

SHIN BET: AN INGRAINED CULTURE OF TORTURE AND DECEIT

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Introduction - Who, or what, is Shin Bet?

Known at different times by various names (the General Security Service [GSS], the Israeli Security Agency [ISA], Shabak), Shin Bet is Israel's internal security and counter-intelligence service. Its role includes the interrogation of "suspects"; exposing "terrorist" rings; counter-espionage; the protection of the state president and so on. It is one of three branches of the Israeli intelligence community.

- 1- Shin Bet: Primarily internal security
- 2- Mossad: Primarily external security, overseas intelligence
- 3- Aman: Military intelligence

With its motto "the defender that shall not be seen" or "the unseen shield", Shin Bet has remained a relatively clandestine organisation operating for the most part in obscurity. It has only really come to the public's attention when missions have been bungled and, even then, only occasionally.

There are several operational departments within Shin Bet, including the *Department for Arab Affairs* (relating to the investigation of terrorist organisations etc.); the *Department for Non-Arab Affairs* (relating to all other countries – in the past divided into Communist and non-Communist countries); and the *Protective Security Department* (responsible for the protection of Israeli embassies, buildings, El Al airlines and so on). The Prime Minister of Israel is ultimately responsible for the activities of the agency.

Shin Bet is the eyes and ears of the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories. It specialises in training undercover operatives to infiltrate Palestinian communities to the extent, it is claimed, that when they are undercover they immerse themselves in their false identities in every way, praying in mosques side by side with Palestinian Muslims (concealing their Jewish identity)ⁱ; socialising with them and so on. This is how they gather information on Palestinian activities from the inside and applies to the occupied territories of Gaza and the West Bank.

The notorious origins of Shin Bet

When looking into the origins of Shin Bet most reports simply state that the Israeli Secret Service was established in 1948 coinciding with the birth of the new state of Israel. Rarely is any in-depth background information provided. If you scratch the surface, however, you will find that the modern Israeli Secret Service actually, disturbingly, emerged from infamous Jewish terrorist organisations such as the Haganah and Irgun.ⁱⁱ A host of notorious Jewish "defence" forces merged together in the nascent state of Israel and have evolved ever since into the Israel Defence Forces (IDF). It was the intelligence wing of the Haganah which evolved into today's Shin Bet.



Haganah and Irgun were notorious for their use of terrorism and committing violent acts, particularly against the British Mandate authorities and Palestinian citizens. Some of their more well-known terrorist actions include the 22nd July 1946 bombing of Jerusalem's King David Hotel in which 92 people were killed and dozens were injured. The leader of the bombers was Menachim Begin who went on to become the Prime Minister of Israel. Another example is the Deir Yassin massacre (1948) in which hundreds of Palestinian men, women and children were murdered.

According to author Richard Deacon, "During the last few years of the struggle against the British prior to the granting [*sic*] of independence to Israel, the nucleus of the secret service had already been forged for the nation to be... in the main it comprised the intelligence-gathering organisations of Haganah and Irgun Zvai Leumi."ⁱⁱⁱ

Deacon also explains how;

"[David] Ben Gurion's plan to recruit most of the personnel for the creation of Shin Bet from Haganah was intended to ensure Haganah men were put into key positions. At the same time he was enough of a realist to know that there was an enormous amount of talent inside Irgun and even Lechi [the Stern Gang, another terrorist group] which needed to be harnessed in the cause of the new state. He was determined not to lose the services of such people. So he set in motion a systematic screening of members of both Irgun and Lechi with a view to recruiting their best and most reliable and disciplined agents, some in Shin Beth, others in the various branches of the Secret Service. As a result it could be said that within a year or two of its inception Shin Beth in particular and the Israeli Secret Service as a whole comprised the most brilliant team of spies and Intelligence organisers from the ranks of Haganah, Irgun and Lechi, including a diverse range of talent from saboteurs, passport and document forgers to communications experts and code-breakers."^{iv}

The origins of Shin Bet, seeped as it was in violence, brutality and ruthlessness may go some way to explain where many of Shin Bet's modern day practices of violence and torture originated.



1. TORTURE – A STANDARD SHIN BET PRACTICE

A) Scandals of the 1980s

A series of scandals in the 1980s raised some serious concerns about the activities of Shin Bet. The concerns were so grave that they led to the establishment by the Israeli government of the Landau Commission (1987), which was set up specifically to look into the interrogation methods used by the agency.

In addition to a flood of complaints made by Palestinian prisoners that they were subjected to excessive violence amounting to torture while they were being interrogated, there were also a couple of very public scandals as well.

i) The “Kav 300 affair” [1984] Extrajudicial executions.

The “Kav 300” or “Bus 300” affair saw two of the four Palestinian men who hijacked a bus in Israel subdued, arrested, led away from the scene and then beaten to death by Shin Bet operatives. Shin Bet officer Ehud Yatom later admitted in an interview (Yedioth Ahronoth: 1996) that he had received orders to kill them. “I received an order from Avraham Shalom (GSS Head) to kill the men, so I killed them,” he said unabashedly. “I smashed their skulls.” (Yatom was later elected to the Israeli parliament, the Knesset.)



[Majdi Abu Jumma, aged 18, after the hijacking of Bus 300. Photo by [Alex Levac](#)]

After the Shin Bet officers executed the two men (without any judicial process, as was their right under the law), they then tried to frame a senior IDF officer for the crime. As a result of this scandal the head of the organisation, Avraham Shalom, was forced to resign. Shalom claimed that his orders were “authorised and approved”, a statement which implicates the then Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir, a man with a background in acts of terrorism with Irgun and the Stern Gang.

Despite the emergence of the news that Shin Bet had order the extrajudicial execution of the two Palestinians, Israeli ranks closed around the offenders to offer them protection while punishing those who sought justice. The Attorney General who was pushing for the matter to be investigated, Yitzhak Zamir, was forced to resign, while a presidential pardon was issued by Israel’s President Chaim Herzog to all Shin Bet agents, including Avraham Shalom, involved in the murder and in the subsequent perjury. This was unprecedented; the men were pardoned before they had even had a trial. No one was ever held responsible for the deaths of the two Palestinians killed on that fateful day.



ii) The overturning of an unsound conviction for treason [1987]

Another scandal emerged in 1987 when an ex-IDF lieutenant, Izat Nafsu, had his conviction for treason overturned by the Israeli Supreme Court after the court held that Shin Bet had obtained his confession using unethical interrogation methods. Furthermore, it was held that Shin Bet officers had given false testimony at his trial, particularly in relation to the methods used during his interrogation. The understanding at the time was that hundreds of other cases like Nafsu's existed and that torture and perjury was a standard Shin Bet practice which had been going on for many years.

B) The Landau Commission 1987

The Landau Commission dealt with two primary issues: Shin Bet's use of torture in interrogations and systematic perjury in court by the agency's officials.

The Commission prepared a two-part report into the interrogation methods used by Shin Bet, only one of which was made public (and part of which remains secret until today). It was confirmed that violent methods of interrogation were indeed used by Shin Bet and that agents were then trained to lie in court about how the evidence (through "confessions", etc.) was obtained.

In a controversial decision the Commission stated that "the exertion of a moderate measure of physical pressure cannot be avoided" and therefore could be used in certain cases.

However, human rights organizations have criticised this decision. In 1994, for example, the [UN Committee Against Torture](#) stated: "The Landau Commission Report, permitting as it does 'moderate physical pressure' as a lawful mode of interrogation, is completely unacceptable to this Committee."^v

C) Israeli Supreme Court ruling against Shin Bet's use of torture 1999

After rejecting hundreds of complaints submitted over many years by Palestinians who claimed that they were subjected to torture by Shin Bet personnel during interrogations, in 1999 the Israeli Supreme Court finally heard a few of the cases. The court ruled against Shin Bet's use of crude torture methods, apparently saying that they were not permitted even on the grounds of necessity (HCJ 5100/94, [Public Committee against Torture in Israel et al. \[PCATI\] v Government of Israel et al](#)). However, the court still left legal loopholes open to Shin Bet by which its agents could continue to use some methods which amount to torture.

Among those methods included the following; (it is important to note that "**the state did not deny the use of these interrogation methods**, and even offered justifications for these methods"):^{vi}



i) Shaking

“The method is defined as the forceful and repeated shaking of the suspect’s upper torso, in a manner which causes the neck and head to swing rapidly. According to an expert opinion submitted in HCJ 5584/95 and HCJ 5100/95, the shaking method is likely to cause serious brain damage, harm the spinal cord, cause the suspect to lose consciousness, vomit and urinate uncontrollably and suffer serious headaches. The state entered several opposing expert opinions into evidence. It admits the use of this method by the GSS.”... “All agree that, in one particular case, (HCJ 4054/95) the suspect expired after being shaken.”^{vii}

ii) Being manacled in the “Shabach” position

“A suspect investigated under the ‘Shabach’ position has his hands tied behind his back. He is seated on a small and low chair, whose seat is tilted forward, towards the ground. One hand is tied behind the suspect, and placed inside the gap between the chair’s seat and back support. His second hand is tied behind the chair, against its back support. The suspect’s head is covered by a sack that falls down to his shoulders. Loud music is played in the room.”

Shin Bet did not deny that it used this method.

iii) The "Frog Crouch" position

“This refers to consecutive, periodical crouches on the tips of one’s toes, each lasting for five minute intervals.”

The court also heard about Shin Bet’s use of excessively tight handcuffs, sleep deprivation and so on.

Despite the Supreme Court’s judgment, human rights organisations such as B’Tselem (The Israeli Information Centre for Human Rights in the Occupied territories) maintain that such methods of physical abuse are still used and that they continue to amount to torture under international conventions. According to the Public Committee Against Torture in Israel (PCATI), for example, the “HCJ provided a loophole enabling interrogators who use torture to evade the law. The public perception was that the court had prohibited torture, but the large number of complaints received since the ruling show that GSS [Shin Bet] interrogators have continued to use torture in the interrogation rooms. They also continue to enjoy complete immunity thanks to a system that abuses and extends the loopholes created by the HCJ ruling.”[2009]^{viii}



D) The on-going practice and methods of Shin Bet torture

According to B'Tselem, "Since the [Landau] Commission submitted its recommendations in 1987 GSS interrogators have tortured thousands of detainees, intentionally inflicting severe pain and suffering. The torture was neither extraordinary nor limited to 'ticking bombs'. Quite the opposite; *torture was a bureaucratic routine: there was standard equipment for inflicting torture*, and careful recording of the times the pain and suffering were inflicted. Even the state's response in petitions against torture repeated, paragraph after paragraph, the routine justification for what were supposedly extraordinary acts. Supervision of the GSS did not succeed in preventing *torture in Israel from becoming routine, systematic, and institutionalized.*"^{ix} (Emphases added)

According to B'Tselem there is no question about the veracity of evidence concerning Shin Bet's torture methods. The hundreds of testimonies given to various organisations and agencies, the affidavits submitted to the High Court in 1999, and the state's responses to these claims "clearly illustrate the interrogation methods that were customarily used by the GSS. Representatives of the GSS and the State Attorney's Office confirmed the use of most of the methods, and the factual description appearing in the recent decision of the High Court further confirmed their use."^x

It is estimated by B'Tselem that between 1,000 and 1,500 Palestinians are interrogated by Shin Bet annually. Methods which would constitute torture are used in approximately 85% of those cases; that's 850 people every year being tortured in Israel. If anything, this is an underestimate.

In a report published in May 2007 by B'Tselem and Hamoked (Centre for the Defence of the Individual) entitled "Absolute Prohibition: The Torture and Ill-Treatment of Palestinian Detainees", several of the standard and "special" interrogation techniques used by Shin Bet whilst interrogating Palestinians were described, including:

1. "Sleep deprivation

This method includes preventing the detainee from sleeping for a whole day, by means of "intensive interrogation," with the detainee sitting in the shabach position. Some of the sample group reported that the interrogators shouted into their ears to prevent them from sleeping. In most cases, sleep deprivation is used only during the first days of the interrogation.



2. Beatings

This includes “dry” beatings, meaning slaps, punches, and kicks to the body. Most of the sample group noted that they were beaten only once during interrogation, generally in the first or second interrogation.

3. Painful cuffing

The agents tighten the cuffs as much as possible, causing intense pain to the wrists. Some of the interrogees [sic] stated that in one interrogation session, the interrogators pushed the cuffs toward the joint, causing a stoppage of blood flow to the palms of the hands for a few minutes.

4. Sudden pulling of the body

The interrogator grabs the detainee suddenly by the shirt or by the shoulder and yanks him, usually forward, once. The interrogator repeats this action a number of times during the interrogation. The detainee’s hands are cuffed behind him, connected to a loop on the seat of the chair, so the sudden pulling causes intense pain in the joints of the interrogee’s hands and arms.



5. Sudden twisting of the head

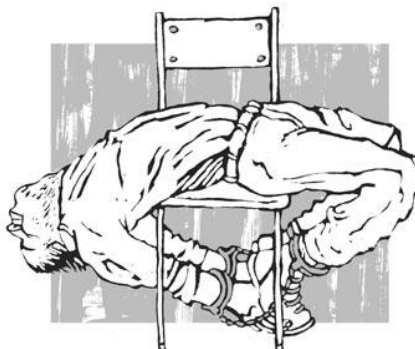
The interrogator grabs the interrogee’s chin and twists the head sharply to one side. The interrogator may also, or in the alternative, push the detainee’s head backwards by a blow with a fist to the detainee’s chin.

6. The “frog” crouch

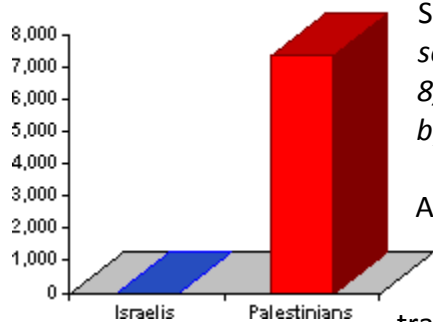
The interrogators force the interrogee to crouch on his toes non-stop for a few minutes, his hands cuffed behind him. When in the crouch, they push or strike him until he loses his balance and falls forward or backward.

7. Bending the back (the “banana” position)

The interrogators turn the chair so that the interrogee sits with the backrest to the side, and cuff his hands in front of him, then push him backwards, so that his back rests at a forty-five degree angle. The moment he cannot maintain this angle, he falls backward, his body forming an arch.”



Political Prisoners



Source: [If American's knew](#): *One Israeli prisoner (and he is a soldier) is being held by Palestinians compared to an estimated 8,000 Palestinians (at the very least – 2009 estimate) being held by Israel*

Added to this is the fact that Israel is notorious for breaching the laws on the protection of children and IDF troops arrest young children regularly. Once kidnapped they are transported illegally across the “border” into the state of Israel away from their families, with no access to lawyers, etc. Thus it becomes an even more serious issue and an even greater indictment of the Israeli security agencies.

E) Immunity of Shin Bet torturers

Human Rights organisations have spent years gathering witness testimony, raw footage of victim’s arrests, medical records on the injuries sustained, and so on, and yet the Shin Bet culture of torture continues with apparent impunity. According to “Accountability denied – The absence of investigation and punishment of torture in Israel”, a Periodic Report issued by PCATI in December 2009, **“Torture is an institutionalized method of interrogation in Israel, enjoying the full backing of the legal system.”**^{xi}

How is this tradition of Shin Bet torture as a standard interrogation method being allowed to continue in what is hailed to be “the only democracy in the Middle East”? A protective shield of immunity seems to have descended over all those involved in the commission of torture in Israel. PCATI outlines the main areas whereby it has identified at least seven “layers of protection” for Shin Bet personnel involved in torture:

1. The use of fictitious names by Shin Bet operatives to disguise and protect the offenders. In this way their true identity is never revealed to their victims who can therefore never identify them to a third party, including the police, the court, lawyers, NGOs, etc.
2. Exemption from audio or visual documentation of the interrogation. Recording an interrogation is considered to be a standard right of detainees in most civilized countries around the world. It provides a basic form of protection for suspects, one which is clearly being denied to Palestinian detainees during Shin Bet interrogations. This lack of evidentiary recording gives interrogators free reign to “interrogate” suspects in whatever way they please with no checks and balances applicable and therefore no protection for the detainee who in any case should be assumed to be innocent until proven guilty.



3. The dual system of documentation. One version of the interrogation report is internal (which details methods of coercion used, etc.) and is kept secret, while another public version is used by the police and courts and omits this information.
4. Isolation of the detainee from the outside world. Shin Bet frequently denies detainees access to anyone who could witness their condition before, during and after the interrogation period, including lawyers or anyone else who is not directly employed by the agency.
5. The removal of medical documentation relating to the investigation period from the complainants' medical files.
6. The façade of investigations into complaints of torture and abuse. Complaints are reviewed internally. According to PCATI "since 2001, over six hundred complaints have been submitted against GSS interrogators suspected of torturing interrogees [sic]. All these complaints have been forwarded to the OCGIC (Officer in Charge of GSS Interrogation Complaints) for examination." Not one referral has led to a criminal investigation: "The Attorney General and the State Attorney's Office effectively grant immunity to interrogators."

PCATI concluded that "Israel does not maintain a genuine mechanism for investigating complaints of torture (p94). Furthermore, "there is no substantial processing of complaints of torture, not to mention accountability and punishment."

7. The GSS Law of 2002. The seventh layer of protection, institutionalised with the help of the Knesset, is the GSS Law of 2002. This law ensures that the GSS agent "will not bear criminal or civil liability for any act or omission committed in good faith and in a reasonable manner in the framework of his function and for the purpose of filling the said function". On the other hand, and alongside this complete immunity, the law also ensures that all the operating methods and names of GSS/Shin Bet interrogators will remain confidential. This legal confidentiality prevents any possibility of the detainee or his/her representative to know who conducted the interrogation; who authorised it; and whether the actions taken against the detainee were in accordance with the working procedures or were even authorised.



F) Psychological torture and threats against detainees' family members

In addition to extreme physical torture there is also abundant and irrefutable evidence that detainees are also subjected to severe and deeply disturbing levels of psychological torture by Shin Bet interrogators. The PCATI report [Family Matters: Using Family Members to Pressure Detainees under GSS Interrogation](#)^{xii}, outlines some of the key methods of psychological pressure frequently used against Palestinian detainees. For example, they are often subjected to threats that they will be killed or severely harmed by their interrogators, including threats to break their backs, physically disable and disfigure them and so on. Solitary confinement is another favoured tactic intended to cause psychological distress.

Another Shin Bet technique is to threaten family members of the detainees; apparently no one is off limits. Tactics include the use of staged scenarios to make the detainee think that their relatives are also in custody and are being subjected to torture as well as the actual arrest, detention and torture of family members in order to put pressure on the detainee to comply with the demands of the interrogators. This practice has been [admitted by Shin Bet](#).^{xiii}

All such methods of torture are illegal under international law. The United Nations Convention Against Torture (which Israel has ratified); the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the Geneva Conventions all contain absolute prohibitions against torture and other forms of ill-treatment, both physical and psychological. However, Israel clearly disregards such basic standards of human dignity and Shin Bet is guilty of gross violations of international law.

2. SYSTEMATIC PERJURY BY SHIN BET AGENTS

One worrying aspect of the use of torture to obtain confessions from Palestinian detainees is how often such “confessions” have then been used in court to convict the detainee or other people who were “exposed” during the interrogation. According to the Landau Commission, in the two decades leading up to the Commission approximately half of all Shin Bet (GSS) interrogations led to trials from which “the overwhelming majority of those tried were convicted on the basis of their confession in court”. (Para 2.20, Report of the Landau Commission)

The fact that confessions were obtained using illegal and immoral means should have meant that the cases were thrown out by the courts, but they weren't. Shin Bet agents, apparently systematically, “simply lied, thus committing the criminal offence of perjury” and “false testimony in court soon became the unchallenged norm which was to be the rule for 16 years”. (Paras. 2.27 and 2.30 of the Landau report)

The direction to GSS interrogators to lie in court was set out in an internal GSS memo. (Para 2.31, Landau Report)



Although the Landau Commission did not bring anyone to justice, the report noted how entrenched this system of perjury was: “the feeling on the part of the interrogators that their actions not only enjoyed the backing of their superiors but were also known to elements outside the service who gave their tacit consent. It was claimed before us that these elements include the prosecution system – both civilian and military, the courts, and the political echelon [...] The GSS employees claimed that there was a kind of tacit and surreptitious agreement that the interrogator on the witness stand would deny using any physical pressure at all [...] A senior member of the Interrogations Unit who was involved in both the ‘Bus 300’ affair and the Nafsu affair claimed in his testimony before us that the heads of the GSS told the interrogators that the method of committing perjury in the courts was with the knowledge and agreement of the political echelon.”^{xiv}

There is an understandably widespread belief that systematic perjury by Shin Bet agents persists to this day.

3. TARGETED ASSASSINATIONS

Targeted assassinations are a hallmark of the Israeli Secret Service. The country’s history is replete with the assassination of people such as Hamas founder Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, a quadriplegic killed in 2004 as he was leaving the mosque after early morning prayers, in his wheelchair. The missile fired by an Israeli helicopter gunship also killed nine bystanders and his bodyguards.

In 2006 the Israeli Supreme Court laid down guidelines regarding assassinations, and recommended arrests rather than killings. In 2008, however, it was leaked by Israel’s Haaretz newspaper that the IDF had been ignoring the Court ruling and had continued with its assassination policy and making the cold-blooded killings look like accidents.

As a result there has been widespread international condemnation of Israel and its intelligence and military units, (including a separate outcry over the issue of Israeli censorship and gag orders).^{xv}

4. SHIN BET BUNGLES AND MORE SCANDALS

a) Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin was assassinated on Shin Bet’s watch

Shin Bet’s reputation was damaged further by the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in November 1995 by Israeli right-wing extremist Yigal Amir. Shin Bet had apparently been aware of Amir’s intentions, had investigated him and had declared that he was not a threat. Considering Shin Bet’s primary function of intelligence gathering, as well as the agency’s mandate to protect the Prime Minister, this was a serious error of judgement. In the ensuing scandal, the head of Shin Bet, Karmi Gillon, resigned in January 1996. He was succeeded by Rear Admiral Ami Ayalon.



b) A case of mistaken identity: a 7 year-old boy is a Shin Bet suspect

In June 2010 it was reported that a 7 year-old boy was summoned by the IDF to a Shin Bet investigation. When the boy's father opened the door and was asked to produce his son, he told the IDF that his son was only 7 and showed them his son's identification. The officer laughed but still served the summons.

The family was told that "Captain Tamir" of Shin Bet would be waiting to see the boy the following day at the offices of the Coordinator of Government Activity in the Territories (COGAT), located in the Gush Etzion settlement bloc. The family contacted Defence for Children International (DCI). When challenged, Shin Bet denied issuing a summons for him and said it was a mistake, demonstrating the ineptitude of both agencies and their unreliability and unprofessionalism.

According to Haaretz, "The summons customarily bears a four-part name (first name, name of the father, name of the grandfather, and family name). Only the first name in this case was in fact the same as that of the child, but the IDF still failed to notice the triple mistake of delivering the summons to a 7 year-old, bearing the wrong name and at the wrong address."^{xvi}

It should be noted that the targeting by Israel of Palestinian minors as young as seven is a common occurrence. In May 2011, a Haaretz headline proclaimed "Police detain 7 year-old Palestinian boy and accost relatives, family members say."^{xvii} In this instance, the second grader was arrested while he was playing. He was missing for several hours during which time he was apparently beaten by police and then investigated at the police station for allegedly throwing stones.

c) Shin Bet sex scandals

Several sex scandals have besmirched the reputation of Shin Bet operatives in recent months. According to the [Jerusalem Post](#):

"A top Shin Bet (Israel Security Agency) official has resigned amid a sex scandal and allegations that he promoted a female subordinate with whom he had an affair... Shin Bet director Yuval Diskin first learned of the affair after a complaint was filed within the agency against the promotion of the top official. Diskin asked the Civil Service Commission to investigate and after receiving its findings ordered the top official to take a vacation. The official decided to resign.

This is the second such case in recent months in the Shin Bet. Another top official resigned several months ago after he had an affair with a female subordinate and continued to make decisions involving the promotion of her ex-husband, an alleged conflict of interests."^{xviii}



d) El Al (Israel's national airline) scandal

Another Shin Bet scandal to have emerged which embroiled Israel in yet more public embarrassment was the expulsion of an Israeli intelligence agent by South Africa after it was discovered that there was a major undercover operation taking place at the Oliver R. Tambo International Airport in Johannesburg.

El Al (Israel's national airline) had apparently been used as a front for Shin Bet for some time and agents had used their cover as El Al employees to "[infiltrate](#) the airport and gather information on black and Muslim South African travellers to Israel".^{xix} This revelation resulted in something of a crisis in South Africa-Israel relations.

5. Conclusion

Shin Bet is clearly an extremely dangerous and immoral organisation operating beyond the bounds of legality. There is a plethora of evidence from various independent sources to demonstrate that the agency has been consistent in its breaches of the most basic standards of international humanitarian and human rights law. It has been condemned by one renowned human rights organisation after another, both international and Israeli, including the UN, Amnesty International, the Public Committee Against Torture in Israel (PCATI), [Physicians for Human Rights](#), B'Tselem, Addameer, and Gisha.

Since its creation out of a background of blood-soaked Zionist terrorism, Shin Bet has been embroiled in one scandal after another. This which calls into question not only the morality and ethics of the agency itself but also, by extension, of its employees past and present. Shin Bet has conducted the physical and psychological torture of thousands of civilians (a fact that Shin Bet itself does not deny); faced allegations of [rape by Shin Bet interrogators](#)^{xx}; carried out targeted assassinations and extrajudicial executions; been complicit in sex scandals; committed widespread and systematic perjury in court; and been responsible for serious intelligence failures and cases of "mistaken identity". Those are just the issues that are in the public domain.

Shin Bet considers itself to be above the law, Israeli and international, and is allowed to be so. It has demonstrated that it is incompetent and unreliable. In any society that is a very dangerous mix; in a democracy it is catastrophic.

Nevertheless, "expert" testimony by current or former Shin Bet operatives is sought by lawyers, think-tanks, media outlets and other agencies as if it has some credibility. However, the very nature of Shin Bet, its origins, policies and practices calls such credibility into question.



This report is a brief overview of basic information already in the public realm but even this demands that the evidence of any member or former member of Shin Bet claiming to be an expert witness, particularly in legal cases against Palestinians, should be rejected out of hand. Shin Bet operatives' systematic perjury and use of torture to extract "confessions" means that any information they provide in court or elsewhere has to be suspect and therefore unacceptable.

The agency is discredited by its own actions, and requires reform from top to bottom. Better still, it should be disbanded in disgrace as a stain on democratic and legal values.



Endnotes

- ⁱ Israel: Missions of Shin Bet Special Operations Unit Viewed: April 2003
<http://www.tbrnews.org/Archives/a321.htm>
- ⁱⁱ The Irgun was legally classified as a terrorist organisation by the State of Israel in 1948
- ⁱⁱⁱ Richard Deacon, Sphere Books Ltd, The Israeli Secret Service, p34
- ^{iv} Deacon, *Ibid*, p49
- ^v Concluding observations of the Committee against Torture : Israel. 12/06/1994.
[http://www.unhchr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/\(Symbol\)/A.49.44,paras.159-171.En?Opendocument](http://www.unhchr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/(Symbol)/A.49.44,paras.159-171.En?Opendocument)
- ^{vi} HCJ 5100/94, Public Committee against Torture in Israel et al. [PCATI] v Government of Israel et al.
<http://www.cfisrael.org/a560.html?rsID=405>
- ^{vii} *Ibid*.
- ^{viii} [The Public Committee Against Torture in Israel (PCATI) Periodic Report: Dec 2009 – “Accountability denied – The absence of investigation and punishment of torture in Israel”.] [See section Part G below for more on this immunity for prosecution for GSS torturers.]
- ^{ix} <http://www.btselem.org/english/torture/background.asp>
- ^x <http://www.btselem.org/english/torture/background.asp>
- ^{xi} The Public Committee Against Torture in Israel (PCATI) Periodic Report : “Accountability denied – The absence of investigation and punishment of torture in Israel.” December 2009, p15.
- ^{xii} <http://electronicintifada.net/downloads/pdf/080422-pcat.pdf>
- ^{xiii} Haaretz, “[Shin Bet admits using relatives to pressure jailed Palestinians](#)” 13 April 2008
- ^{xiv} The Public Committee Against Torture in Israel (PCATI) Periodic Report: DECEMBER 2009
“ACCOUNTABILITY DENIED - THE ABSENCE OF INVESTIGATION AND PUNISHMENT OF TORTURE IN ISRAEL”
http://www.stoptorture.org.il/files/Accountability_Denied_Eng.pdf
- ^{xv} See Hanan Chehata, “Israeli Censorship” (2010) for more info.:
<http://www.middleeastmonitor.org.uk/reports/by-dr-hanan-chehata/1449-israeli-censorship>
- ^{xvi} “[IDF mistakenly summons 7-year-old Palestinian boy to Shin Bet interrogation.](#)” Haaretz, 1st July 2010
- ^{xvii} Nir Hasson, “[Police detain 7-year-old Palestinian boy and accost relatives, family members say](#)” Haaretz, 29th May 2011
- ^{xviii} “[Another Shin Bet official resigns amid sex scandal](#)” The Jerusalem Post, 9th December 2010



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Useful sources of reference:

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["Accountability Denied: The Absence of Investigation and Punishment of Torture in Israel](#) - PCATI

