

Political Prisoners in Jordan

Amnesty International issued the following circular in January.

Amnesty International is concerned at continuing reports of arrest and short term detention without charge of political opponents to the government, some of whom may be detained solely for the non-violent expression of their political beliefs and may therefore be prisoners of conscience. Amnesty International is also concerned at allegations that some of these prisoners have been tortured or ill-treated during their detention.

Arrests for political reasons are normally carried out in Jordan by the intelligence services, the largest of which is the Department of General Intelligence (Da'irat al-Mukhabarat al-'Amma) based in Amman. According to the provisions of martial law, in force since 5 June 1967, such arrests should be confirmed within a maximum of 15 days by the Prime Minister, in his capacity as General Military Governor, or by local administrators empowered to do so as Local Military Governors. Martial law provisions invest Military Governors with wide powers to arrest anyone considered a threat to state security. Security detainees can be held without charge for an indefinite period or be formally charged and brought to trial before the Martial Court, which lacks basic legal safeguards such as the right of appeal.

Prisoners detained by the intelligence services are held, usually incommunicado, for periods ranging from a few weeks to a few months, after which they are either released or formally charged and transferred to an ordinary prison, awaiting trial by the Martial Court. The intelligence services are apparently responsible for deciding whether a prisoner is to be brought to trial before the Martial Court or released. Such a decision is taken weeks and sometimes months after the arrest, leaving the prisoner until then uncertain about any pending legal proceedings against him/her.

When torture or ill-treatment of political prisoners takes place, it is usually during the period of detention by the intelligence services. Reported torture methods include beatings on all parts of the body, although beatings are often concentrated on one part at a time such as the *falaqa* that is beatings on the soles of the feet, and the *farruf* known as the parrot's perch (the prisoner is hung

from a perch by his wrists and ankles tied together and beaten intermittently). Other forms of reported physical ill-treatment include sensory deprivation, deprivation of sleep and deliberate mishandling of food.

Psychological pressure is reportedly exerted on all political prisoners, whether they are also being physically ill-treated or not. Reported practices include solitary confinement, verbal abuse, threats on relatives, threats on the prisoner's employability and threats of being brought to trial with a heavy sentence as a result.

Brainwashing in Jordan

We have received reliable information about literature being circulated in the Jordanian armed forces by the military intelligence. The gist of this is tarnishing the image of the martyr, Nasser al Bayed, the Jordanian soldier who attacked the Zionist forces in the Jordan Valley on January 29th. Jordanian soldiers were assembled and lectured that Al Bayed was a confused person, who had an unsuccessful love affair, and carried out the operation as a deliberate suicide, not a heroic attack on the enemy.

The military intelligence purposefully delayed delivering his body to his family for burial, and changed the place to avoid mass participation in the funeral. Many people went afterwards to pay condolences to Al Bayed's family who stressed that they were not receiving condolences, but congratulations on their son's heroism.

Political prisoners recently subjected to this pattern of short term detention without charge belong to a number of political organizations including the Organization of the Democratic Front in Jordan, the Organization of the Popular Front in Jordan, and the Islamic Liberation Party. All political organizations in Jordan were dissolved in 1957, with the exception of the Jordanian Communist Party which was outlawed earlier in 1953.

Amnesty International has received reports of 35 people having been reportedly arrested and detained without charge during the past 4 months. They

include students, trade unionists, labourers, engineers, writers and journalists, as well as a lawyer, a pharmacist, a translator and a bank employee. Six of them were allegedly tortured while detained. In all these cases the arrests were reportedly made by the Department of General Intelligence and the detainees were held in the General Intelligence building in Amman. By January 1986, Amnesty International learned that 13 of these detainees had been released.

The attached is a list of 55 prisoners — including those listed above — reportedly arrested by the Department of General Intelligence and detained without charge in the General Intelligence building in Amman, unless otherwise specified. Amnesty International believes that in all 55 cases the prisoners are detained for political reasons. The organization is at present seeking details of their detention and clarification of the allegations of torture involving some of them.

1. Ali 'Abdul-'Aziz 'Amer (politician).

Arrested in October 1985 in Amman. Member of the Palestinian National Council. Former student leader at Jordan University. Reportedly moved to al-Mahatta Central Prison in Amman.

2. Bassam Haddadin (trade unionist).

Arrested on 6 November 1985 at home in Amman. Member of the General Union of Print, Press and Publications' Workers. Haddadin was reportedly already detained once, without trial, for a period of 3 years, and was released in August 1984. He was arrested the same day as al-Mreidi and al-As'ad. Reportedly moved to al-Mahatta Central Prison.

3. Majid Mustafa al-Mreidi (translator).

Arrested on 6 November 1985 at home in Amman. Member of the Syrian Branch of the General Union of Palestinian Writers and Journalists. Al-Mreidi was reportedly already detained once, for 18 months, and was released in August 1984. He was arrested on the same day as Haddadin and al-As'ad. He is 30 years old. Reportedly moved to al-Mahatta Central Prison.

4. Mazin al-As'ad (writer). Arrested on 6

November 1985 in Amman. Member of the Jordanian Writers' Association. He is a short story writer. Member of the National Union of Jordanian Students. Al-As'ad was allegedly tortured. He reportedly suffered a heart attack and was treated at the al-Hussayn medical center and brought back to the General Intelligence building. Later in December