

THE NIGHTMARE OF ARREST AND THE BATTLE OF DETERMINATION

Abdel Hamid continued, «At first, I was in shock. I felt my brain stop. After a few moments I began to realize the severity of what had happened. They continued to ask me about my comrades, and I knew I was entering a new battle - the battle of determination against the enemy. They handcuffed me and took me to Al Nuseirat camp. There a Zionist soldier tried to shoot me but missed. His superior screamed at him and took away his pistol...»

Mohammad Al Rukoi was arrested a few years later: «At midnight on March 16, 1973, I was arrested in my house. I was sound asleep, and suddenly my bedroom door was broken open and several soldiers entered. I thought it was a nightmare. After a moment, I realized what was happening. Several soldiers held me in the dark, shining a flashlight in my eyes. They asked me to lift things and help them search the room, but they forbid me to touch anything except on their orders. They were afraid I would reach for a hidden weapon. They took me into the courtyard in my pyjamas; they didn't allow me to wear my shoes. They made me take off my pyjama pants and blindfolded me with them. They tied my hands with nylon ropes and took me outside.»

«They attacked my mother and beat her, then returned her to her room. They encircled me and beat me up, asking about where I had hidden my weapon. When I didn't answer, they took me away in a car which was part of a convoy. On the way to the jail, a soldier hit me in the eye with his pistol, and I suffered a black eye.»

Zakaria prefaced the description of his arrest by thanking *Democratic Palestine* for opening its pages to the prisoners' story. He stressed that the way the Zionists torture Palestinian freedom fighters is comparable to the Nazis' brutality... He told about the work that he was involved in prior to his arrest: «I was part of a fighting cell of the PFLP. We concentrated our work on planting explosives in different parts of occupied Palestine. On November 29, 1971, the anniversary of the day the UN adopted the plan dividing Palestine (since turned into the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People), we planted explosives in three different places in the 1948 occupied territories. The enemy admitted 30 casualties that day. Then on February 2, 1972, we had prepared 27 explosives in the occupied West Bank, but one of them exploded by accident. A comrade was martyred and another one injured. The injured comrade was taken to hospital and arrested there. I was told to go to Gaza to tell the leadership what had happened.»

«I told them the same day, and they suggested that I leave for Jordan, but I refused, and it was decided that I should go to the West Bank. I went to

my home to say good-bye and prepare for my departure the next day. That night, February 6, 1972, 72 Zionist soldiers came to my house at 3 a.m. We heard heavy knocking. When my father opened the door, the house was surrounded. Several soldiers entered. They ordered us out and searched the house. They dumped all our grain, rice, sugar and oil on the ground, while we were forced to wait outside with our hands in the air. They asked for ID cards, and when they saw mine, they said: 'That's the one. That's the terrorist.' My mother began to cry, but I told her not to, that I would come back to her... My morale was high. I knew that I had entered a new form of war with the enemy. I was determined not to give in.»

FASCIST TORTURE

Our questions about the first hours of detention elicited vivid accounts of torture from the comrades. Needless to say, political prisoners have no access to lawyers during the interrogation period which may be very prolonged in accordance with the Zionists' efforts to break the militant's will. Lawyers are first provided at the stage of trial which is a sham where anyway the accusations of the intelligence are accepted at face value.

Mohammad recounts: «I arrived at the detention center at about 1 a.m. and they handed me over to the wardens. They stripped me and searched me thoroughly; they took my watch. Then a policeman came with a soldier and a member of the Shin Beth, and took me to the interrogation room. There were about 24 cells in that section, and I was led into a small room with paintings that looked like crosswords and mazes on the walls. There was a table and several chairs. The interrogators were Iraqi Jews in civilian clothes. They asked me to take off my clothes. When I refused, they attacked me and tore them off. I was totally naked.»

«They made me sit on the floor and put my legs through the chair; they started beating me on the feet with a stick. After my feet swelled, they made me sit on a chair. One of the butchers, with big hands, started beating me on the ears until they bled. They dragged me by the hair to another room where there was a shower, and poured ice-cold water on me for fifteen minutes. Then I was sent to another room where they 'ghosted' me.» This torture is notorious in Zionist jails. The detainee is handcuffed by one hand and hung by this hand from the ceiling, in a position resembling a ghost. It is a very dangerous form of torture, as it can result in paralysis of the hand and arm.

Under the pressure of such torture, Mohammad was asked the following questions over and over: Which organization do you belong to? Did you hide arms? Did you carry out any operation against 'Israel'? Who are your comrades and where are they? Who helps you? Where are the hiding places of

fugitives?

Next Abu Waffa told about his questioning: «When they started, I realized that the information they had was not accurate. I was charged with several operations I did not do. Usually when one is arrested, he would say that others did all the things he did, so I found myself responsible for many operations. They asked the whereabouts of our comrades, the names of people in charge and who carried out specific operations. During that period, time stopped for me.»

This questioning was accompanied by severe torture: «They used several methods. The worst is the 'ghosting', but they would also put the tube of a ballpoint pen into the penis. There were electric shocks and injecting a water hose into the rectum, with a jet of water, that made you feel your insides would come out of your mouth. They make you eat chocolate with pickled fish and bread, which causes extreme thirst. They use chemicals on your skin. They use specially trained dogs to attack you, and show you beheaded bodies.»

Zakaria explained that the Zionists use both psychological and physical torture: «They ask you what you think of the Israeli army, then they put you up against a wall blindfolded and make you think that they will shoot you. They told me that they knew everything about me, for others had confessed; they promised good treatment if I cooperated. Then they said that they would force me to speak, that I would speak from my ass. Then they showed me a map and asked me to point out the locations of the revolutionaries' hideouts. When I didn't cooperate, they hung me from the ceiling by my legs, so I felt my head would explode. They also put a plastic bag on my head, so I felt I would suffocate.»

«WHERE IS GUEVARA GAZA?»

Abdul Hamid was an assistant to Mohammad Al Aswad, called Guevara of Gaza, the PFLP Politbureau member in charge of the Gaza Strip in that period. This fact was predominant in his interrogation. He relates the proceedings after he was arrested: «They moved me from Al Nuseirat camp to the offices of the Zionist military governor of Gaza. On the way, I was severely beaten, and I was bleeding. Then the military governor's deputy ordered me transferred to the Gaza Central Prison. On the way, they treated my injuries in a superficial manner.»

«In the Gaza prison, several officers received me and started asking questions, especially about the whereabouts of Comrade Guevara of Gaza. They sent me to the intelligence section of the prison. There I learned that they knew that I was an assistant to Comrade Guevara. I was taken to a room where a Shin Beth officer gave me a paper with the following questions: Where are