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UNITED NATIONS  
SECURITY  
COUNCIL



307/639  
Distr.  
GENERAL

S/8961\*  
8 January 1969

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

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LETTER DATED 7 JANUARY 1969 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE  
OF JORDAN ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

Upon instructions from my Government, I have the honour to bring to Your Excellency's attention a statement prepared by a Jordanian national, Mr. As'ad Abdel Rahman, President of the Union of Palestine Arab Students in Lebanon, describing his treatment and that of other Arab prisoners in Israeli jails in the occupied territories.

I have the honour to request that this letter together with its enclosure be circulated as official documents of the General Assembly and the Security Council.

Please accept, etc.

(Signed) Muhammad H. EL-FARRA  
Ambassador  
Permanent Representative

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\* Also issued under the symbol A/7500.

Statement

by

As'ad Abdul Rahman

(B.A., M.A., American University of Beirut, Lebanon)

President, the Union of Palestine Arab Students in Lebanon

on

his imprisonment in Israeli occupied territory (21/12/67 to 29/9/68) and

the treatment of Arabs in prisons under the Occupation

to the

Club of the Alumni Association of the American University

Beirut, Thursday 21/11/1968

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Any discussion of the treatment of the inhabitants of the occupied territories in Palestine is bound to be affected by emotion, by preconceived ideas and by the temptation to distort facts for propaganda purposes. My awareness of this has prompted me to confine my remarks today to two sets of data: (a) what actually happened to me when I was arrested by the Israeli authorities and during my period of imprisonment, and (b) what I gathered directly during my imprisonment by way of observation, conversation and verification concerning the experiences of other Arab inmates of Israeli prisons. I shall include in this second category of data only the information that I believe to be strictly true. I am, therefore, here to report facts to you. My purpose is information not propaganda.

1. What happened to me

On the morning of 21 December 1967 just after 9 o'clock I was knocking at the door of a house in the Old City of Arab Jerusalem situated near the Syriac Convent to meet a colleague of mine Mr. Tayseer Kuba'a the Vice-President of the General Federation of Palestine Arab Students. No sooner had I started knocking at the door than I found myself before two men of the Special Branch of the Israeli Jerusalem Police who pointed their pistols at my face and the face of another friend who had come with me to show me the house. Within seconds we found our hands handcuffed while the policemen proceeded to empty our pockets of all their contents.

I started to protest and to ask for an explanation for such behaviour when one of the two policemen who had arrested us (Sergeant Rosenthal Joseph) ordered me not to utter another word. One of the Israelis then left us for about ten minutes and returned with six other Israelis. One of the six new arrivals immediately slapped my face and asked why we had come to the house, and whether we expected other visitors. I said that I had come to call on a friend and protested at our treatment. Thereupon, and after two of the Israelis were left behind in the house, my companion and I were each handcuffed to a policeman and we were led to a military vehicle parked some 200 yards away near Jaffa Gate. The car drove us to the prison in the Russian Compound in central Jerusalem. The time was about 9.30 a.m.

My companion and I were led to separate rooms in the basement of the prison where our interrogation started immediately. In my interrogation room I faced

Commander Shimon Sapir who asked me two questions after which he asked me to take my clothes off. Every time I took an article off, he would order me to take off another, until I suspected the worst, and refused to continue my striptease. As soon as I had stopped, Sapir and four other men immediately rushed at me raining blows with their fists and the edges of their outstretched hands in expert Karate fashion. The blows were aimed at my head and every part of my body. I shouted in protest and demanded to know the reason for such treatment. Their attacks persisted without interruption for a period I cannot calculate until I began to feel the loss of consciousness. Before I passed out I remember trying to show them a deep scar in my belly, the result of an operation, in the hope of putting them off, but their blows continued to be directed systematically, it seemed, at my head and neck.

My next recollection is of water being splashed over me after which I revived somewhat. As I came to, Sapir told me that my friend Taysir Kuba'a had been arrested. He showed me his identity card and told me that there was no point in further denial.

The interrogation then started all over again. A question would be put to you but before you could answer the blows would fall again; another question would follow, then more blows, and so on. This time, however, the blows did not come from fists and hands only; a short thick knotted stick was also used. This was aimed at the head and every part of the body. This interrogation continued until about 2 p.m. after which I was taken to my cell.

My cell was a dark, damp, icy cold corridor leading to Blanket Store Room No. 4. I found there another inmate, one Ali Al 'Awadah from Gaza. I spent the night in this cell.

The following day I was taken to cell No. 1 in the Muscovite Prison where we were five in all. I was left alone during the whole of the second day, perhaps to build up suspense. On the third day we had a heated argument with our warden Jacob, because he ordered us to stand to attention every time he appeared, saying: "An Arab must stand to attention whenever an Israeli enters the room."

As a result of this argument I was taken to a stinking underground cell to which no light penetrated. The cell was divided into two by iron bars across the middle. On the other side of the bars there was a tin full of faeces. In my cell,

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this side of the bars, there was no place to relieve oneself. One urinated through the bars into the tin, but for other purposes one looked for scraps of newspapers on which one relieved oneself and then deposited them through bars in the tin.

On the following day I was summoned for more interrogation. I was confronted by a certain Tolensky who, we were led to believe, was the deputy chief of Intelligence and a Major Joseph (these were probably fictitious names). My interrogators mentioned certain allegations against me, chiefly that I was one of the fedayeen. They threatened me with torture if I denied these allegations. I repeated what I had said on the first day, namely: I was the President of the Union of Palestine Students for Lebanon and the President of the Confederation of Arab Students in Lebanon. I had come to the Western Bank to visit my family who live in Nablous on the occasion of the Bairam Feast and to bid them farewell before I left for the United States, where I intended to continue my graduate work for a doctorate. I also intended to seize the opportunity of my presence in the Western Bank to study the possibility of organizing passive resistance among students in the face of the forcible change in the school curricula imposed by the Israeli authorities on Arab schools in occupied territories. I intended to collaborate with my colleague Taysir Kuba'a in drawing up a report on the subject which we intended to submit to the Executive Committee of our Students' Federation.

On the following day a bedouin from Gaza was put in my cell. He could hardly stand up. His whole body was lacerated and covered with blood. His urinary system was almost completely damaged. One did what one could to help him out of his difficulties. He said he had been an inmate of a torture camp run by the Israeli Army and reported gruesome details of the happenings in the camp.

On Friday, 29 December 1967, two members of the Israeli Military Police appeared. At their sight my bedouin companion shouted a warning that they were members of the staff of the torture camp. They asked for me and for another prisoner named Khalil Buhais whom I had not met before. Our hands were handcuffed and shackles put on our legs. We were then led blindfolded to a lorry. We climbed to the back of the lorry where we were chained to a ring in the floor. In this manner we travelled to Sarafand - a forty-minute drive. The strain on our wrists was considerable and the manner in which we were tossed about produced nausea.

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As soon as we arrived at our destination and got off the lorry we were met with slaps and blows accompanied with jeers and a continuous flow of curses from a group of soldiers. Our escort led us across ditches and trenches filled with stinking water into which we stumbled because, being blindfolded, we could not see our way. Our clumsy attempts to climb out of the trenches were met with more jeers, laughter, curses, and blows. Suddenly there was firing, very close to us, and for a while I thought I had had it. It turned out, however, that they intended only to play with us.

After this I was taken to a cell of unbelievable stench. The cell was eighty cms. long and sixty cms. wide. This was to be home for the next days. There was no blanket or cover of any kind, no bed, no mattress, no water to wash, no place to relieve nature except a bucket already brimful with faeces and urine. I was still handcuffed, my legs shackled, my eyes blindfolded (except at mealtimes). It was impossible to lie down, to rest or sleep. I often found that my hands had slipped into the bucket.

Throughout the night the place echoed with the sounds of torture and interrogation. They always chose the night: your neighbours led away from the cell on the right, or the cell on the left; their screams piercing the night; yourself expecting your turn, at any moment.

On the fourth day only, my turn came. Tolensky with two others called for me. On the way to the interrogation room the soldier who was dragging me stopped in front of a tree and violently knocked my head against the trunk, then he threw me down a flight of stairs.

What happened at the interrogation? A new development: the gradual transformation of any interrogation into a political investigation. There were no beatings but constant threats. I could in fact hear the cries of the tortured and I was constantly reminded that if I wanted to avoid their fate I had to speak up quickly. This was not Jerusalem, they said.

The interrogators seemed surprised at my explicit political stand and my analysis of the Israeli entity as an imperialistic, expansionist and racist phenomenon, an analysis which I supported by quoting from documents and sources available in the Central Zionist Archives Office and the Hebrew University Library in Jerusalem.

After this interrogation session I was transferred to a cell larger than the one I was in where I stayed for six days.

The following day and for every subsequent day my interrogation continued. They would start at 9.30 a.m. and continue until 11 p.m. at the earliest. There were no breaks for meals. Food was brought to the interrogation room. I was subjected to political, intellectual and psychological probings by army and intelligence officers. They worked in teams of three to eight persons in endless relays, averaging twenty different persons a day. My political convictions, of course, remained the same, and I could see the expressions of puzzlement in their eyes. One effect of this seemed to be that the army officers who came to cross-examine me and listen to my views about the nature of Israel and Zionism became increasingly more senior in rank. Of course this did not mean that I inspected a guard of honour on my way to or from the interrogation room. There were the same blows and attacks to the accompaniment of an unending background of the filthiest insults and curses from my escorts and the soldiers on the way.

On the thirteenth day I was taken to wash my face for the first time since my arrival at Sarafand. I was also allowed for the first time in eighteen days to have a shave, after which I was asked to sign a paper testifying to the good treatment I had received. I signed.

I was then tied through my handcuffs back to back to another person and both of us were dumped into a lorry. As we were lying in the back of the lorry, a woman soldier (I could tell this from her voice) sprayed eau de cologne on my head and face and all over my clothes. The lorry took us to Jerusalem where I found myself in my last cell there again.

I stayed in this cell for a month during which my interrogation continued. During this period my health deteriorated and I began to feel the effects of under-nourishment in addition to my other troubles. To give you an idea about food in Jerusalem this was our daily menu:

- Breakfast: (1) One small cube of salty margarine per person.  
8 a.m. (2)  $\frac{3}{4}$  tablespoonful of jam for all the cell irrespective of the number of persons in it.  
(3)  $\frac{1}{4}$  loaf of bread, per person, the loaf itself being about one foot long.  
(4) One small-sized glass of very weak, tepid tea.

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Lunch: (1) 2 tablespoonfuls of rice, tepid and soggy, with one hot dog  
12 noon served cold per person.

(2) 1/4 of a loaf of bread per person.

Every other day a plate of cold, thin, vegetable soup.

Dinner: (1) One hard-boiled egg per person.

3.30- (2) 1/4 loaf of bread per person. Sometimes a small cube of  
4 p.m. margarine.

In the last third of January I was transferred with other comrades to the Central Ramleh Prison where we stayed for six days after which we were transferred to another section of the prison commanded by an officer named Copani.

I stayed two months in Ramleh Prison. Food and sleeping conditions were not too bad, i.e. we had beds and a lavatory but were twenty to twenty-five persons in a room ten by four metres. After continuous contacts with the Red Cross we won the right to listen to one news broadcast a day (Radio Israel, 7.30 a.m. in Arabic) in addition to receiving some Arabic books, the most recent of which had been published in 1945. It was while I was in Ramleh Prison that I was taken, together with a friend named Ahmad Khalifeh, on two occasions (once towards the end of February, the other time in early March) to the torture camp in Sarafand, wrapped in canvas bundles, where we met General Gazit (an assistant to the Chief of Staff) and another apparently important but mysterious civilian person who listened to our views about the nature of Israel and Zionism. Gazit behaved with all the arrogance of the conqueror and the civilian mentioned the books I had written in Arabic on Zionism.

On 4 January 1968 together with other comrades I was transferred to Ramallah Prison. We had quite a reception party of beatings and insults. We were hit with the hands, with sticks, with pistol-ends and rifle butts. Three of us, Taysir Kuba'a, another friend and myself were put together in a cell two metres long and one metre wide. We were beaten daily but intermittently for four days and remained eighteen days in all in this cell. We were then isolated from the other prisoners in a special section. I stayed in this section for three months during which I was brought to trial. There were no more beatings, only the occasional spitting. I was tried before a military court composed of one judge and an officer. I was charged with infiltration, membership of an illegal organization, and forging an identity card. I was not allowed the services of a team of French lawyers who



arrived in Ramallah to defend several of us. But we were allowed to obtain defense counsels from the territory occupied before 5 June. We had five lawyers, three of them Arab and two Jewish. They were all competent, honest and brave. I thank them all. My line of defense was to deny the competence of the court to try me. I based my case on the principles of international law, the United Nations Charter, the Geneva Conventions, the Security Council resolutions. In fact we introduced the whole Palestine question into the court from the moral, legal, national and humanitarian points of view. The first presiding judge was infuriated by this line of defense. He altogether lost his temper and publicly attacked the Jewish lawyers for repeating my arguments. He also constantly attacked me. This first judge was replaced by another more disciplined judge. With some exceptions, the trial was public and the procedure outwardly democratic. The lawyers, it was obvious, were under great duress. I was finally convicted of ordinary infiltration for social purposes and for forging my identity card. My sentence was one year of imprisonment.

Very gradually my treatment began to improve. On 18 July 1968 I was transferred to an ordinary cell with other prisoners where I remained until my deportation to the Eastern Bank on 29 September 1968.

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2. What happened to the others:

Let me preface the second part of my statement with three observations:

(1) What I am about to describe does not always happen in its entirety, nor at the same level of intensity.

(2) It does not necessarily happen to all those who are arrested.

(3) The torture methods of the Israelis follow two axes: the psychological and the physical. These two axes often intersect to produce a compound effect, so that it is not always possible to draw a clear line of distinction between the one and the other. Nevertheless for the purposes of clear presentation I shall deal with the two methods separately.

A. Psychological torture and the war of nerves

The moment one is arrested one is subjected to two influences simultaneously: inducements and threats. The threats take many forms. You are threatened with

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beating or torture, with the arrest of those dearest to you (your father, mother, sister, brother), with the blowing up of your home, with the rape of your nearest women relatives, with imprisonment in cells containing Israeli thieves and murderers; if you are a woman, with imprisonment in cells containing Israeli prostitutes.

The cells you are sometimes thrown into and the condition in which you are thrown into them (blindfolded, handcuffed, shackled) have already been described. But there are variations here too. The cells often are powerfully lit day and night without interruption. They are sometimes fitted with mouthpieces which continuously broadcast sounds and words deliberately calculated to break your nerve (e.g. the sound of weeping or wailing, the appeal of a mother or a sister, etc.). Sometimes the cell is fitted with blowers which direct strong waves of cold and hot air alternately. Sometimes a snake might be thrown into your cell. The snake is not poisonous, but you don't know it and, remember, you are blindfolded. Sometimes enormous highly-trained dogs are introduced into your cell. They tear at your clothes and body and expertly snatch at the cloth blindfolding your eyes.

Sometimes you are led to an open grave and told that the grave has been specially dug for you. Sometimes the leg of a corpse (probably artificial) is sticking out of the grave covered with dirt and you are told it is the body of this or that of your friends. Sometimes you are taken into the torture chamber to see your friends or strangers undergoing torture. Sometimes you are merely shown the torture implements (e.g. batteries with wires and clips attached to them; handcuffs dangling from the ceiling). Sometimes you are deliberately starved. Sometimes you are taken to a "party". At these parties beating is usually moderate but their basic ingredients are jeering and insults from groups of soldiers accompanied by shooting at close range between your legs or above your head. Sometimes when you are transferred from one place to another the information is volunteered that you are going to a torture camp. Always your identity is cancelled from the start and you become a mere number. Mine was 293. At least 60 per cent of those arrested on charges of helping the resistance receive some variations of this type of psychological treatment.

B. Physical torture

Within this general environment, which, as can be seen, lends itself to many combinations, physical torture, in the strict sense, is practised on you in one or more of the following styles.

It should be remembered, however, that this happens to only a minority of those arrested. The proportion varies. On the West Bank up to about 15 per cent receive this physical treatment. In the Gaza Strip the proportion is higher, reaching up to 25 per cent of those arrested.

As for the actual methods of physical torture I have been able to identify sixteen different methods. These are methods that I am completely intellectually convinced have actually been practised. I am not saying they are all practised against the same person. Nor am I saying they are all practised with the same frequency. What I am saying is that all have actually been practised. This conclusion is based on continuous research that I carried out with my prison inmates. It is based upon a close examination of evidence given me by these inmates, on a long rigorous process of checking and counter-checking of the evidence, and on my objective appraisal of the integrity of my informants. To do less than this, to invent horror stories for you for cheap propaganda effect would be to insult the manhood and humanity of hundreds of my compatriots. In this connexion I would like to say that I am not mentioning names in public for obvious reasons. But I have the names of all the victims concerned as well as other relevant details. These names and details I am prepared to put at the disposal of specialized international agencies if I could get adequate guarantees that the victims would not be endangered.

As for the different methods of torture, these are:

- (1) The prisoner is made to strip completely of all clothes. The body is whipped or beaten with sticks. No part of the body is spared. The beating and whipping continues until blood is drawn. Salt is thrown on the lacerations and the beating is resumed.
- (2) The lighted cigarette ends are applied to various parts of the body.
- (3) The prisoner is forced to sit naked on cactus leaves fixed on platforms.
- (4) Enormous dogs are let loose on the prisoner who is usually handcuffed with hands behind the back. The dogs are trained to throw the prisoner on the

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ground. The prisoner is ordered by an interrogator, whip in hand, to get up on his feet as soon as he falls down and so on....

(5) The fingers of the hand are placed on the edge of an open door and the door is slammed on the fingers.

(6) Finger nails are pulled out with ordinary pincers.

(7) The prisoner is injected with pepper solutions.

(8) The prisoner is suspended from the ceiling from his wrists or ankles.

The interrogator throws his weight on the prisoner or pulls him in downward motions.

(9) Electric shocks are passed through the ear lobes, the chest and the privy parts.

(10) The prisoner is injected with solutions which he is told induce almost instant insanity. He is shown what he is told is an antidote which he would be given if only he would confess in time.

(11) A large metal container is fitted over the head and neck and held firm to the body by extensions that are held in place by a waist-band. The container is then hit with sticks and rods on the outside, at first slowly and in routine fashion, and then with increasing tempo. The more battered the container is the more difficult it is to pull out.

(12) A certain chemical substance (possibly a nerve irritant) is put in the hand of the prisoner who is ordered to clench it. The substance gives the effect of an electric shock.

(13) Water hoses are applied to the mouth or anus and the water turned on.

(14) The motions of sodomy are enacted apparently by a man kept for the purpose.

(15) One of the prisoner's arms is firmly tied to the fixed bars of a window, the other to the handle of a door. The door is slowly opened in the other direction.

(16) Matchsticks are inserted into the urinary-genital tract. Sometimes they are lit. Or, alternatively, the fillings of dry ink pens are inserted in the tract.

These methods of physical torture are practised with great skill and artistry in order to avoid permanent damage. But the interrogators sometimes lose control of the situation and certain, perhaps unwanted results, follow, such as partial paralysis, the perforation of the stomach, the loss of an eye, or total nervous breakdown.

Thank you.