

Human Rights Watch

Torture, Former Combatants, Political Prisoners, Terror Suspects, & Terrorists

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Government Must Investigate Torture Allegations

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Jordan's General Intelligence Department (GID) frequently carries out arbitrary arrests and abuses suspects in its own detention facility, Human Rights Watch said in a [report](#) released today. Many suspects are held in incommunicado detention but never charged with a crime and eventually released without trial.

GID detainees often don't know why they are there and have no way of contacting their family or lawyer said Sarah Leah Whitson, Middle East director at Human Rights Watch. Especially when governments rely heavily on security services, it is important to ensure that they operate within the framework of basic international human rights standards.

The 66-page report, [Suspicious Sweeps: The General Intelligence Department and Jordan's Rule of Law Problem](#), documents the arbitrary arrest and abusive treatment of detainees held at the GID's central detention facility in Amman. The report finds that there is no clear basis in Jordanian law for the GID's law enforcement role, and that detainees cannot seek an independent judicial review of the grounds for arrest and continued detention.

The Jordanian government should investigate the GID's arrest and detention practices, including allegations of torture, and prosecute any official suspected of wrongdoing, Human Rights Watch said. The government should also restrict the GID's ability to carry out arrests or to determine whether a person must remain in detention except where regulated by strict independent judicial oversight and a clear basis in law. All detainees should have prompt access to legal counsel and be able to challenge their detention in an independent court.

Suspicious Sweeps looks in detail at the cases of 16 individuals whom the GID had arrested, including that of 'Isam al-Barqawi. On December 27, 2004, after he had been in custody for some two years, the State Security Court found al-Barqawi not guilty of charges of plotting to attack the U.S. embassy and other targets, but the GID only freed him six months later, on June 28, 2005. The GID then arrested him again a week later, on July 5, 2005, allegedly telling him: The court may have freed you, but we didn't! Al-Barqawi has since been in solitary confinement at the GID detention facility. Jordanian officials say the government is charging him with conspiracy, but more than a year later he has yet to appear before the State Security Court or any other judicial authority.

The GID has kept another detainee, 'Adnan Muhammad Sadiq Abu Nujila, for more than three years without charge. The GID first arrested Abu Nujila in September 2003 and released him without charge on August 24, 2004. Three days later, on August 27, GID officers re-arrested Abu Nujila and continue to hold him without charge.

The report also documents cases in which the GID arrested persons solely because they were relatives of wanted suspects. For example, the GID arrested Fahmi S., the 17-year-old brother of Rami S., who was in Saudi Arabia at the time in December 2000 / January 2001, telling him: We'll take you instead of [your brother].

In 14 of the 16 cases in this report, the individuals or their family members provided credible and consistent testimony that the GID had tortured or ill-treated them. Two detainees described the salt and vinegar walk the GID had subjected them to, which consists of beating the soles of a detainee until they bleed and then forcing him to walk on this mix, causing a burning sensation in his open wounds.

Jordanian officials claim that allegations of torture are a ploy to gain acquittal or get charges dismissed. However, 13 of these 16 detainees had been released without trial and had nothing to gain from continuing to allege that the GID had abused them.

To Human Rights Watch's knowledge, Jordan's prosecutor general has initiated no criminal investigations into alleged arbitrary arrest, violation of due process rights, or torture.

Jordanian law contains provisions criminalizing official abuse of power. GID or other military officers, however, fall under military

jurisdiction the same authority that the State Security Court Law empowers to charge and remand security detainees in custody and ultimately prosecutes them before the State Security Court. These military prosecutors or the judges at the State Security Court do not meet the criteria of independence or impartiality needed to review the legality of detentions.

It is up to the Jordanian authorities and their backers in the international community to take steps towards erasing this stain on Jordans reputation and to prevent these abuses from happening, said Whitson.

Human Rights Watch on September 18 met with several high-ranking GID officials, after requests for meetings on three occasions had gone unanswered. The officials listened carefully to Human Rights Watchs points and firmly denied abuses had taken place, saying that: The GID works within the strict parameters of Jordanian law. A further meeting has been scheduled.

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