



Zakaria, Mohammad, Zuhdi, Abdul Hamid, Abu Waffa

# The Battlefield Inside

## Interviews with Militants Liberated from Zionist Jails

This is a composite interview conducted with five comrades of the PFLP, who courageously served long terms in Israeli jails and were liberated in the 1985 prisoner exchange, when two Israeli soldiers were released by PFLP-General Command in return for the freedom of 1,150 revolutionaries.

*Democratic Palestine* interviewed Khalaf Nasser (Abu Waffa) from Ramallah, who spent 17 years in the Zionist jails; Zuhdi Hamoud Al'Adawi of Gaza, who spent 15 1/2 years in Zionist jails; Abdul Hamid Mohammad Al Shatali of Gaza, 14 years; Zakaria Tatari from Gaza, 13 years; and Mohammad Al Rukoi from Gaza, 12 years. All five took part in the phase of the Palestinian resistance that immediately followed the 1967 occupation. All five were sentenced to long prison terms, ranging from thirty years to multiple life sentences. In fact, the Zionist enemy intended for them to die in prison. All five spent their youth - the best years of their life - in prison, but they turned this into another battlefield in the Palestinian national struggle. All of them served time in several different jails and took part in the battles of the political prisoners, such as the prolonged hunger strike in Nafha in 1980, and earlier strikes in Ashkelon, etc. All five are now active in the Palestinian revolution, in fields ranging from military to mass and cultural work, within the ranks of the PFLP.

We began the interview by asking each comrade about the circumstances of his arrest. Abu Waffa explained what happened to him: «Two patrol cars came to my house and took me to the center. I was interrogated for going to Jordan. My legs and hands were tied and I was blindfolded. At first, I was

confused, but when I realized that all the questions focused on my travel to Jordan, I relaxed. I stayed 21 days in detention. The interrogator said that I would be released in two days because of lack of evidence. That was on May 6, 1968, but two days later I was surprised to see one of the comrades, who came from Jordan to work under my leadership, enter my cell. He explained that he had come with a combat patrol and was arrested after a clash with the Zionists on April 12th. Then, on May 9th, he was called for interrogation, and on the same day, I was accused of leading a combat cell in Ramallah, that had carried out several operations. He served as a witness, and he turned traitor. His name was Lutfi Sa'adeh.»

Zuhdi added his experience: «In 1970, at one o'clock in the morning, a group from the Zionist army broke into the house where I was staying with four other people, all friends, not PFLP members. That was in Gaza. They started interrogating us right in that house, beating us severely and asking about the location of other comrades and arms. At that moment I felt highly responsible for my comrades. That gave me strength, though I had little experience then. They blindfolded me and took me to the jail.»

Abdul Hamid prefaced telling about his arrest by describing the situation in that period as he had experienced it: «I joined the PFLP in the Gaza Strip, in

what we call the golden time of the resistance. The PFLP was the most active and developed organization in the Strip, with the most support, as everybody acknowledges, even the enemy. That explains why the militants of the PFLP were especially targeted by the Zionists. Due to the rise in armed struggle in Gaza, the Zionist enemy hysterically pursued, arrested and detained many people. In this way, they learned about my activities and began to hunt for me.»

«I lived underground for a period of time and carried out several operations against the enemy. An example was the attack on the Zionist military camp at Al Nuseirat, where the enemy admitted the death of six of their soldiers. Because of their anxiety about the escalating resistance, the occupation forces enforced collective punishment. This was organized by Moshe Dayan and included demolishing the houses and land of families of members and supporters of the revolution, as well as administrative detention. Hundreds of thousands of our people were affected by this policy, including my own family. My father and two of my uncles were detained. The rest of my family was sent to one of the concentration camps the Israelis built in the Sinai.»

«All this, however, failed to deter the revolution in the Gaza Strip, so the Zionists opened an all-out war on Gaza. This was called Sharon's campaign, led by the infamous Ariel Sharon. I was arrested during that period. While I was on a mission, I found myself surrounded by Zionist troops. I tried to escape, but was caught. I tried to ignite a grenade, but they were faster and stopped me. They attacked me like a pack of dogs, beating and kicking me.»