

# Appalling Israeli Gulag Prison Conditions

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Region: [Middle East & North Africa](#)  
Theme: [Law and Justice](#), [Police State & Civil Rights](#)  
In-depth Report: [PALESTINE](#)

Israel's gulag is one of the world's worst. On July 9, 16 human rights organizations [headlined](#) "RE: European Parliament Fact-Finding Mission on Palestinian Political Prisoners." They include:

Addameer Prisoners' Support and Human Rights Association

Aldameer Association for Human Rights

Al Haq

Al Mezan Center for Human Rights

Arab Association for Human Rights

Adalah - The Legal Center for Arab Minorities in Israel

Badil Resource Center for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights

Defence for Children International - Palestine Section

Ensan Center for Human Rights and Democracy

Hurryyat - Centre for Defense of Liberties and Civil Rights

Jerusalem Center for Legal Aid and Human Rights

Ramallah Center for Human Rights Studies

Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling

Palestinian Society Prisoner's Club

Physicians for Human Rights Israel

The Public Committee Against Torture in Israel

The way Israel treats detained children explains its contempt for human rights. Previous articles explained. Israel's secret prisoner policy tells more.

A previous article discussed [Ben Zygiel](#). He was called Prisoner X. Disappearing him says much about Israel's dark side.

He was denied all rights. Israel imprisoned him secretly with no name or identity. He was completely isolated from the outside world.

Information leaked. Media reports followed. Australian-Israeli Mossad agent Ben Zygier was Prisoner X. His Australian passport identified him as Ben Allen.

Disappearing him was a state secret. He became a nonperson.

He was secretly indicted, tried and imprisoned. He died in December 2010. Israel said nothing. Did he kill himself or was he murdered?

Targeted killing is longstanding Mossad policy. It prefers burying its secrets. Dead men tell no tales.

Did he blow his cover? Was he selling state secrets? Did he expose or endanger other agents? Did he commit other treasonous acts?

Israel won't say. Everything about his case remains classified. Nothing's revealed publicly.

Mordechai Vanunu spent 18 years in Israel's gulag. At least 11 were in solitary confinement. Israel wants him disappeared.

He was incarcerated for exposing dirty secrets. Israel's nuclear weapons program is now well known.

Israel violates fundamental rule of law principles repeatedly. It does so unaccountably. Information on another Prisoner X came out. How many more remain unknown.

On July 9, [Reuters](#) headlined "Israel secretly holds 'Prisoner X2' for security reasons: lawyer."

According to a "prominent Israeli lawyer," Israel imprisoned a security services member. It did so for "a grave offence."

Avigdor Feldman specializes in national security cases. He called Prison X 2's situation "riveting and sensational." He's male, Jewish, an Israeli citizen, and a secret services employee. He explained little more.

He called charges against him far more serious than Zygier's. They're "(m)uch more sensational. Much more amazing. Much more riveting."

He added that Zygier and Prisoner X2 may be the tip of the iceberg. They operated covertly. X2 held Israel's highest level security clearance. He betrayed a secret Mossad operation. According to Feldman:

"We're speaking of a criminal act which was a serious breach of the walls of security and secrecy of the secret apparatus."

"Not just endangering the security of the State but the heads of those (security) organizations who would be fired."

On July 10, [Haaretz](#) headlined "Israel Prison Service sources: 'Second Prisoner X' held for years in total isolation."

He's in one of Israel's most secure prisons. It's where Zygier was held. It's "well guarded with no windows. He has no contact with other prisoners or guards."

No one knows his identity or why he's there. Except for brief walks, he hasn't left his cell for years. He's surrounded by "a high stone fence covered with heavy iron."

He's monitored 24-hours a day. Information about him was discovered in an appendix to discussions and decisions on Zygier. He worked for Mossad. Israel's second Prisoner X likely did so also.

Public Security Minister Yitzhak Aharonovitch lied. He claimed "(t)here are no disappeared prisoners in Israel whose families don't know of their incarceration."

He also said "sometimes there are files whose existence cannot be released to the public, in order to prevent damage to state security. In these cases, a court gag order is imposed."

"There are also cases in which it is necessary to keep an inmate's name concealed to prevent damage to state security."

"Even in these cases, the prisoners' rights are meticulously protected, and these prisoners are certainly not 'hidden' from the courts."

Meretz Leader Zehava Gal On commented earlier on Zygier. "In a democracy, there cannot be secret prisoners, with no outside supervision of where and under what conditions they are held," she said.

Holding prisoners secretly and lying about it "befit(s) a totalitarian state," she added. Holding more secret prisoners compounds an unconscionable problem.

Labor MK Nachman Shai called for a state comptroller investigation.

"The thought that additional prisoners are being held in such conditions is frightening and disturbing. Only the state comptroller has the tools to investigate," he said.

According to Meretz MK Esawi Frej, "we are on the fast track to becoming a dark police state."

Israel's that much and more.

Elmar Brok's a German European Parliament member (MEP). He's been one since 1980. He chairs its Committee on Foreign Affairs. The above listed human rights groups (called HRGs below) addressed him.

They urged his committee to "immediately dispatch a parliamentary fact-finding mission to assess the current situation with regard to the detention conditions of Palestinian prisoners, including women and children, and the use of administrative detention."

On March 13, an EP resolution addressed deplorable conditions in Israeli prisons and Arafat Jaradat.

Shin Bet interrogators tortured him to death. Autopsy evidence confirmed it. He wasn't the first political prisoner killed in prison. He won't be the last. Israel remains unaccountable.

HRGs urged EP Committee on Foreign Affairs members “to take a lead role in ensuring that Israel complies with its international humanitarian and human rights law obligations.”

Thousands of political prisoners languish in Israel’s gulag. They include 238 children, 16 women, 14 Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) members, and 156 uncharged administrative detainees.

Most Palestinian inmates are in 17 prisons, four interrogation centers and four detention centers. All but one are in Israel.

Incarcerating them there violates Fourth Geneva’s Article 76. It states:

“Protected persons accused of offences shall be detained in the occupied country, and if convicted they shall serve their sentences therein.”

Holding them in Israel prevents family visits. Hard to get permit permission is required.

Article 76 also states:

“They shall, if possible, be separated from other detainees and shall enjoy conditions of food and hygiene which will be sufficient to keep them in good health, and which will be at least equal to those obtaining in prisons in the occupied country.

They shall receive the medical attention required by their state of health.

They shall also have the right to receive any spiritual assistance which they may require.

Women shall be confined in separate quarters and shall be under the direct supervision of women.

Proper regard shall be paid to the special treatment due to minors.

Protected persons who are detained shall have the right to be visited by delegates of the Protecting Power and of the International Committee of the Red Cross, in accordance with the provisions of Article 143.

Such persons shall have the right to receive at least one relief parcel monthly.”

Israel systematically violates all of the above. Palestinian prisoner rights are denied. Prison conditions are deplorable.

Facilities are overcrowded. They lack basic amenities. Prisoners endure “poor hygiene, a significant lack of fresh air and inadequate living space.”

They’re “currently allotted about 2.9 square meters of living space.”

“(E)xisting windows in prison cells are often covered by iron sheets, thus reducing the availability of natural sunlight.”

“All amenities such as television, clothing, blankets, and books are considered ‘privileges.’ ” They “can be revoked at any time” for any reason or none at all.

On May 14, 2012, Egypt brokered a deal with Israel’s Prison Service. Doing so ended a mass

hunger strike. Israel agreed to prisoners' demands.

It's agreements aren't worth the paper they're written on. Agreed on terms were systematically violated. Nothing substantive changed.

"In fact," said HRGs, "the agreement has led to an escalation in individual hunger strikes, in which currently 12 prisoners/detainees are engaged."

"These prisoners/detainees are protesting for various reasons, including their continued administrative detention, denial of family visits and prison conditions."

"Israeli authorities regularly neglect their duties to provide medical care for Palestinian prisoners, as required by the Geneva Conventions."

"Treatment is often inadequate and considerably delayed. In 2013 alone two Palestinians have died as a result of medical neglect."

According to Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the occupied Palestinian territories, Richard Falk:

"(T)here have been at least 54 cases of clear medical neglect that have resulted in the deaths of Palestinians in Israeli prisons."

Prison medical staff numbers are woefully inadequate. Personnel are poorly trained. Israeli Prison Service (IPS) authorities control them. Serving them involves violating fundamental medical ethics.

"Since 1967, 73 Palestinians have been tortured to death" during interrogation.

"Methods of interrogation and torture that Palestinian detainees are subjected to include beatings, tying prisoners in 'stress positions,' interrogation sessions that last up to 12 consecutive hours, depriving prisoners of sleep and other sensory deprivation, isolation and solitary confinement, and threats against the lives of their relatives."

Beatings and other type abuses are commonplace. Released prisoners relate horror stories. Intolerable treatment persists.

Detaining and imprisoning Palestinian children is "extremely alarming." According to UNICEF, "ill-treatment of Palestinian children in the Israeli military detention system appears to be widespread, systematic and institutionalized."

"(I)n the last ten years, an estimated 7,000 children have been detained, interrogated, prosecuted and/or imprisoned within the Israeli military justice system."

The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child urged Israel to "guarantee that juvenile justice standards apply to all children without discrimination and that trials are conducted in a prompt and impartial manner, in accordance with minimum fair trial standards", while also urging Israel "to dismantle the institutionalized system of detention and use of torture and ill-treatment of Palestinian children at all stages of the judicial procedure."

Israel ignores all reasonable demands. It does so with impunity. HRGs want EP members to intervene responsibly.

They want them to visit Israeli prisons, detention centers and interrogation ones. They want them to meet prisoners face-to-face. They want them to learn firsthand what they endure.

“(I)n case Israel denies (them) access,” they want them to “include a visit to an Israeli military court; meet with former prisoners; prisoner’s families; Palestinian and Israeli organizations that deal specifically with prisoners; the Palestinian Ministry of Detainees and Ex-detainees; and Israeli Military Judges, the Military Prosecution Office and the Israeli Prison Service.”

They want them to take direct action to end gulag prison conditions. They want Israel held accountable for its actions.

A Final Comment

On July 13, [Haaretz](#) headlined “Former military intelligence chief: Israel held a ‘Prisoner X’ in the 1970s,” saying:

From 1974 – 1979, Major General (res.) Shlomo Gazit headed the IDF’s intelligence unit. “Roughly 36 years ago,” he said, “as director of Military Intelligence, I allowed the detention of a prisoner X in total solitary confinement.”

“I did it with a clean conscience, and I knew full well the national and security-related ramifications or making that information public.”

“My superiors of course knew of the secret, and authorized my decision.”

“The subject was brought to the attention of the justice system, which dealt with the matter with complete discretion.”

“The whole affair ended long ago – and I’m glad to say without any leaks.”

“Moreover, even though decades have passed since then, if information on the affair came out it could still cause a great deal of damage, even today.”

Gavit stopped short of saying who was detained or why. Yitzhak Rabin was prime minister. Shimon Peres was defense minister.

Yigal Alon was foreign minister. These officials and other top ones likely authorized what happened.

Haaretz explained what presumably was involved. It failed to condemn harsh imprisonment without due process and judicial fairness.

Regardless of what offense was allegedly committed, rule of law principles matter most. Israel spurns them with impunity. It’s standard Israeli practice.

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*His new book is titled “Banker Occupation: Waging Financial War on Humanity.”*

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