

Israel's Skin Bank Raises Ethical Concerns on Organ Consent

By [Jordan News](#)

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Israel possesses the world's largest skin bank, a medical facility that stores human skin for later use in treating burns and skin cancers. This bank was established in 1986 under the supervision of the military medical sector of the occupying army, which provides its services internationally, especially to requests from Western countries.

Israeli occupation authorities been stealing organs from the bodies of dead Palestinian, a heinous criminal practice that has been revealed in several reports and through testimonies of Israeli doctors who participated in this gruesome practice, violating professional ethics and constituting a crime against humanity, Al-Ghad reported.

In contrast, this Israeli bank differs from other banks worldwide in that its supply of these vital organs does not come solely from voluntary donors. Instead, documented cases of stealing skin from the bodies of Palestinians have been recorded, individuals whose organs are also stolen.

There is compelling evidence of Israelis engaging in trafficking these stolen organs, making the entity the largest market for organs in the Middle East.

Where Did Israel Get This Inventory From?

Expert in Israeli affairs Anas Abu Arqoub says,

"The Israeli skin bank is the largest in the world, surpassing the American skin bank that

was established 40 years before it, noting that Israel's population is much smaller than the United States."

Arqoub emphasizes that the theft of organs from Palestinian bodies is not just suspicions, stating,

"Even the Israeli media acknowledges that it is an extraction process without the knowledge of the dead's families."

The reserve of human skin held by the Israeli occupation state, equivalent to 170 square meters, stored within the Israeli skin bank, confirms Arqoub's account. The number is considered unreasonable since Israel ranks third in its population's refusal to donate organs, attributed to Jewish religious beliefs.

Handing over Palestinian bodies to their families without organs!

The details of the story date back to 2001 when Swedish investigative journalist Donald Boström published an investigation exposing the theft of organs from the bodies of Palestinian martyrs and their trafficking by Israeli entities. This was the first time this crime was revealed to the international public.

Boström did not stop at this point but published another investigation on the same subject in 2009 in the pages of the Swedish magazine "Aftonbladet." The investigation mentions that the Israeli Ministry of Health launched a national campaign to encourage organ donation in 1992. However, despite that, a significant gap persisted between the demand and the supply of donations.

Coinciding with that campaign, cases of the disappearance of several Palestinian youth began, only to return afterward in closed coffins. The Israeli authorities imposed on their families to bury them at night without funerals.

Boström says,

"I was in the region at that time, and on several occasions, UN employees contacted me concerned about the developments. The individuals who contacted me said that organ theft certainly happened, but they were prevented from doing anything about it."

These contacts prompted the journalist to delve further into the issue, so he went to interview the families of the dead who confirmed the theft of their sons' organs before their killing. Among them was the son of the martyr Bilal Ahmed Ghannan, who was 19 years old when the Israeli army arrested him in the village of Um al-Tut in the West Bank in 1992. He returned with a body without internal organs, from the neck to below the abdomen.

The Israeli medical authorities did not deny the torture and theft of Bilal's organs. At that time, the director of the Israeli Institute of Forensic Medicine, **Chen Kugel**, said that Bilal's family could be right because they "took everything that could be taken from all the bodies that came to the Institute of Forensic Medicine," without the family's consent. His family did not receive any explanation, apology, or compensation for what happened.

Israeli Confessions of Organ Theft from Palestinians

In a 2009 documentary on the issue, there are admissions from the former director of the Israeli Institute of Forensic Medicine, **Yehuda Hiss**, confirming the theft of organs from the bodies of Palestinian in the institute. Hiss stated,

“We took corneas, skin, heart valves, and bones ... Almost everything was done unofficially to a large extent... and permission was not sought from the families.”

In her study on dealing with the bodies of Palestinians at the Abu Kabir Forensic Medicine Center in Tel Aviv, published in a book titled “On Their Bodies,” anthropologist Meirav Feis stated that she witnessed “how they take organs from the bodies of Palestinians. In return, they leave the bodies of soldiers intact.”

The researcher added,

“They take corneas, skin, and heart valves in a way that makes the absence of those organs unnoticed by non-specialists. They replace corneas with plastic bodies and remove the skin from the back so that the family does not see it. In addition, the bodies of the dead are used in medical schools in Israeli universities for research purposes.”

Feis said,

“In the first intifada, the army effectively allowed the institute to extract organs from Palestinians under a military procedure that required dissecting the bodies of Palestinian prisoners. The autopsy procedure was accompanied by the removal of organs used by the Israeli skin bank, established in 1985 to treat burns suffered by Israeli soldiers.”

Trafficking in the Organs of Palestinian Casualties

Israel is one of the largest markets for trafficking in human organs in the world, and the largest in the Middle East. Media reports revealed that the Israeli entity is involved in killing Palestinians to steal their internal organs illegally and trade them within an illegal international network.

In 2009, the US Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) arrested an Israeli settler named Levy Izhak Rosenbaum. After investigating him, it was revealed that he played the role of a broker in organ-selling operations in the United States for the benefit of a criminal cell led by rabbis, politicians, and government officials in Israel.

Journalist Donald Boström, in his mentioned investigation, suggests a connection between this network and the theft of organs from Palestinian martyrs taking place in “Israel.” Boström said,

“Half of the kidneys transplanted to Israelis since the beginning of the first decade of the 21st century were illegally purchased. The Israeli health authorities have full knowledge of this activity but do nothing to stop it.”

In a report published by the Israeli newspaper “Haaretz” in 2016, Israel admitted to losing dozens of bodies of Palestinians. The newspaper quoted statements from sources in the Israeli judicial and security apparatuses about the loss of 121 bodies of Palestinians held by

the occupation authorities since the 1990s.

Continued Organ tTheft

Following the explosion of the organ theft scandal in 2009, the Israeli government tried to evade the proven charges against it. The spokesperson for the Israeli Ministry of Health at that time, **Einav Shimron Greenboim**, issued a statement saying,

“The practice mentioned in the investigation is an old story that ended years ago.”

Doubts persist about the continuation of these unethical practices that violate human rights, as indicated by the Israeli authorities’ continued detention of dozens of bodies of Palestinian dead, justifying it as a punitive measure.

According to **Abdel Nasser Farwana**, the head of the Studies and Documentation Unit at the Palestinian Prisoners and Ex-Prisoners Affairs Commission, Israel still holds more than 370 bodies of Palestinian and Arab bodies who died in different circumstances and years apart. He added,

“The list of these detained martyrs includes individuals who died from the 1970s until around 2023.”

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