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Israeli Torture of Palestinian Detainees Soared in Late 2014

By Jason Ditz

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New reports out of the Israeli military court system show that the number of cases of torture of held Palestinian detainees soared in the second half of 2014, with rights groups expressing concern that the “special means” interrogations are no longer the rarity they used to be.

In all of 2013, there were 16 reports of violent interrogations by Shin Bet. In the first half of 2014, there were 8. In the second half, that number jumped to 51, a six-fold increase.

The torture breakdown is remarkably well documented in Israel, where torture has to be reported to the courts, but is usually not treated as any particular problem. The 51 incidents in the second half of 2014 included 19 sleep deprivation cases, 12 beatings, 18 tying into stress positions, and two incidents of violent shaking.

Shin Bet is allowed to torture if an “urgent need” is determined, but this is a standard that is often determined after the fact. Detainees are reporting that in the recent months Israeli interrogators are not as patient, and are going to the torture well early on.