



## Statement Calling for the Repeal of Israel's Death Penalty Bill Against Palestinians

1. On 30 March 2026, the Knesset, Israel's legislative branch, passed a bill (Death Penalty for Terrorists Law, 5786–2026; hereinafter the "bill") that would, in principle, apply the death penalty to those who intentionally cause the death of a person through terrorist attacks in Palestinian territory / the West Bank.<sup>1</sup>
2. In Israel, the death penalty for ordinary murder, excluding crimes against humanity, was abolished in 1954.<sup>2</sup> Since the founding of the state, there have only been two actual executions within Israel, including of Adolf Eichmann, a former officer of the Nazi SS. This bill, which effectively reinstates the death penalty for ordinary murder committed by Palestinians, was promoted by Israel's far-right Jewish Power party, led by National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir, and passed in the Knesset with 62 votes in favor and 48 against.<sup>3</sup>
3. The bill provides that, in principle, the death penalty will be applied to residents of the West Bank who are found by a military court to have intentionally caused the death of a person in a terrorist attack and that life imprisonment will only be applied in exceptional cases where special circumstances are recognized. The term "resident" here does not include Israeli citizens or Israeli residents; its application is effectively limited to Palestinians residing in the West Bank. Furthermore, a death sentence in a military court does not require a prosecutor's request. It requires only a majority vote of judges, rather than the unanimous approval previously required. Furthermore, pardons for death sentences are not permitted, and those sentenced to death are, in principle, to be executed within 90 days.
4. The bill also includes amendments to the criminal code applicable within Israel, providing that those who intentionally cause death "with the intent to deny the existence of the State of Israel" will be subject only to the death penalty or life imprisonment. In any case, it must be said that the only people envisioned to be subject to the death penalty under the bill are Palestinians.
5. The bill excludes illegal settlement activities by Israeli settlers in the West Bank, which have accelerated since 7 October 2023, and the resulting killings of Palestinians, and it is ultimately an extremely discriminatory bill that imposes the death penalty, in principle, only on Palestinians. Furthermore, the conviction rate for Palestinian defendants in Israeli military courts exceeds 99 percent,<sup>4</sup> making it easy to foresee a situation where Palestinian defendants are sentenced to death and executed through arbitrary application of the law, under circumstances where due process is not guaranteed.

The passage of this bill would further solidify Israel's apartheid policy in the West Bank, which it occupies illegally under international law, and there are serious concerns that it would violate the Fourth Geneva Convention and other international laws. UN Secretary-General António Guterres' spokesperson, Stéphane Dujarric, stated at a press conference that "we ask that the Israeli government rescind [the bill] and not implement it." Additionally, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk called for the immediate withdrawal of the bill, stating that it is "patently inconsistent with Israel's international law obligations."<sup>5</sup>

In light of the recent passage of this bill, Human Rights Now resolutely opposes Israel's racial discrimination and apartheid policies against Palestinians and calls for the immediate repeal of the new law.

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.adalah.org/uploads/uploads/Death\\_Penalty\\_Bill\\_unofficial\\_translation.pdf](https://www.adalah.org/uploads/uploads/Death_Penalty_Bill_unofficial_translation.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.jta.org/archive/israel-parliament-votes-to-abolish-capital-punishment>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cp8dkd6lnjdo>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.972mag.com/conviction-rate-for-palestinians-in-israels-military-courts-99-74-percent/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2026-04-01/israel-death-penalty-un/106519258>