

## Israel stops policy of destroying houses of Palestinians involved in attacks

By Karin Laub  
AP Writer

JERUSALEM (AP) - Israel will abandon a decades-old policy of demolishing the homes of Palestinian suicide bombers and gunmen, accepting an army panel's assessment that the practice does not deter attacks and should be stopped, the military said Thursday.

The decision means an end to a policy that has led to the destruction of more than 1,800 Palestinian homes as punishment since Israel captured the West Bank and Gaza Strip in the 1967 Mideast war, including 675 during the past four years of fighting, the Israeli human rights group B'tselem said.

Human rights groups have condemned the demolitions as collective punishment and have demanded for years that they be halted. B'tselem says the policy violates international law.

Israeli Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz ordered the demolitions stopped on the recommendation of Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Moshe Yaalon, the military said, referring to the tactic as Israel's "legal right."

"The chief of staff clarified that if an extreme change in circumstances takes place, the aforementioned decision regarding the policy will be re-examined," the statement added.

The committee found that house demolitions generally inflame hatred, citing only 20 cases in

which the threat of demolition deterred potential attackers or pushed their families to turn them in. Militant groups compensate families of attackers and help them rebuild, which weakens any possible deterrent effect.

House demolitions, along with other army practices such as targeted killings of Palestinian militants, were suspended after Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas declared a truce earlier this month.

Yaalon concluded that "when there's more quiet, it's not the time to use this policy," a military official said on condition of anonymity.

Punitive demolitions during the last four years have left 4,239 Palestinians homeless, most of them in the West Bank, B'tselem said. Since 2000, more than 1,000 Israelis have been killed in bombings and shootings.

The human rights group says the Israeli military has destroyed more than 4,000 Palestinian homes during the current conflict. Most were razed in operations to clear away buildings used by militants as cover for attacks or to widen security roads. Those practices were not included in Thursday's decision.

Palestinian legislator Hanan Ashrawi said the change in policy was part of the package of measures Israelis and Palestinians agreed to earlier this month during their Egyptian

summit, where they declared an end to four years of bloodletting.

The package, Ashrawi said, was meant to end not only the demolition of homes, but Israeli military raids and assassinations of wanted men as well.

"We think this is the implementation of one part of the deal, and we hope they will implement all the other parts," she said.

The three-story home belonging to the family of Ala Sanakra, local leader of the violent Al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigade in the West Bank refugee camp of Balata, was demolished last fall after he recruited a 19-year-old woman from a nearby camp to blow herself up at a busy Jerusalem junction, killing herself and two Israeli policemen.

Sanakra, a bachelor, had his own apartment in the family compound, which was home to nine people. He said the army could have demolished his rooms and spared the rest of the house.

The demolition "motivated me to send more people on missions and gave more motivation to our fighters," Sanakra said in a telephone interview Thursday.

He has the money to rebuild but will not do so because he fears the army will raze any new construction, he said. For now, he rents a room nearby for \$180 a month. His mother often visits the pile of rubble that was once her home and drinks her morning

coffee there, he said.

The policy of house demolitions is a holdover from the British rule of Palestine and has been used intermittently in the West Bank and Gaza since 1967, peaking during the first Palestinian uprising from 1987-1993 and in the current round of violence. Legal efforts by human rights groups to halt the practice have failed.

B'tselem said that in many of the demolitions since 2000, adjacent buildings also were damaged or razed. In half the cases, the army never claimed the houses it demolished were home to Palestinians directly involved in attacks, the group said. In 97 percent of the demolitions, residents received no warning, the group said.

Boaz Ganor, an Israeli counterterrorism expert, said the policy has been applied too indiscriminately during the past four years but should not be halted entirely. The military should keep razing houses if relatives of an attacker were involved in violence or if an attack led to large numbers of Israeli casualties, he said.

Ganor acknowledged that effectiveness was not the military's only consideration, and that demolitions are a way of settling scores and appeasing public opinion. The army revived the policy in October 2001 after a three-year lull.



Photo courtesy of www.chinadaily.com

The destruction of Palestinian homes were put on hold after Israeli and Palestinian leaders Sharon and Abbas recently declared a truce.

## Prison overcrowding forces Mexico to revive penal island

By Mark Stevenson  
AP Writer

MEXICO CITY (AP) - Bedeviled by killings, escapes and scandals at Mexico's prisons, authorities are trying a number of novel steps to regain control, including using soldiers in armored vehicles to

guard the country's top-security prison.

But perhaps no measure is as striking as the decision to revive a once-dreaded island penal colony at a time when other nations are converting such prisons into nature reserves or tourist attractions.

Just a month after Panama

closed the only other penal colony remaining in the Americas, Mexico announced it would spend \$2 million to revive its Islas Marias jail.

Island penal colonies have been used around the world since the 1700s as remote, escape-proof places to "rehabilitate" inmates

through hard labor. Most also tried to be self-supporting and help settle remote territories.

Almost all gained reputations for harsh conditions, and almost none survived.

In the Americas, France shuttered its notorious Devil's Island off Guiana in 1946. Chile's Santa Maria prison closed in the late 1980s, Costa Rica's Isla San Lucas in 1991 and Brazil's Isla Grande in 1994. Peru dramatically ended its El Fronton island prison in 1986: Gunboats blew up most of the buildings to put down a riot, killing more than 100 inmates.

Panama is converting its Coiba Island penal colony into a nature reserve, exactly what many Mexican environmentalists had wanted to do with the four Marias islands, which lie 70 miles off Mexico's southern Pacific coast.

Buildings on the Marias colony were being closed, 80 percent of the prisoners were shipped back to the mainland and a cleanup was under way. But in December, Mexican officials did an about-face and sent 150 new prisoners.

"Given the problems of overcrowding, underfunding and corruption, we have to urgently restructure the country's prison system," said Public Safety Secretary Ramon Huerta. "The first step will be to revive the Islas Marias penal colony."

The decision reflected Mexico's struggle with jail overcrowding and inmates who continue criminal activities from prison. On Jan. 14, hundreds of soldiers and federal police surrounded La Palma Prison, just west of Mexico City, after investigators determined drug lords were conducting business from the inside.

The problems have even touched the remote Islas Marias: Three inmates disappeared from the island in January, apparently escaping with help from a boat or aircraft.

The revival of the Islas Marias colony was a blow to environmentalists like Ramon Ojeda Mestre, who spent several years helping direct the complicated cleanup of the islands, which are home to unique yellow-headed parrots and brown hummingbirds.

But while Ojeda called the decision "infinitely sad," the prisoners weren't mourning. The odd truth is that many didn't

want to leave. Despite its history of violence, disease and forced labor, the colony is a place where inmates can roam free, build their own houses, grow food, even distill liquor.

Ojedarecalled hearing complaints as the colony's population was reduced from 3,000 a few years ago to 600 today. "When we told some they were going to leave, they would often cry, or go hide in the hills," he said.

Panama saw the same thing at Coiba Island despite a fearsome past, including the decapitations of five inmates by other prisoners in 1998. Many of the final 27 prisoners didn't want to leave, said Lider Sucre, an environmentalist who hired one former inmate to stay as a park ranger in the new nature reserve.

"While Coiba was a hell for some, for others it represented a sort of paradise because here they had freedom of movement," Sucre said of the island 20 miles out in the Pacific. "They could hunt, farm, play basketball, do things they couldn't in a normal prison."

Prisoners on Mexico's Islas Marias must contend with scorpions, snakes, mosquitoes and, at one time, hard labor on the salt flats. But Ojeda said a school, a clinic and church make it somewhat homey.

Only inmates with good behavior are sent to the colony. They have to show up for roll call, but some are allowed to live with their families. Others openly brew moonshine. Children also have been born on Islas Marias, but they are sent to the mainland at age 11, to avoid being corrupted.

Ironically, the penal colonies sealed their own fate by long keeping developers at bay. A penal colony allowed an island "to remain in its natural state," said Panama's tourism chief, Ligia Castro. In the modern era of mass tourism, that made them more valuable as tourist sites or nature reserves than jails.

Huerta, Mexico's prison boss, thinks keeping the Islas Marias penal colony will be compatible with creating a nature reserve there.

"We're going to send prisoners there who have experience in farming," he said. Though many of the "farmers" in Mexican jails are there for growing marijuana, a crop rumored to grow abundantly on the Islas Marias.

# World View

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Hello world viewers. I recently saw the quote, "Technology changes not only what we do, but how we think."

Do you agree with this? Think about changes in how we communicate. Do the advances in information technology change us (personally or socially) by changing how we communicate?

Technology has created a faster pace of life and changed the presentation of the scene. Technology has also added new properties by which it increases accuracy and has also eliminated many hassles. Many people call today's era the computerized era.

Now, when I say "computer," people might think home or office PC. However, computers are included in most everyday tools you use at home, work, services, or recreational sites. Think about your home appliances, your cell phone, your MP3 player, rides you enjoy at Hershey Park, the escalator at the mall, your doctor's office, and many other things you see and use everyday.

Just as information technology has improved effectiveness in medicine, finance, manufacturing, and numerous other sectors of society, advanced computing and telecommunications have the potential to help students to master complex 21st-century skills. All this has been accomplished by humans being machinery. What is ironic is that humans can invent tools to ease their life but hardly implement social values to have an intact society.

In order to make any statement about whether technology changed the way we think, let us look at the way we learn. The question is, when a person first starts to learn things, in the very beginning when he or she is very young, was that person able to argue things or spontaneously believed what was told? How long is it going to take for the person to free the mind of certain beliefs he or she was told when he or she was young? Can you envision earlier generations and today's teachers' fault by defining hypotheses as absolute facts, when young people do not have the right tools to argue? Somehow, there are a lot of adjustments our brains adapted due to the introduction of the new technical processes to our life. Technology changed the way we think and accordingly changed the way our society is.

This new world is centered on multinational corporations, multidisciplinary researches, global financial markets, and the highly concentrated system of technological research and development. All these very modern aspect and terms have been spawned by globalization of economy and have completely depended on the technical advancement we have accomplished. Can you imagine what social changes are going to occur due to any of these new aspects and due to technology?

Many theorems that led to such technical accomplishments are still hypotheses. Some of them have been refuted, and some of them have not. Simply, because people did not uncover everything about their own nature before they decided to advance technically, we don't have a perfect society.

What has been accomplished so far regarding societies since humans first emerged? The process of advancing technology has its losses in the human's society. If human societies would progress at the same acceleration as technology, people would not need laws to rule their behavior and no governments to regulate their freedom by now!

What is wrong? What is the acute operation we the people need? When people reach the point at which everyone is ideal (supportive, not violent, loving, and loveable), we will not have any wars, troubles, controversies or negative competitions.

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