

The Association for Civil Rights in Israel (ACRI)

MINORS IN THE SHORE CAMP

A Report by Tamar Pelleg, ACRI Attorney

1) Background

Gaza. June 2, 1988. The time is noon. I have received permission to visit and meet with the youthful prisoners (minors) at the "Shore Camp" -- the official name of the Ansar 2 prison, located on the shores of the city. The permit was signed by the deputy attorney general for the Gaza area. On the way, I am joined by Anis Riad, an attorney from Uhm el-Fahm and a member of the ACRI. He has agreed to help me interview the youths since I do not speak Arabic.

There were, at first, thirty-five prisoners kept here, between the ages of fourteen and sixteen. Only eleven now remain and they all live together in a 3m. by 7m. barracks. Most of them have been sentenced to a few months' imprisonment and fines for throwing stones or burning tires. They are hopeful that their families will pay the fines that will ensure their release at the end of their terms.

They arrive at the prison office in Indian file, wearing prison uniforms a few sizes too large and looking worried and suspicious. They sit down on a long bench to our right.

"We are lawyers," Anis begins, but before he can continue he is interrupted by a youth sitting at our far left, a thin boy with a sharp face and an eagle nose.

"Is she Jewish?" he wants to know.

Anis answers in the affirmative, as if it were the most natural thing in the world. "She's Jewish, from the ACRI, and she's interested in what's happening to you. He -- I'm from Uhm el-Fahm," he adds. "I came with

her."

The boy answers his questions freely and Anis writes down his answers in Hebrew for my benefit. My own questions are translated into Arabic and answered in detail.

2) Remarks of the young prisoner.

Wail Said al-Madhoun, no. 5494, was arrested on May 8, 1988, when the Nasser neighborhood, where he lives, was sealed off. He was told that he was suspected of building roadblocks and throwing stones. That night a large number of youths from the neighborhood were arrested.

He was put into the lock-up until five in the morning. From five to 8:30, he was made to stand up for refusing to confess. He was then taken to the interrogation room where he was beaten up. For four hours he was ordered alternately to sit down and stand up -- without pause. His interrogators were soldiers. The name of the commanding officer was "Captain" Levi or Lavie who claimed he was responsible for the interrogations at Ansar 2. He was beaten again, at which point he confessed to the charges. HE HAS NOT YET BEEN TOLD WHEN HE WILL BE TRIED.

Valid Khalad Kharah, no 6073, lives in the Shatti Refugee Camp. He is fifteen (b. Sept. 2, 1972). He is a student. He was arrested on May 25 and taken to the interrogation room where he was beaten continually all night. Then he and the other prisoners were ordered to stand. He was slapped a number of times. At noon the next day he confessed to the charges -- throwing stones. He was sentenced to two months inprison and a NS 600 fine. He has no idea if his family paid the fine or not. His address: el-Shatti 10/32.

Faiz Mahaud Arari, no. 4724, fifteen, lives in the Ein Zeitun neighborhood in Gaza. He was arrested on April 16, sentenced for throwing stones and burning tires to three months' imprisonment and a fine of NS

800. His mother is divorced from his father and is unable to pay to the fine. His father has another family of three wives.

Faiz complains that there is no running water or toilet in the narrow crowded barracks. When there were thirty-five inmates it was intolerable. The eleven prisoners sleep on thin mattresses on the tiled floor. Although there are two windows, there is not enough ventilation. Food is provided to each two inmates on one tray. The food is never enough to satisfy their hunger. There is tinned meat for lunch and the bread is often moldy.

Their parents bring them a change of undersclothes but they never have a chance to launder the prison uniforms, nor are they provided with a change.

Parents are permitted to visit for ten minutes, behind a glass barrier. They have to shout to converse through a small hole.

Punishment? Once he was late returning from the shower. The entire group was ordered to sit outside in the sun for a number of hours.

What do they do all day? Nothing. Talk. There are no games, no books. Bringing in books and games was against the regulations, they were told.

What's the worst complaint? The mosquitoes bite them all night long.

Ahmad Tawfik el Hol, no. 4736, aged fourteen (b. August 5, 1973). He lives in Gaza, Ein Zeitun, next to the Saladin Mosque. He was arrested on April 16, tried and sentenced to five months in prison and a NS 700 fine. He does not know whether his family paid the fine or when he will be released.

Yamin Ibrahim Mukhtar Salamah, no. 6072, fifteen, worked in a garage. His address: Shatti Refugee Camp, Block 2. Was arrested at home on May 24 and sentenced to two months in prison and NS 650 fine. Does not know if the fine has been paid.

Kidal Ismail Suleiman Hilar, no. 2369. A resident of the Sejiya

neighborhood in Gaza, he has been in prison the longest -- since February 6. He is the "prefect." Sentenced to four months he is due for release this week.

He complains about the lack of ventilation in the barracks and an absence of running water. The place is dirty since the rooms are cleaned only once every three days. There are no toilet facilities in the minors' barracks and the boys are taken out to the outhouses only twice a day. There is a pail in the barracks but the inmates try not to use it as the stench is terrible and its presence constitutes a health hazard. Still it is not always possible to control one's self. Mornings they are taken to the showers but are not allowed sufficient time there. Drinking water is adequately supplied in gerrycans.

He confirms the complaints made by those who spoke before him. They would all prefer to live in tents because the ventilation is better and there is free access to toilet and water facilities.

### 3) Discussion with the prison commander.

The commanding officer, Col. Malul, listens to my remarks as I pass on the youngsters' complaints. He explains to me that the reason the youngsters are kept in the barracks is to protect them from the older prisoners. Sexual assault, he believes, is a real danger.

He is of the opinion that the time allotted for showers and latrine is entirely adequate.

The uniforms, he maintains, are changed once every ten days. It is unlikely that a prisoner wears the same clothes for a whole month.

He has no objection to the supply of books and games. He gives me his telephone number so that people from Gaza can coordinate an organized delivery with him.

Regarding punishment: it is his opinion that punishment is not frequent.

What about forcing them all to sit outside in the sun because one of them was late coming from the showers? He thinks that they rather liked being outside, tanning themselves in the sun in the fresh air. Col. Malul repeats this remark twice, smiling, apparently enjoying the idea.

4) A retarded administrative detainee aged seventeen

Muhammed Shehadeh Awad Naim, no. 5409 (b. April 24, 1971), who claims to be fifteen, is a special case. I don't understand how he came to our meeting since he is not kept in the barracks with the other boys. Apparently he was on the list of names I had submitted (some of whom, it turned out, were either over eighteen or had already been released).

Muhammed is an administrative detainee. A problematic child from a problematic family. Neither his father, who is ill, nor his mother work, and there are three younger children at home. They live in the Ein Zeitun neighborhood in Gaza but he is unable to provide an exact address. From studying his face, movements, body and manner of speaking, it occurs to us that the boy is either mentally retarded, suffering from brain damage or epileptic. His movements are uncoordinated, his head jerks involuntarily. He complains of frequent dizziness (a few times a day) which involve a loss of consciousness (our "free translation" of his garbled explanations).

He does not remember the date of his detention. He does not know when he was born. He does not know how to read or write and signs the power of attorney with his thumbprint.

"I don't eat that food because my throat hurts me from it, and I don't eat that kind of meat," he says. Then he goes on to explain: "My house is next to the "Star" factory in Gaza where it's written Welcome to Gaza. That's where I live."

In Muhammed's file, the order for his administrative detention is signed

by Col. Ya'acov Or, on April 24, 1988, indicating that he should be held in Prison no. 7 (K'tziot or Ansar 3). There are no remarks attached to his medical report from May 4. He is listed as "fit for prison" and "fit for work."

His fitness for work cannot be contended. He worked, according to his own testimony, in a juice factory in Ashdod, and, after he left, in a restaurant. What standards can be employed to judge whether or not a youth is "fit for prison" are simply beyond us.

Muhammed tells us that he "was in Israel" all the time. "Then they came to look for me ... and my father came and told me that they were looking for me and I went with my father and I was arrested there."

In answer to our questions he replies that he wasn't interrogated or beaten.

We submitted an appeal on the arrest of Muhammed Naim. Perhaps in the course of due process we will get to the bottom of the riddle of his administrative detention.

  
Tamar Pelleg-Sryck

June 8, 1988