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## Or panel member slams police probe into 2000 riots

By [Yoav Stern](#), Haaretz Correspondent, and Haaretz Service

A member of the Or commission of inquiry into the riots of October 2000, during which 13 Arabs were killed in clashes with police, said Wednesday that there had been some evidence to incriminate at least two police officers in the affair, despite claims to the contrary by an internal police probe.

"The panel found serious suspicions with regards to at least two policemen," said Professor Shimon Shamir who sat on the panel, which was set up in the wake of the riots under the leadership of Justice Theodor Or.

"One [Guy Reif] who caused the deaths of two civilians and the other [Rashad Morshad] who fired rubber bullets at short range, leading to the death of a third civilian. If two important and respected judges are of this opinion, is there not a way to bring at least these two cases to trial?"

Shamir was responding to the outcome of an internal probe by the Justice Ministry Police Investigations Department (PID) into the events of the riots, which found no cause to prosecute any of the police officers involved.

Relatives of the 13, as well as Israeli Arab and leftist legislators, have condemned the decision as racist.

They argued that if the victims had been Jews, investigations of the killings would have been pursued much more vigorously, and the police responsible for the deaths would have been brought to justice.

Earlier Wednesday, Attorney General Menachem Mazuz strongly rejected allegations of racism in the decision not to bring any police officers to trial.

Mazuz on Wednesday expressed "full confidence" in the PID's move to close the cases for lack of evidence against individual policemen.

According to Mazuz, there was no evidentiary basis for filing charges against the officers. "None of us wants to live in a country in which indictments are filed just to mollify one sector of the public or another.

"There shall be none of this in the state of Israel. Two wrongs do not make a right."

According to Mazuz, the Justice Ministry knew that the decision would draw criticism, but said that the officials had acted properly. He reiterated his stance that prosecutors must maintain a "high threshold" of evidence in filing indictments, refraining from pursuing cases with a low probability of obtaining convictions.

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In an apparent swipe at Shamir, Mazuz said that criticism was "especially outrageous when it comes from professionals from whom a bit more responsibility might have been expected."

Shamir had slammed the decision to close the cases, noting that "for some time the PID's credibility had been problematic in the eyes of the [Israeli] Arab public."

### **Arabs to launch protests next week**

The Higher Arab Monitoring Committee has announced it will open a public and legal battle next week against the decision to close the investigations.

On Sunday they will hold a major rally outside the Prime Minister's Office (PMO). The monitoring committee is also planning to set up a protest tent outside either the PMO or the Justice Ministry, where the committee heads will go on a hunger strike.

On October 1, the fifth anniversary of the riots, Israeli Arab leaders are set to hold processions in Arab towns in memory of the 13 people killed.

The plans for protest came as Adalah - The Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel - revealed a document showing that the PID had allowed four of the people killed during the riots to be buried without an autopsy, even though autopsies could have helped determine which policemen fired the fatal bullets.

On the legal side, the monitoring committee and Adalah are considering petitioning the High Court of Justice against the ministry decision and asking jurists abroad to join the fray.

"We'll knock on the door of anyone who can help us - we are also considering approaching the international court in The Hague," said Hassan Aasla, the spokesman for the parents of those killed in the riots.