

the campaign begun earlier in the Gaza Strip, to force all Palestinians to get new identification cards. Besides being a form of bureaucratic harassment, forcing people to wait in offices for hours, revoking ID's was intended as a new form of control, to single people out for arrest and to register who had paid taxes. All in all, this campaign, which from the beginning elicited resistance from Gaza residents, reminds one of the abhorrent pass system used by the apartheid regime in South Africa to control the movement and lives of Black citizens of the country.

In Ramallah, El Bireh, Beit Sahour, Qalqilya, Tulkarm and other places, Israeli soldiers arrived before dawn, sealed off the towns and embarked on

house-to-house searches, confiscating ID cards and summoning residents to a central location to be presented with bills for overdue taxes and future estimates. Those who resisted had belongings confiscated and, in some cases, their businesses shut down. The general response was for Palestinians to close their shops themselves in protest, and clashes often ensued between the masses and the Israeli soldiers. Attacks were staged on institutions of the occupation, such as the July 5th attack on the cars of Israeli customs officials in Tulkarm, and the July 11th burning of the Ramallah traffic department.

The tax sweeps were connected to the Zionists' overall war against Palesti-

nian self-sufficiency and civil disobedience. The calls of the United National Leadership in July emphasized storing supplies, breaking blockades to assist besieged villages and camps, voluntary work, building cooperatives, etc., as prerequisites for moving to more extensive civil disobedience.

Beit Sahour residents were among the many Palestinians persecuted for their self-sufficiency and civil disobedience. The village had become a model for home gardening, raising poultry, organizing the distribution of provisions and alternative, popular education for the children. Intense confrontations started with the July 7th tax sweep where Zionist brutality led to widespread arrests. Hundreds of residents marched to the municipal building, shouting, «This is not our government; we don't want the Israeli identity cards.» Over a thousand turned in their ID's to the deputy mayor.

As punishment, Beit Sahour was placed under curfew for ten days. «At the beginning of the curfew it was announced that the curfew would last until the crops were destroyed or, failing that, fields would be bulldozed. People attempting to irrigate or work in backyard gardens were shot at. While the threat to bulldoze was not carried out, the lifting of the curfew came after one crop had been ruined» (Database Project on Palestinian Human Rights). About 200 people were arrested during the curfew, including eight members of the popular committee, who were placed under six-month administrative detention. One of those detained was a Bethlehem University professor who had responded to the United National Leadership's call for self-sufficiency by selling seedlings to his fellow citizens for their home gardens. Even before his arrest, he had been forced to stop this little enterprise due to Zionist harassment.

However, Beit Sahour was not passified by this repression any more than the uprising will dwindle due to the banning of the popular committees. Clashes between the masses and the occupation troops continued in the ensuing days, intensifying after a town youth was killed by a building block which 'fell' on his head from the roof of an Israeli lookout post.

ECONOMIC WARFARE

Israeli economic sanctions took many forms in an attempt to under-

DETAINING CHILDREN

On May 2nd, *Hadashot* reported the opening of a «new» detention center for children from nine to sixteen years of age, to be called Ofra. However, the newspaper noted that the building in question already houses dozens of detainees who are sentenced to a maximum of five months, and were transferred to Ofra from Ansar III in the Negev. On May 19th, *Maariv* reported the closure of the center by the military authorities, noting that the closure seemed related to the eyewitness reports about youth from Gadna (Zionist paramilitary organization) being brought in to beat the detainees whose number was put at 281. According to *Maariv*, some are being set free, while others will be transferred to other prisons.

A few days before, *Hadashot* had reported that about 60 Gadna youth were sent to Ofra. One of them gave the following testimony: «We were told that prisoners from Judea-Samaria (West Bank) and Gaza were in this camp. One morning, as we went to work, we saw three blindfolded prisoners who were tied hand and feet. We asked the soldier with us if we could beat them without getting into trouble. 'Why not?' was his answer. In the evening after dinner... we went back to the place and I recognized one of the prisoners I had seen in the morning. I tore off his blindfold and hit him in the face. He begged not to be beaten but I took a club and threw it at his head.» The Gadna youth related that another prisoner had started to shout, and «I

went mad, took an iron bar and beat him until he was only a bundle of flesh and bones. I heard afterwards that he had been hospitalized and put into a cast. While I was hitting them, I felt a great pleasure; had I had a gun, I would have killed them, not because they did anything to me, but because they are harming the state so much.»

Since this type of brutal beating has been common since the uprising began and is officially sanctioned by the Israeli leadership, one can doubt whether the reported closure of Ofra has any meaning, or even why it was closed. Perhaps it was due to illusions that the «moral fiber» of the Israeli military can be protected by ending some of the most sordid examples, after they have been publicly exposed.

Another horror center for youth is operating at Dhahariya. As reported in *Haaretz* on June 15th, the Organization for Imprisoned Arab Children denounced the conditions in this center which houses Palestinians aged 12 to 18. As an example, 35 youth are kept in a 10 x 6 meter room where it is dark, cold and full of stench. Families are not given any information about their children.

In Gaza, parents have to pay bail equivalent to \$3,000 to get children out of jail. If the child is arrested again, this sum will be kept by the occupation authorities.

source: *Eurabia* (French), July-August 1988