

After the fatal shooting of two Ansar III detainees, the International Committee of the Red Cross, on August 18th, protested to 'Israel' that detention of West Bank and Gaza Strip residents at Ketziot violated international humanitarian law. The next day, the ICRC again called on 'Israel' to end «grave and repeated breaches of the 4th Geneva Convention,» referring in particular to the 29 new expulsion orders issued, and noting its past protest of Israeli violations, including the destruction or walling-up of houses, bans on travel and growing crops, and

restrictions of economic activity (AP, August 22nd).

EXPULSIONS

Without underestimating the horror of other Israeli repressive measures, one can term expulsion the most cruel next to outright death, because it means driving Palestinians permanently from their homeland. Expulsion, particularly when practiced so extensively as during the uprising, is closely tied to the idea of «population transfer» - an option which has come under renewed discussion in the Zionist state over the last

few years. In this light, one can see each expulsion as a test balloon for the «final solution,» whereby Palestinians would be driven across the borders en masse, as happened in earlier wars, in what could only be termed attempted genocide.

Faced with a whole people in uprising, the Zionist authorities mistakenly thought they could quell «the disturbances» by expelling persons they singled out as instigators. As a result, four Palestinians were expelled on January 13th, eight on April 11th, eight on April 19th, one on June 13th, eight on August 1st, and four on August 18th, making a total of 33 recent expulsions, added to the thousands over the years of occupation. Among those expelled are ex-political prisoners, lawyers, journalists, trade unionists and student council members - showing that the Zionist authorities want to rid Palestine of activists. While some were accused of membership in revolutionary organizations, others are like the six citizens of Beita, expelled April 19th, because they happened to live in a village which was encroached upon by Zionist settlers.

The Zionist state has persisted in this policy despite international condemnation as was expressed in the January UN Security Council resolution, when even the US administration did not see fit to protect its «strategic asset» with the veto. A new element was introduced after the issuing of 25 new expulsion orders on August 18th, in what could be the large single case since the mass expulsions from the Gaza Strip in the early seventies. It was reported that on August 22nd, John Whitehead, US deputy secretary of state, warned Israeli leaders from carrying out these orders «or damage to our bilateral relations will occur.» Having grown accustomed to US administrations issuing critical statements, all the while funding Israeli aggression, as happened during the 1982 invasion of Lebanon, one retains some scepticism that these threats will be followed up. However, it may be that the US administration sees the need for protecting 'Israel' in a new way, because with the media coverage of Israeli atrocities, there is a beginning awareness in the American public of what their tax dollars are going for. It is in US imperialism's interests to clean up the Israeli image, in order not to have problems with the funding of its prime base in the strategic Middle East.

Letter from Ansar III

The following letter was smuggled out of the Ansar Three camp in May, written on toilet paper.

To all people of conscience:

To all defenders of human rights:

We call upon you to rescue us from the Camp of Slow Death, Ansar Three, the Negev

We, the thousands of Palestinian prisoners in Ansar Three, have been detained without any judicial formalities whatsoever. We have not even been told the charges which have been levelled against us. We are kept in inhuman desert conditions where the daytime temperature reaches 45 C degrees and drops below zero at night, in an area teeming with lizards, insects and rats.

But this hardship is nothing compared with the cruelty and arbitrary brutality of the soldiers. A physical and mental war is being conducted against us through starvation, thirst, humiliation and physical and psychological torture. Their behaviour breaks all international conventions governing the treatment of prisoners, and reflects a lack of even the most basic moral and human values.

We are forced to keep our tents open from 5 am to midnight, exposed to the searing heat of the sun and the sandstorms of the desert. Two or three times a day we are made to sit outside under the scorching sun, for periods of up to half an hour, under the muzzles of our captors' guns.

Water is scarce, and is cut off for many hours each day. There is barely enough for drinking, washing, and twice-monthly baths in this suffocating heat. We have only one change of clothing, and we are forbidden to receive clothes or other necessities from our families. Neither are we provided with items for washing clothes.

Our health is deteriorating and we are suffering physical deterioration and disease; health care is virtually nonexistent.

In addition we are totally isolated; our families are not allowed to visit us, we are not allowed to send or receive letters, and we are forbidden radios, newspapers, magazines, books, writing paper and pencils.

We are being subjected to punitive measures which aim to crush our human spirit and deny our social being. We are not even given those rights contained in the law of administrative detention.

We call upon you to stand by us, and to call for an end to the organized violence and humiliation which is leading us to a slow death. The peace and justice which the people of the Holy Land long for is being strangled in this evil place.

We urge you to organize humanitarian groups to visit this murderous detention center, and to work for its closure.

We call upon you to stand on the side of humanity

May the world hear our voice.