



Written by [Dennis Behrendt](#) on June 22, 2010

The Mystery of Israel's "Prisoner X"

According to the few sketchy details made public, the prisoner, dubbed "Mr. X," is being held in a special wing of Israel's Ayalon prison. That wing, known as Unit 15, has but a single cell, and has historically be used to hold only the most important and significant prisoners. [According to the London Telegraph](#), the cell holding the mystery prisoner was "specially built to house Yigal Amir, the Israeli extremist who assassinated Yitzhak Rabin, the former prime minister, in 1995."



While the original report on the mystery prisoner contained only sketchy details, bloggers have been quick to follow up on the story. One such blogger, [Richard Silverstein](#), is also a well-known journalist whose work has appeared in *Haaretz*, the *Los Angeles Times*, the *Seattle Times*, *Slate*, and many other publications. He's been following the story of Mr. X since the original report appeared.

[Describing the situation with Mr. X](#), Silverstein recounts on his blog: "The man was in solitary confinement. His jailers did not know who he was, did not share a word with him, no one came to visit him. No one seemed to know he was there. They didn't even know what crime he had committed or how he came to be in the prison. His prison cell was completely isolated from other prisoners and he couldn't communicate in any way with them. He was a complete mystery."

Silverstein also quoted at length from the original *Yedioth Ahronoth* coverage:

"He is in absolute isolation from the external world," said a source in the prison service. "I'm not aware of any other prisoner held in such grave conditions of isolation. In Unit 15 [where he is held], everything concerning him is secret. There are too many secrets concerning him. What frightens is that a man can be imprisoned in Israel in 2010 and no one knows anything about him. The man simply has no name and no identity. We don't even know if he has rights accorded to all other prisoners in the prison system."

Rumors abound as to what crime the nameless prisoner may have committed. Some speculation holds that he is accused of terrorism. Others that the prisoner is accused of espionage. A commenter singled out by Silverstein said: "Rumours from a good source say this is a Mosad agent, suspected of espionage, and allowed to see no one but other Mosad agents."

To this, Silverstein adds: "That would sound about right. But can one imprison a Mossad agent without trial and without the world knowing the man is imprisoned? Can he simply disappear off the face of the earth like this?"



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Questions like that have civil rights activists in Israel questioning the motives of the Israeli government. Speaking to the *Telegraph*, Dan Yakir, chief legal counsel for the Association for Civil Rights in Israel said, "There is no information on whether this person has been charged, whether he has been tried, or whether he has been convicted."

Yakir described his concerns in a letter to the Israeli attorney general: "It is insupportable that, in a democratic country, authorities can arrest people in complete secrecy and disappear them from public view without the public even knowing such an arrest took place," he said.



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