

RELEASE IN FULL

---

**From:** Abedin, Huma <AbedinH@state.gov>  
**Sent:** Monday, October 17, 2011 8:56 AM  
**To:** H  
**Subject:** Fw: Israeli Supreme Court to discuss prisoner exchange (Reuters)

---

**From:** OpsNewsTicker  
**Sent:** Monday, October 17, 2011 06:01 AM  
**To:** NEWS-Mahogany  
**Cc:** SES-O  
**Subject:** Israeli Supreme Court to discuss prisoner exchange (Reuters)

JERUSALEM, Oct 17 (Reuters) - Israelis opposed to a prisoner exchange deal with Hamas sought Supreme Court intervention on Monday to block the release of hundreds of jailed Palestinians in return for captive Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit.

The first phase of the swap, to take place on Tuesday, should bring to a close a saga that has gripped Israelis over the five years of Shalit's captivity in the Hamas-run Gaza Strip.

But under Israeli law, those against the planned release of 477 Palestinian prisoners, many of whom were convicted of deadly attacks, can appeal before the exchange is carried out.

Four petitions were filed with the Supreme Court by the Almagor Terror Victims Association and relatives of Israelis killed in Palestinian attacks. Judging from similar appeals in prisoner exchange deals in the past, the court is unlikely to intervene in what it considers a political and security issue.

An opinion poll in the popular Israeli newspaper Yedioth Ahronoth found that 79 percent of the public supported the deal with Hamas, an Islamist group that advocates Israel's destruction.

Hamas prepared a heroes' welcome in Gaza for 295 of the prisoners due to be sent to the territory. Palestinians regard brethren jailed by Israel as prisoners of war in a struggle for statehood. Israel holds some 6,000 Palestinian prisoners.

Shalit, now 25, was captured in 2006 by militants who tunneled into Israel from the Gaza Strip and surprised his tank crew, killing two of his comrades.

Israel, which withdrew troops and settlers from Gaza in 2005, tightened its blockade of the coastal territory after he was seized and spirited into the Gaza Strip.

## EMOTIONS HIGH

The repatriation of captured soldiers, alive or dead, has long been an emotionally charged issue for Israelis, many of whom have served in the military. But they also feel a sting over the high price they feel Israel paid for

Shalit.

Ron Kehrman, whose daughter Tal was among 17 people killed in a suicide bombing on a bus in the northern Israeli city of Haifa in 2003, said he was asking the Supreme Court to prevent the release of three Palestinians linked to the attack.

But he said he was not hopeful. "This whole fiasco -- it's fixed," he told Army Radio.

In a rare step, the court has allowed Shalit's parents to appear and argue in favor of the deal for their son.

"Nobody knows what the impact of any delay, or any change, even the smallest, in the terms would be," they wrote in a letter to the court.

Israel's Prison Service has bused the 477 Palestinian prisoners under heavy guard to two holding facilities ahead of their release.

On Tuesday, some of the Palestinians will be brought to Egypt's Sinai desert, where the exchange for Shalit will take place. Some of those prisoners will be taken to the Gaza Strip and others will be exiled abroad. Shalit will be flown to an air base in Israel to be reunited with his family.

A smaller group of prisoners on the release roster will be taken from Israel to the occupied West Bank, where they will be welcomed by Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, a Hamas rival, and their families.

In the second stage, expected to take place in about two months, the remaining 550 Palestinian prisoners will be freed, officials said.

Israel's deal with Hamas seemed unlikely to have an impact on international efforts to revive Israeli-Palestinian peace talks, which collapsed 13 months ago in a dispute over settlement-building in the West Bank.

Abbas has been pursuing a bid for U.N. recognition of Palestinian statehood in the West Bank and Gaza Strip in the absence of negotiations with Israel.

(Writing by Jeffrey Heller and Ari Rabinovich; Additional reporting by Nidal al-Mughrabi in Gaza)

\\10.40.0.17\ReutersFeed\XmlData\2011-10-17T092540Z\_01\_L5E7LH0PN\_RTRIDST\_0\_PALESTINIANS-ISRAEL-PRISONERS.XML

.ExternalClass1FB0D1B081DD43ABA33A65AB787B0C17 input  
{display:none;}

*News Tickers alert senior Department officials to breaking news. This item appears as it did in its original publication and does not contain analysis or commentary by Department sources.*