Spanish Court to Probe Israeli Officials for Alleged 'Crimes Against Humanity’

January 29, 2009

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YNetnews.com

<http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3663932,00.html>

National Infrastructure Minister and former Defense Minister Binyamin Ben-Eliezer and former IAF and IDF Chief of Staff [Dan Halutz](http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3284188,00.html) may face criminal charges in Spain for killing Palestinian civilians seven years ago.

A Spanish court granted a petition by the Palestinian Center for Human Rights on Thursday, asking the two be investigated for alleged "crimes against humanity" for their involvement in the 2002 assassination of [Hamas](http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3377113,00.html) operative Salah Shehade. Fourteen civilians were killed in the incident and about 100 more were injured.

Internal Security Minister Avi Dichter, former IDF Chief of Staff Moshe Yaalon, former GOC Southern Command Doron Almog, former National Security Council Head Giora Eiland and Brigadier-General (Res.) Mike Herzog have also been named as persons on interest in the case.

"Those who call the killing of terrorists 'a crime against humanity' are living in an upside-down world," said Defense Minister Ehud Barak. He called the Spanish announcement "delusional".

"This decision is all the more outrageous when you consider Hamas' true colors, being revealed once again these days to us and the world," Barak added. He said he would do everything in his power to get the charges dropped.

"All senior officials belonging to the defense establishment, past and present, acted properly and in the name of the State of Israel, out of their commitment to protect the citizens of Israel," he said.

Andeo, a Audiencia Nacional de España (National Court of Spain) judge, is expected to inform both the Israeli and Palestinian authorities of his decision.

Shehade was the founder of Hamas' Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades – the organization's military wing. He was arrested by [Israel](http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3284752,00.html) in the 1980s and later turned over to the Palestinian Authority's custody. The latter set him free in early 2000.

Shehade was considered to be the mastermind behind hundreds of deadly terror attacks on Israel. He was targeted by the IAF on July 22, 2002.

Dan Haluzt, who was still the Israeli Air Force chief at the time, was later quoted as telling his pilots that they carried out the mission "perfectly."

Shehade's assassination also gave birth to one of his most infamous quotes, noted when he was asked about the collateral damage of the hit: "If you want to know how I feel when I release a bomb (off a fighter jet) – I feel nothing but a little thump on the side of the plane. It only lasts a second. "

According to a legal source in Madrid, Justice Fernando Andeo decided to grant the Palestinian petition "in the name of universal justice."