

## Maat for Peace' Submission to the United Nations Committee Against Torture Regarding Israel September 2025

Israel submitted its sixth periodic report to the United Nations Committee Against Torture (hereinafter referred to as "the Committee") under Article 19 of the Convention as part of the simplified reporting procedure on December 30, 2020. This report was originally due on May 13, 2020. Maat has reviewed the report submitted by Israel and the information it contains. Maat has concerns as the Israeli government's report attempts to portray a reality that diverges from the actual practices amounting to torture that Israel engages in, in violation of the principles and provisions of the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, to which it acceded on October 3, 1991. Despite this, Israel has not yet ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention.

This report was submitted to the Committee before it reviewed Israel's highlights of Maat's concerns regarding Israel's compliance with the Convention. Maat hopes that the report will enrich the Committee's study of the extent to which the Israeli government adheres to the provisions of this Convention. The concerns outlined below are primarily based on Maat's research and the evidence it has gathered regarding human rights practices in Israel, including practices of torture, ill-treatment, and cruel and degrading treatment. Maat has also documented recent testimonies from former detainees in Israeli prisons. This report concludes with a set of recommendations that it hopes will form part of the Committee's final recommendations following the review process.

### I. Definition of Torture - Article 1

Maat notes that Israel, despite its repeated promises to align its legislative and legal framework with the provisions of the Convention, has not, as of the date of this report, established a legal definition of torture that is consistent with the definition provided in Article 1 of the Convention. This creates a serious legislative vacuum that facilitates severe human rights violations, including torture and ill-treatment, without actual accountability.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Is torture in Israel considered a crime? Justice, <https://2h.ac/czna>



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Theoretically, Israel continues to declare its commitment to adopting a separate and anti-torture bill that would provide a clear definition in accordance with Article 1 of the Convention. However, in practice, the government and the legislative authority in Israel have been slow to adopt any law that would provide a clear prohibition against torture practices, especially in Israeli prisons, or to establish a definition that encompasses all elements and forms of torture as outlined in Article 1 of the Convention. Among the attempts made was the repeated effort by the Ministry of Justice in 2016 and 2021 to draft a separate definition of the crime of torture within a bill it was preparing; however, this bill has yet to be adopted.<sup>2</sup>

The continued absence of a legal definition of torture within the legal framework weakens the Israeli government's compliance with its obligations under Article 1 of the Convention, which absolutely prohibits torture without any exceptions. Consequently, the absence of legislative text clearly reveals the systematic nature of the Israeli government's lack of seriousness in fully complying with the provisions of the Convention.

## II. Legislative, Judicial, and Administrative Measures to Prevent Torture – Article 2

Under Article 2 of the Convention, Israel is obligated to take legislative, judicial, and administrative measures to prevent torture and ill-treatment. However, Maat's research indicates that Israeli laws, executive decisions, judicial rulings, and policies remain inconsistent with the text of Article 2 of the Convention. Israel has amended the law known as "Illegal Combatants" multiple times since October 7, 2023, which deprives detainees of judicial review for up to 45 days and prohibits them from meeting with a lawyer for a period of up to 70 days, contrary to the principles and provisions of the Convention.

Maat believes that this legal amendment institutionalizes the isolation of detainees from the outside world, a practice that increases the risk of torture and ill-treatment and prevents external oversight, especially from civil society and independent human rights organizations.<sup>3</sup> This amendment clearly contradicts international standards for preventing practices that may amount to torture. Additionally, detaining individuals in isolation for more than 30 days contravenes Rules 44 and 45

<sup>2</sup> See the following link: <https://tinyurl.com/2h2283mh>

<sup>3</sup> Detention Fact Sheet 2025, <https://stoptorture.org.il/en/detention-fact-sheet-2025/>



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of the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners, known as "the Nelson Mandela Rules," which Israel claims to adhere to.

Similarly, in 2024, two committees associated with the Knesset held an urgent discussion regarding an extension that would allow the detention of prisoners coming from war zones in Israeli prisons without trial. According to the draft bill, detainees from war zones would be deprived of basic rights, including access to legal counsel, healthcare, and sufficient food for their survival.<sup>4</sup>

In a related context, on October 28, 2023, in parallel with the Knesset's ratification of the "State of Emergency in Prisons" law in Israel and the West Bank, the government extended the maximum limits set by law for judicial or administrative oversight during the arrest of Palestinian residents in the West Bank. Israel also introduced several changes to military legislation, including amending Article 33 of the Security Instructions Order No. 1651 of 2009. This amendment allows for the use of "combat detention," which occurs during operational anti-terrorism activities and is applicable only when there are concerns that the detainee poses a threat to the security of the area or the forces. The amendment included extending the maximum period for presenting a detainee before a judge to obtain an administrative detention order.

On another front, Israeli policies towards the West Bank have continued to facilitate practices of torture and ill-treatment. The authorities adopted a "minimum standard" policy, as the prison administration declared a state of emergency on October 17, 2023, and began imposing collective punitive measures described as "tightening the living conditions of security detainees." These measures included reducing living spaces to cramped conditions, removing beds and replacing them with floor mattresses leading to overcrowding, and implementing a "lockdown" policy that enforces complete isolation of detainees, closing prisons to family visits, Red Cross visits, or lawyers, and conducting all court hearings via video, depriving detainees of the opportunity to appear physically before judges.<sup>5</sup>

The violations did not stop there, as they included confiscation of personal belongings, cutting off electricity, as well as severe violations documented in various reports reviewed by Maat. These violations included the use of handcuffs and blindfolds for prolonged periods, severe beatings across the body, extinguishing cigarettes on the prisoners' necks and backs, and the use of electric

<sup>4</sup> See the following link: <https://tinyurl.com/3j6c4rmy>

<sup>5</sup> Welcome to Hell: The Israeli Prison System as a Network of Torture Camps, <https://shorturl.at/Wxj17>



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shocks. Detainees were deprived of sleep and access to restrooms, being forced to urinate in their clothes. These violations also included forms of sexual humiliation, harassment, and beatings of genitalia, along with various methods of psychological torture.

Administratively, decisions for administrative detention have remained prevalent within the Israeli prison administration, with statistics indicating that 3,498 individuals were under administrative detention, including 100 children and four women as of April 2025.<sup>6</sup> Israel resorts to this form of detention to hold certain detainees in Israeli prisons for extended periods without charging them or referring them to urgent judicial trial.<sup>7</sup>

Maat has judicial concerns that it hopes the Committee will focus on, especially following the Israeli Supreme Court's decision permitting the use of torture methods during interrogations under certain conditions. This decision undermines a previous ruling by the Israeli Supreme Court that prohibited certain means of torture and cruel treatment that Palestinian detainees faced during interrogations. The Supreme Court ruling allows security forces to broadly invoke it to justify subjecting detainees in Israeli prisons to torture.<sup>8</sup>

### III. Interrogation Rules During Investigations – Article 11

Maat has reviewed the information in Israel's report, indicating that there have been no instances where detainees during interrogations have faced illegal treatment or abuse, including torture to extract confessions. Maat notes that there are legislative guarantees regulating interrogation rules in Israel. However, contrary to these previous claims, Maat observed that law enforcement authorities in Israel have continued, in the years following the last review before the Committee, to use practices that amount to torture as a primary tool for obtaining confessions from detainees and suspects in places of deprivation of liberty, depriving them of contact with their families or legal counsel.

Maat has also reviewed credible reports indicating that torture and ill-treatment remain widespread and constitute a systematic practice in the treatment of detainees and suspects by the police and

<sup>6</sup> Palestinians mark Prisoners' Day Amid Ongoing Genocide for 2nd Year in a Row, <https://english.wafa.ps/Pages/Details/156508>

<sup>7</sup> Administrative Detention in Israel and the Occupied Territories, <https://digitalcommons.law.udc.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1015&context=antiochlawjournal>

<sup>8</sup> See the following link, <https://2h.ae/tuvh>



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other law enforcement agencies, contradicting Israel's obligations under Article 11 of the Convention. Maat has documented a series of testimonies confirming these previous assessments.

According to a testimony reviewed by Maat, (A. A), a 41-year-old employee of the Palestinian Authority, was subjected to torture during interrogation after being arrested following attacks by Palestinian factions on October 7. He reported experiencing severe torture practices in the Sidi Taiman detention center, located in a military base in the Negev Desert, where he spent 110 days handcuffed and shackled. He stated that he was not allowed to change his clothes, was subjected to severe beatings, and was provided with minimal food. He was continuously deprived of sleep.<sup>9</sup>

Subsequently, he was transferred to Ofer Prison west of Ramallah, which is managed by the Israeli Prison Service, where he endured further torture practices. He described being placed over sewage water, handcuffed and shackled, with his head restrained. He recounted, "I would freeze at night under the blanket," adding, "I suffered severe humiliation when a female soldier urinated on me while I was restrained." He was also beaten in an area known as "the tree area," where there are no surveillance cameras. They used dogs to intimidate him and offered him collaboration as an informant; when he refused, he stated, "They stripped me of my clothes, beat me, and made me sit on stones, while settlers came to mock me and film me."

In another testimony reviewed by Maat in September 2025, (M. A), a 36-year-old mechanic who was released after being found not involved in the October 7 attacks and returned to Gaza, described being stripped of his clothes, blindfolded, restrained, and brutally beaten, in addition to electric shocks and deprivation of medical care.

According to another testimony documented by Maat in August 2025, a 19-year-old male cook was held for 77 days at a military base in the Hebron area. He faced various forms of torture, including insults, ill-treatment, and psychological intimidation aimed at extracting confessions during interrogations. He was denied contact with a lawyer or his family and was not allowed to receive necessary medical medications.

Another woman, aged 26, was arrested at the Nitzarim junction and held for 50 days, initially in an unidentified military facility before being transferred to the Antout camp, Damon Prison, and

<sup>9</sup> From Drowning to Solitary Cells: A Testimony Documenting Brutal Torture in Israeli Prisons, <https://pchrgaza.org/from-drowning-to-solitary-cells-a-testimony-documenting-brutal-torture-in-israeli-prisons/>



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finally Be'er Sheva Prison, before being released because she was not involved in the October 7 attacks.<sup>10</sup>

On another note, according to reports reviewed by Maat in September 2025, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) acknowledged that Israel tortured several of its employees during their arrest and interrogation by Israeli authorities. These practices included abuse and sexual exploitation. According to the agency, its employees reported being "forced to give confessions under torture and ill-treatment" during interrogations regarding the attacks by Palestinian factions on Israel on October 7.<sup>11</sup>

In a related context, the Israel Defense Forces acknowledged the deaths of detainees in prisons during their custody. According to a statement from the army, it is "aware of cases of deaths among detainees," adding that "according to procedures, a criminal investigation is opened by the military police's investigative unit in each case of a detainee's death." However, these investigations have not led to fair outcomes, and the perpetrators remain unpunished.<sup>12</sup> According to the Public Committee Against Torture in Israel, it is following up on dozens of complaints from individuals who have suffered severe torture during investigations by the internal security apparatus. The methods of torture described by the committee include painful restraints, sleep deprivation, exposure to extreme heat or cold, in addition to sexual harassment and religiously-based humiliation. The committee concluded that the violations of the rights of detainees, whether they are citizens or non-citizens in Israel, represent a persistent and ongoing practice.

These practices obstruct Israel's implementation of Article 11 of the Convention and contradict a set of principles concerning the protection of all individuals subjected to any form of detention or imprisonment. They facilitate widespread impunity and the lack of accountability for perpetrators, often leading to announced governmental directives to Israeli officials to expand these practices to extract confessions from detainees.<sup>13</sup>

#### IV. Complaints Regarding Torture Cases – Article 13

Through evidence gathered by Maat, it is evident that Israel systematically violates the right of victims to file complaints and ensures a prompt and fair investigation into allegations of torture

<sup>10</sup> PCHR Releases Report on Torture and Genocide Against Palestinians from Gaza, page 56, <https://tinyurl.com/327569kz>

<sup>11</sup> Israel subjects UN workers to torture, <https://tinyurl.com/ymhr8wva>

<sup>12</sup> Chemical burns, assaults, electric shocks - Gazans tell BBC of torture in Israeli detention, <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cn7vje365rno>

<sup>13</sup> PCATI Annual Report 2023. Page 12, <https://stoptorture.org.il/en/pcati-annual-report-2023/>



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and ill-treatment. This issue affects not only complaints from detainees in the West Bank and Jerusalem but also extends to Israelis themselves who are victims of police violence.

Maat has reviewed local Israeli reports indicating that most complaints of police violence submitted to the unit investigating police officers are not only closed but are often dismissed without any criminal investigation. The rejection of these complaints is frequently attributed to vague and ambiguous reasons, such as that opening a criminal investigation is "inappropriate under the circumstances of the case."<sup>14</sup>

According to information held by Maat, the complaint and investigation mechanisms in Israel lack credibility, transparency, and seriousness. Statistics show that since the outbreak of the war until June 2025, 52 military investigations into serious crimes committed by Israel in the occupied West Bank, including torture, have been announced. However, 88% of these cases either remained under review without any disclosure about their status or progress, or were closed without finding any violations. Among all these investigations, only one case resulted in an actual prison sentence for the accused, reflecting the fragility of the Israeli military justice system and its failure to achieve accountability. Maat points out that the Israeli army only resorts to opening these investigations when faced with intense pressure or public accusations of committing serious crimes.<sup>15</sup>

Reports reviewed by Maat indicate that the internal investigation process is characterized by a high degree of ambiguity, possibly intentionally, which ensures the rarity of accountability and maintains a state of impunity. This approach contradicts Israel's claims that its military operations comply with the highest standards of international humanitarian law, as the available data do not show actual accountability but rather an attempt to minimize and contain the damage in the media. This approach to handling complaints related to torture crimes and serious violations not only constitutes a breach of Article 13 of the Convention but also entrenches a policy of impunity, closing the door for victims to obtain justice and redress. This situation calls for serious intervention from the Committee Against Torture to pressure Israel to reform its military judicial system and ensure its compliance with international standards.

## Recommendations

<sup>14</sup> Ibid

<sup>15</sup> %88of Israeli investigations into recent Gaza abuse allegations stalled or closed without findings, with just one leading to criminal sentencing, AOV, <https://2h.ae/WKHC>



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**Maat requests that the Committee consider including the following recommendations in its concluding observations on Israel:**

- Call on the Israeli government to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.
- Urge Israel to establish a comprehensive definition of torture that includes the elements of the crime outlined in Article 1 of the Convention.
- Encourage the Israeli government to clarify its final position on establishing a separate law against torture.
- Call on Israel to take urgent measures to stop torture and ill-treatment within places of detention, including conducting fair investigations into all allegations of torture and ill-treatment against detainees, ensuring accountability for all responsible parties before the courts, and compensating victims.
- Urge Israel to abolish the widely practiced administrative detention, particularly against detainees from the West Bank.
- Consider the repeal of amendments made to the "Illegal Combatants" law and the Prison Service law, ensuring that all Palestinian detainees are subject to international humanitarian law, including their right to communicate with lawyers, families, and humanitarian organizations.
- Repeal all administrative decisions and orders issued following October 7 that have entrenched practices amounting to torture in Israeli prisons.
- Press Israel to allow unrestricted access for the International Committee of the Red Cross and independent human rights organizations to all places of detention in Israel to investigate the conditions of detainees and their treatment.
- Ensure comprehensive medical care for Palestinian detainees and prisoners, providing adequate food, clean water, and appropriate sanitary conditions in accordance with international standards.
- Call on Israel to establish a new mechanism for investigating complaints of torture committed by police forces against its citizens and against Palestinians residing in Israel.



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