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HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL
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**HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN PALESTINE AND OTHER
OCCUPIED ARAB TERRITORIES**

**Letter dated 5 June 2008 from the Permanent Representative of Israel
to the United Nations Office at Geneva addressed to the President of
the Human Rights Council**

I note that the Permanent Mission of the Syrian Arab Republic has requested that the issue of Bisher Almeket be considered under agenda item 7 at the upcoming session of the Human Rights Council.

This issue has already been considered by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, as in my letter dated 29 January 2008 addressed to the attention of the Deputy High Commissioner. In a session which is already oversubscribed with important subjects, Israel regrets that it is compelled once again to deflect baseless allegations on this issue. Nevertheless, I wish to convey the following information as provided to me by the relevant authorities in Israel, and ask that you circulate the present letter as a document of the eighth session.

The prisoner in question, Mr. Almeket, was arrested in 1985. He was charged with attacking an Israeli army base, possession of explosives and membership of a hostile organization. He was tried, convicted and sentenced to 27 years of imprisonment. He is serving his term in Gilboa prison.

The Syrian authorities allege that Mr. Almeket is gravely ill and has been denied medical treatment. We categorically deny this.

Mr. Almeket is afflicted with heart disease. When necessary, he has been treated inside the prison authority medical facilities. In June 2007, he underwent an angioplasty procedure. On 25 July 2007, Israeli authorities confirmed with the deputy delegate of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in Israel that Mr. Almeket had received satisfactory medical treatment performed in a professional manner. According to ICRC doctors who checked him, he has recovered from the procedure and his situation is stable. Furthermore, the ICRC delegate confirmed that, as a matter of principle, Mr. Almeket receives adequate medical treatment and is visited by his family every two weeks.

On 6 January 2008, Israeli authorities contacted ICRC representatives again, and they reiterated that the ICRC enjoys full access to all Syrian detainees and visits them regularly.

On 5 June 2008, Israeli authorities initiated further contact with ICRC representatives, who verified that ICRC doctors continued to monitor Mr. Almeket's treatment, which continues to be satisfactory. This fact was attested to by the patient himself, in conversation with ICRC doctors.

As a matter of course, Israel treats all detainees according to accepted international standards, which is not something the Syrian regime can similarly attest to. Syria has been holding the corpses of Israelis for over 25 years, and refuses to return them.

It is curious to note that Syrian authorities feel warranted in alerting the Council to alleged human rights abuses taking place outside their own borders. Of course, all human rights abuses, wherever they are perpetuated, deserve the attention of the international community. Nevertheless, one can only hope that the Syrian authorities are motivated by the same sense of urgency and moral outrage when investigating human rights abuses within Syria.

We encourage the Syrian authorities to remain vigilant regarding human rights abuses and trust that, in the future, they will refrain from false allegations and will look inwards instead.

(Signed): **Itzhak Levanon**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative
