

shape than that we were. We answered that we survived on our morale and collective solidarity.

Prisoners Fight Back

In the first years, the guards' violence was rampant. I remember how in Askelon a prisoner could be beaten for any or no reason. In 1971, a guard kicked a blind prisoner to wake him up. Two comrades were provoked to insult the guard and push him out of the cell. Then other guards came with sticks and tear gas; they took the two comrades and beat them in the courtyard. This led other prisoners to beat on their cell doors and shout protests and slogans of resistance. Two hours later, 400 guards and soldiers were called in to calm the disturbance, armed with tear gas and clubs. They beat every prisoner, systematically, cell by cell.

The prisoners began to defend themselves against the guards' violence, first spontaneously, then collectively. After real clashes with the guards, there were orders not to beat a prisoner in the presence of others. Of course, the prisoners can never win this battle, but they can keep the situation explosive for the prison authorities. Today, the prison authorities are more selective; they choose the target and circumstances. It would take hundreds of guards to beat all the prisoners, and this elicits revolt. Now they usually single out the most militant; beatings usually occur in solitary cells or in the trucks used for transferring the prisoners, blindfolded and chained. Sometimes a whole group of prisoners are taken to another prison to be beaten. This practice started after prisoners later attacked the guard who had beaten them. In 1975, after a protest in Bir Sheeba, those who had articulated the prisoners' demands to the administration were taken for a 'ride'. For five hours, they were driven around South Palestine, stopped at kibbutzim and beaten. The two prisoners, who were murdered on the 7th day of the 1980 hunger strike in Nafha, died from being beaten in the attempt to force-feed them; nine others were injured and had to be hospitalized. Beating is still one of the most used disciplinary measures, especially against the most active.



«Operation Galilee»

PFLP-General Command skillfully conducted protracted negotiations which forced the Israelis to free 1150 political prisoners in exchange for 3 captured Israeli soldiers.

How was the mood among the political prisoners when you entered the jails?

It was that of the Palestinian resistance in general at the time: full of patriotism and romantic ideas of heroism. People were very optimistic; they did not think they would stay long in prison, for the revolution would soon be victorious. Of course, there was also a sense of disappointment because of being deprived of freedom of action, but everyone felt they would have another chance. Political education was rather low, though there was great consciousness of the necessity of fighting the enemy and liberating our land.

There were some prisoners with long political and organizational experience. In the first years, they contributed a lot to raise the need for more political knowledge. This would have happened anyway, for the political prisoners felt their shortcomings and would have eventually been motivated by their own experience, but the process was quicker because of these vanguards.

«Operation Galilee» Liberated prisoners welcomed in the Bekaa Valley, Lebanon.

