

break their will, transform them into empty shells and destroy their steadfast national and organizational identity in confronting the continued attacks...

«The occupation forces' announcement that they would meet some of the demands of the striking prisoners in this prison or that, is only a superficial answer aimed at absorbing local and international reaction. These promises will soon be cancelled, and the conditions of imprisonment will return to the zero level. This requires all democratic institutions, all people of conscience and human rights committees to immediately raise their voices. They should investigate what is occurring in the prisons and take steps in solidarity with the detainees' demands...»

The letter called special attention to the severe conditions in Jenin, Jnaid, Khalil (Hebron), Gaza, Damon, Ramallah and Asqalan prisons. The committee also inclosed letters from the political prisoners in Jenin, Jnaid and Asqalan, to give a first-hand impression of the prison conditions and the detainees' demands.

Letter from Asqalan

On September 10, 1985, the political prisoners in Asqalan were ordered to stand during morning roll call. This had earlier been general practice. All prisoners were forced to stand throughout roll call in the entire prison, which often lasted several hours, giving the guards

ample time for humiliating and harassing the prisoners. Thus, the Asqalan prisoners decided to refuse reimposition of this practice which had been abandoned in the mid-seventies as the result of their struggle.

On September 11th, when they refused to stand, 100 Zionist soldiers, gas-masked and wielding truncheons, stormed the cells, one by one, teargassing and beating the inmates, and confiscating their meagre personal belongings. Many prisoners were injured, three of them so seriously that they were moved to the prison hospital at Ramla. For the next three days, all the prisoners were deprived of food and water; family visits were cancelled. Two attempts by the ICRC to see the prisoners were blocked by the Zionist prison administration on September 19-20th. On September 29th, the Asqalan prisoners staged a hunger strike, protesting maltreatment, parallel to a similar strike waged by political prisoners in Jenin.

A letter sent out of Asqalan in November, conveys the prisoners' impression of these events:

«From the beginning of September, we have been sensing the horrible smell of hatred from the detention officers. Their eyes and behavior foretold that a new-old policy would be enacted...aiming to uproot our organized, national existence in the Zionist prisons. This oppressive policy does not stop at roll

call. It aims at revoking all the concessions we have attained through our struggle. The horrible events in our prison since September 11th are only the beginning of the application of a plan that has humiliation as its headline. There has been horrible oppression, volumes of tear gas, and the army and police dogs are constantly present, turning the prison into a military barracks. Yet we have not feared these measures, and they have not killed our spirit of struggle...

«In the light of this attempted liquidation, we decided the following in order to confront these measures and prove our Palestinian identity, after having used all other methods: to refuse morning roll call and begin an open, partial, hunger strike, eating only bread. We therefore call on you to stand by us, letting the whole world hear our voice and using all efforts for our just struggle...»

The Asqalan prisoners also conveyed their demands, including not to stand in roll call, extending the exercise break to 2 1/2 hours as it was before, a stop to the daily search before the break, permission to move between the different sections of the prison, allowing hot water, the return of confiscated books and notebooks, and an end to the acts of intimidation by the administration and personnel.

Jnaid: deliberate neglect

Prisoners in Jnaid have been facing a similar Zionist campaign of harassment and deliberate neglect. For long-term prisoners, a major problem is the administration's policy of frequent transfers in order to make problems for the prisoners and their family visits. The death of a Jnaid prisoner underscored that the Zionist policy of neglecting health conditions is deliberate. Ghassan Issa, a 25 year old Bethlehem citizen, died on October 2, 1985. He had contracted cancer earlier in the year, but went without treatment for eight months despite appeals for his being treated or released. At the last minute, he was moved to Ramla prison hospital to die. His family was forbidden to visit him. A letter sent by the Jnaid prisoners in November describes the overall situation:

«The oppressive, fascist administration is continuing its policy of attack and delay (in addressing our demands). This policy became more pronounced after the prisoner exchange. The administration has escalated this policy...resorting to the old-new methods of

Sit-in in Damascus

