstances we find unconvincing and we say why in the course of the report. The second is that though a number of Arabs have agreed to be named others involved would agree to be identified only to an international tribunal; and a few were frightened even of that.

The third, frankly, is that we are not prepared to accept simple new assertions that there is no truth in any of it. Israel has for years successfully resisted outside inquiries into these matters and particularly into allegations of torture. It has been helped by the fact that many of those making the inquiries have been obviously biased and one-sided - for instance the UN Commission on Human Rights which repeatedly attacks Israel and South Africa but is shatteringly silent over Uganda.

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This, though, only demonstrates the Commission's partiality; it does not necessarily mean all the testimony it has heard is false. Israelis frequently, and with justification, complain of a double standard operating against them in international affairs. In some cases, such as the present one, it operates in their favour. International bodies which are prepared to air allegations of ill-treatment of prisoners made against Latin American, Asian and African countries hesitate to do so against Israel and there has been similar reticence in the Press and in particular in the Israeli Press.

In a free society, the Press operates as a safety valve for grievance and complaint, but Israel's Press, normally so vigorous and outspoken, has not taken up the challenge of finding out just what is going on in the interrogation centres. The newspapers have until recently given little coverage to the West Bank and Gaza (with the exception of Haaretz) and rarely refer to the allegations of ill-treatment except in giving denials. The military governments of the West Bank and Gaza have therefore had a free hand in enforcing law in the occupied areas.

Israel's conduct in the occupied lands has deserved more scrutiny than it has received in ten years; but it now assumes a profound new importance. There is a new government in Israel. The outgoing government at least held out the possibility that the most densely populated areas of the West Bank might be returned to Arab rule in a peace agreement, though it has continued to build Jewish settlements.

Likud, the party of Mr. Menahem Begin, makes no such offer. It is committed to maintain Israel's rule over all the West Bank and Gaza, adding another million Arabs to the half million who are already Israeli citizens. Mr. Begin says they will have equal rights with Jews so long as they accept they are a minority in a Jewish state.

Apart from disbelief, two other responses to the allegations are certain. The first is that very few if any of the Arab countries would emerge unstained from a comparable inquiry into methods used there by police and prison authorities. Many, indeed, would fail to pass any westernised tests of civilised practice. The second is that outsiders should have some understanding that Israelis feel besieged and under the provocation of Arab terrorism. In such circumstances, the argument will run, ends justify means: to extract from suspects a confession, followed by conviction in the courts, is so important to the stamping out of terrorism that it takes priority over everything, human values included.

Both points can be met. Torture must be condemned wherever it is practised. But in the occupied lands of Israel the people are dependent on international protection and only respect for international conventions can help them. Secondly, though surrounded by enemies, Israel has not had to contend in recent years with massive internal violence on the Ulster or Algerian pattern.

But the justification of torture for the control of populations cannot be accepted by nations with claims to western values, whatever the provocations. It is

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inhumane. It is self-defeating. At the minimum it strengthens the resolve of those who think of themselves as oppressed. It demoralises those who practise it; as the French in Algeria had reason to learn. And, most important, an apologia like this does less than justice to Israel's own standards. Mr. Begin, who is about to become Prime Minister, suffered in a Russian prison in his youth, had a price on his head under the British, and has written with great emotion in condemnation of British methods of interrogation and trial of his comrades in the Irgun Zvai Leumi underground organisation in the 1940's. Unless his convictions have changed, he cannot be satisfied that since 1967 Israel has used against Arab prisoners the British mandate laws and regulations he so bitterly denounced.

Finally, it will be said, of course, that to publish reports of torture and ill-treatment is to strike at the very heart of Israel's existence. The opposite is true. Israel has to live in peace with Arabs. It seems unaware of the deep strength of feeling against continued occupation. Certainly the occupation has brought some material benefits to the Arabs, but the deprivation of human rights is gravely poisoning its relationships with those people it must not only subdue now but eventually live with as neighbours. In the long term a just peace is essential to Israel; and some kind of basic trust is essential to that. Torture by Israel (like terrorism by extremist Palestinians) undermines trust, is an obstacle to peace and by extension weakens Israel's prospects of survival.

Six years ago we published a report on interrogation on Northern Ireland which led to the banning of those practices by the British Government, and the removal of a little of the poison in Anglo-Irish relationships. The report we publish today will, we hope, cause Israel to rethink its occupation policies and remove a little of the poison between Jew and Arab.
