

of ping-pong for more than a year,» said ICRC chief in Lebanon, Reto Meister.³

In early November, it was estimated that there were 120 persons held in Khiam which is under direct Israeli supervision, and staffed by five Israeli and 20 SLA officers. A month later, new information coming from persons released, as well as new arrests, had pushed the estimate to 180 detainees, including teenagers, women and old men. It is difficult to know exactly how many are detained for several reasons. For one, the detained are held incommunicado, and besides Khiam there are at least ten interrogation centers in the 'security zone' with an untold number of inmates. Second, arrests are ongoing. (For example, in the December 31st expulsion from Kounin, some 32 people were arrested.) Thirdly, there are frequent kidnappings by SLA militiamen and Shin Beth agents, and the fate of the victims is most often unknown, though bodies have been found to indicate that some of them are murdered. At least twenty villagers were kidnapped in October alone, and are thought to be in Khiam, but others are missing altogether. Fourth, it is unknown how many inmates have been tortured to death in Khiam or other centers. At the end of 1985, a Reuters report indicated that 393 people had died during the year in attacks launched by the Israeli occupation forces or their militia allies, but the real number of victims of Zionist terror cannot yet be calculated.

«All testimonies of former Khiam prisoners agree on the description of the detention conditions as worse than in the other interrogation centres in Mar Elias, the Regie or Tyrus: malnutrition, isolation, confinement, beating, physical and sexual harassments, all kinds of humiliations and insults, torture. An important number of testimonies mention torture, particularly with electricity: electro-shocks produced by a machine with handles are given on the sensitive parts of the body (ears, fingers, neck, sexual organs...) The victims are splashed with water to heighten the effects. At the end of September, strong rumors spoke of the death of three detainees from Bent Jbeil as a result of these tortures...»⁴

Blockade

In addition to repeated acts of piracy and sinking of cargo ships, the Israeli occupation forces have imposed collective punishment through blockades. On October 2nd, they established

a no-go zone for civilian boats off South Lebanon. At the beginning of November, the Israeli occupiers declared Lebanon's southern coast a military area; fishing was banned, and Sour (Tyre) harbor was blockaded for two weeks; incoming ships were searched and no cargos could be unloaded. Again from November 20th until the first days of December, this harbor was blockaded; a new naval blockade was imposed in mid-December. Israeli gunboats patrol the entire coast, as far north as Tripoli. Enacted under various 'security' pretexts, these measures are an obvious violation of Lebanon's sovereignty and aim at disrupting the country's economic life.

The population of the 'security zone' is subject to a permanent land blockade. People are only allowed to travel out of the zone on two days a week, and then only after rigorous searches supervised by Israeli occupation troops. This is part of the attempt to cut the zone off from the rest of the country.

Escalating aggression

While the thirteen Israeli air strikes on Lebanon in 1985 were launched from within the Zionist entity, the 'security zone' serves as a launching pad for continuous ground operations and artillery attacks. The villages just north of the zone are subject to constant shelling, and artillery fire is also directed at Saida. This shelling became heavier and more frequent in November as efforts proceeded to find a solution to the Lebanese civil war under Syrian auspices. By mid-December, the area between Jezzine, where fascist militias are based, and Saida, home of the Popular Liberation Forces, had again become a major battlefield.

At the same time, Israeli operations outside the 'security zone' have escalated from raids to major offensives. On November 6th, the SLA and Israeli occupation troops raided villages north of the zone, destroying three houses and rounding up 80 men to try and force them to form a committee for keeping 'strangers' out of the area, i.e., resistance fighters. On November 28th, 150 Israeli troops in armored vehicles and helicopters made a four-hour raid on three villages north of the zone, dynamiting homes and arresting citizens. On December 3rd and 4th, the Israeli occupation troops launched their biggest ground operation in Lebanon since June; 150 troops raided the Wadi Horsh

Kanaaba area, northeast of Hasbaya, attacking Palestinian freedom fighters. The next day, 100 Israeli soldiers attacked a resistance base near Rachaya, in the southern Bekaa Valley.

Annexation

There are many concrete signs that 'Israel' is far from ready to relinquish its positions in South Lebanon. This fall's preparations for the winter were actually an annexation of Lebanese territory. In addition to bringing in prefabricated houses to keep their occupation troops warm, the Israelis installed mines and electronic detection equipment along the Lebanese-Israeli border on land expropriated from Lebanese farmers, in effect, pushing the border northwards. The statements of many Israeli officials, including Defense Minister Rabin, that UNIFIL is no longer needed, are another indication of the Zionists' desire for total control. In line with this, there is frequent harassment of the Norwegian troops in particular, who are the only contingent deployed exclusively in the 'security zone'. According to official Norwegian sources, there have been 40 incidents between the Norwegian soldiers and the SLA or IDF in South Lebanon since April. The US has seemingly given its stamp of approval to Israeli hegemony in southernmost Lebanon, as indicated by the December decision to suspend \$18 million in aid to UNIFIL, and the January veto of a UN resolution calling for Israeli withdrawal.

In early January, Israeli officials threatened an expansion of the 'security zone'. Though Defense Minister Rabin denied this, there are indications of de facto implementation. Daily Israeli-SLA shelling in the new year has caused new mass displacements in the villages north of the zone. Mustafa Saad, Secretary General of Saida's Nasserite Organization, charged that «Israel is trying to enlarge the security belt, in order to protect Galilee, but also to acquire more water and territory.»

¹ Newsletter 21 of the International Centre for Information on Palestinian and Lebanese Prisoners, Deportees and Missing Persons. This newsletter contains extensive documentation about human rights violations in the 'security zone' including first-hand testimonies from released detainees and refugees, maps, etc. The Centre is currently appealing for donations in order to enable it to continue its documentation. Its next newsletter will focus on the repression of children in occupied Palestine. The address of the centre is B.P. 335.16, 75767 Paris Cedex 16, France.

² Ibid.

³ Monday Morning, Nov. 4-10, 1985.

⁴ Newsletter 21.