

«The Blackest Days of My Life»

Testimony of a Survivor of a Phalangist Prison

The International Federation of the Rights of Man based in Paris has compiled statistics and taken testimonies of Lebanese and Palestinians who have been abducted by the Phalange and Lebanese Army in the wake of the Sabra-Shatila massacre in October, 1982. Karim X was detained by the Phalange from September 26, 1983, until March 2, 1984. His testimony was published in Le Monde on July 3, 1984:

While visiting a sick friend in Baabda, a southeastern suburb of Beirut, I was unable to return to my home in West Beirut due to the fighting which worsened on that day. After a month of staying in the suburb, two Phalangist militiamen came to take me to the Phalangist general headquarters in Hadath. I was subjected to numerous forms of torture. The militiamen blindfolded me and bound my hands. At first they began to beat me all over my body with their fists. They continued to beat me with whips and threw boiling water on me until I lost consciousness for almost half an hour. When I regained consciousness they forced me to walk on barbs and broken glass. Next they put me in the trunk of a car and took me

to the Phalangist security headquarters in Karantina. I was not well at all and was not allowed to get out of the trunk of the car.

I was put in isolation and subjected to interrogation that lasted for 9 days. These were certainly the blackest days of my life. Then I was transferred to another tiny cell which held 15 other persons. We were not allowed to leave the cell except to take a cold bath for only one minute. We were only fed once a day and received only 2 liters of water for a 24 hour period.

Two and a half months later, a new inmate named Farid was introduced into the cell, a young person who was almost paralyzed. He was gravely ill and unable to eat. Our protests forced the guards to bring him to a doctor, but we did not escape their whips after our protest. They brought Farid back to the cell in a worse condition than when he left. We were categorically forbidden to give him anything to drink even though water was the only thing that he could ingest. Our incessant protests could not bend the cruelty of the guards and he died before our eyes.

In preparation for a visit by the International Committee of the Red Cross, they took us to Adonis in a large truck flanked by four jeeps. Our new cell was in a basement near a convent. Four

young bearded men were present in the basement when we arrived, waiting their turn to be presented to the ICRC representatives. We could hear their moaning voices without knowing what kind of state they were in. Abu Michel, the head of the prison, made us shave our beards and cut our hair. For the first time since our detention, we were allowed to take a bath with warm water and soap. We also received cigarettes.

Then Abu Michel gave us orders to furnish testimony favorable to the Lebanese Forces under the pain of death. After assuring us that these orders would be executed, he sent us to see the two ICRC representatives whom we subsequently discovered were imposters. The next day the real representatives arrived. They were assisted by Dr. Hayatem who was accompanied by a young woman. The visit took place in the presence of a Phalangist. The doctor asked us about the case of Farid, but we were afraid to respond openly and only said that he died after «falling down some stairs». We engaged in a superficial conversation with the doctor concerning the conditions of our detention. We assured him that we had arrived at Karantina the day before where the conditions had improved (this was not the case at all).

The doctor understood that we were lying to him. We had all stated that we had not been subjected to torture. With this, the ICRC delegates left and we were taken again to Karantina the next day.

many of them Palestinians, had been taken in for interrogation.» Most of the men arrested in the Lebanese Army sweep of Beirut have never been heard of since.

In 1983, the kidnappings in West Beirut continued and reached a peak in the months just prior to the liberation of West Beirut in February 1984. The victims included many Lebanese patriots abducted by Phalangists. This wave of disappearances forever shattered fascist propaganda contentions that Palestinians were to blame for insecurity in Beirut.

On July 2, 1984, the International Federation for the Rights of Man held a press conference in Paris to publicize the plight of the disappeared in Lebanon. The organization acts as a clearing-house for collating statistics on the missing, and representatives stated that 2,011 Palestinians and Lebanese are

currently missing due to abduction by the Israeli-backed Phalangist militia. More than 1,000 others are still missing after the Lebanese Army sweep of West Beirut. By comparison, the Federation said that the Shiite Amal Movement was thought to be holding 47 Phalangist combatants and that the Druze Progressive Socialist Party of Walid Jumblatt was thought to be holding only «several dozen Christian militiamen». Jumblatt stated at the end of July that none of the disappeared from the mountain war in the Shouf last winter are still alive due to the intensity of the combat.

With 6,000 West Beirutis killed in the 1982 Israeli siege, 3,000 killed in the Sabra-Shatila massacre, and thousands more disappeared and wounded during the past two years of continuous war against West Beirut, there is hardly a family in the national areas which has not lost a member or now has someone

disabled. This then forms the base for the movement of the Families of the Disappeared.

No political reconciliation without the guilty brought to justice

The Families of the Disappeared escalated their protest movement in July, just as the government of Prime Minister Karami announced the implementation of a new security plan in Beirut which sought to abolish the green line dividing fascist and leftist controlled areas of the city, opening all crossing points between the two sectors and opening the port and airport. The government was set to go ahead with the plan while totally ignoring the culpability of the Phalange for the massive destruction wrought in West Beirut and the southern suburbs since the 1982 Israeli invasion. Not surprisingly, the Amin