

Release all Palestinian & Lebanese political prisoners



**PALESTINE
SOLIDARITY
CAMPAIGN**

**NO TO ISRAELI
CONCENTRATION CAMPS**

No to Israeli Concentration Camps Release all Palestinian and Lebanese Political Prisoners

When Israel invaded the Lebanon in June 1982, using the latest and the most sophisticated US weapons, the human cost was devastating for such a small country. An estimated 20,000 people died and more than 100,000 were made homeless. Over 80 percent of the casualties were civilians, Lebanese and Palestinians, and at least 6,000 children were orphaned.

As a result of the invasion, Israel still occupies a large part of Lebanon where their war crimes continue to be committed.

ANSAR CONCENTRATION CAMP

This Israeli concentration camp is situated in the South of Lebanon, on a bleak hillside near the town of Nabatiyeh. According to the latest figures released by the International Committee of the Red Cross, the number of prisoners at the concentration camp is 5,500. But this figure fluctuates and at one time it has reached the 9,000 mark.

•Description

The camp was hastily constructed at the beginning of the invasion on a site covering more than 20 acres of confiscated land containing a four-mile perimeter fence. On the 3rd October the London based Daily Telegraph gave the following description of the place:

'watchtowers with searchlights and sandbagged machine-gun posts are positioned at 50 yards intervals around the perimeter fence marked with red warning signs for mines.'

Inside the camp the prisoners are held in US made tents housing 25 prisoners each.

•Conditions

Describing conditions at the camp as 'catastrophic' a senior Red Cross official told the Sunday Times on the 3rd October that the camp is 'overcrowded, there is no proper drainage or sanitation.' One Israeli relieved from his duties at the camp had the following to say 'It was good to get away from the camp, from the human mass of "the ones brought in", not to hear the screams of pain from the men under interrogation.' (reported in the Israeli newspaper Ha'aretz of 5 November)

Prisoners at the camp have been indiscriminately shot at, tortured and have faced long hours of brutal interrogation, while at the same time food and medical attention has been totally inadequate. One prisoner reported that he had been given only two small meals during 4 days of interrogation. While a doctor, who was detained at Ansar, stated that only

ten aspirin tablets were distributed every four days to meet the needs of 500 prisoners, many of them wounded, ill and suffering from the results of torture.

•Status of the prisoners

Israel, signatory of the 1949 Geneva Convention, is refusing to recognise the 5,500 detainees of the Ansar prison camp as Prisoners of War, on the grounds that this would mean indirect recognition of the PLO. On 17th September, *The Economist* commented on the Israeli argument as follows: 'Israel seems to believe that admitting that it holds Palestinian POWs would be tantamount to recognising the PLO. This is nonsense. The Geneva convention of 1949 stipulates that prisoners captured in war must be treated as POWs whether they come from a formal army, an organised militia or are simply civilians resisting an invading army, which is what many of the Palestinians were. There is nothing in the convention linking POWs to a recognised state.'

have spoken out that torture and murder is routine — both in Ansar and in the prison camps in Israel and other interrogation centres in South Lebanon.

The Red Cross has secured the right to visit Al Ansar camp in South Lebanon but nowhere else. During the war, Israeli forces conducted massive 'mopping-up' operations leading to the detention, deportation and 'disappearance' of thousands of Lebanese and Palestinians. These mass arrests, contrary to the Geneva Convention continue today. The testimony before the House Foreign Affairs sub-committee in Washington of Christopher Giannou, a Canadian doctor arrested by the Israelis in Sidon, provides insight into the conditions of the detention camps and the treatment accorded to Lebanese and Palestinian captives:

'I have been a witness to men being taken prisoner upon the denunciation of hooded collaborators, neither accuser nor ac-

cusations ever being made known to us. The entire male population of Sidon which had crossed Israeli lines to get out of the zone of hostilities was herded onto the beach and then taken one by one, and paraded past three parked jeeps. In each jeep sat a man wearing a hood with the eyes punched out or a blanket wrapped around him to cover his face, an Israeli soldier sitting next to each one. As the men paraded past, a number of them would be singled out, pulled from the line, a large "X" or something in Hebrew written on their backs and then placed against a wall. In this way, there were 4,000 to 5,000 arrested including myself, two staff of the Palestine Red Crescent Society, the Palestinian Red Cross (PRCS) in Sidon. I later learned that the same situation prevailed in Tyre, and that the PRCS staff there suffered a similar fate ...

'After being taken into custody, the prisoners were led to a convent school and placed there in the schoolyard. There were 500 to 600 prisoners at any one time in the yard, new groups of prisoners being continuously brought in and others being taken out. The conditions of detention were difficult; hands bound, the stifling heat, food and water in short supply. Prisoners would be taken into one of three classrooms used

for interrogations, I could hear blows struck in the next room and saw the prisoner as he left; his face was puffed up, eyes blackened and blood trickled from his mouth. The scene in the schoolyard, however, was one of savage and indiscriminate beatings of the prisoners by the forty Israeli guards. A prisoner would call out for water and be told that there was none. When he continued to call out, he would be insulted and then a guard would wade into the crowd and start to beat him. The physical abuse ranged from simple punching and kicking to beatings with wooden sticks, plastic hose or even a bunch of pieces of rope with nuts and bolts tied to the ends; a sort of modern cat-o-nine-tails.'

Another testimony from the Norwegian doctor, Oyvind Mollen tells the following horrifying stories:

'To mention the cases I can remember. I am not sure if it was the first or the second day of my being kept at this court yard in Sidon, five prisoners were taken — all of them had their hands tied behind and were blindfolded. They were brought and lined-up about 3 metres away from me. They were accompanied by a well-built guard, a soldier. The guard drove his knee with

full strength in the groin of the first prisoner, then he hit him with his hand on the neck. The prisoner fell down to the ground. Then he kicked him with his boots in the stomach and then he pushed him into the group of the other prisoners. He did the same, with small variations, to all of the other five prisoners.

Another case, an old man, I guess about 60 years. He was more or less desperate. I don't know if it was because of the whole situation, the lack of water, the hot weather, or what. He tried to kick with his boots an Israeli soldier. Immediately four or five soldiers surrounded him and started to beat him — with some of these weapons that I mentioned — on the head, the stomach, all over the body and they also kicked him with their boots. I guess this went on for 10 minutes, I am not sure. When you see such things it seems to you that it is going on for a long time. After they finished beating him, they tied his hands and then tied them to his ankles. They left him in the sun and I do not remember for how long he lay there. But later on when they were going to interrogate me, I saw him in the corner of this court yard. I am not a physician, but for me he seemed to be dead. He lay together with three other prisoners and they also seemed to be dead — at least from the way they were piled. I also want to mention that the whole court yard was exposed to the sun from early morning to late in the evening.

Another case is that of Dr Nabil, who worked for the Palestine Red Crescent and also had his private practice in Ain El-Helweh. He was also taken by the Israelis and I saw him at the court yard. I heard that he was badly beaten. I saw that he had a rope around his neck and they dragged him around just like a dog. He was very badly treated. He was very tired. At that moment I saw him very weak. This month I got a letter from Dr Francis, a Belgian physician who was with us in which he says that he heard from a Palestinian in Brussels that Dr Nabil died in an Israeli prison.'

NEW MASSACRE

**NEW ISRAELI MASSACRE IN SOUTH LEBANON
PALESTINIAN SOURCES SAID IN DAMASCUS YESTERDAY THAT THE ZIONIST ENEMY COMMITTED A NEW MASSACRE AGAINST PALESTINIAN PRISONERS IN THE ANSAR CAMP SOUTH LEBANON. THEY SAID THAT A LEBANESE FARMER FROM THE VILLAGE ANSAR HAS DISCOVERED THREE DAYS AGO A NEW CEMETARY WITH 15 CORPSES OF YOUNG PEOPLE WHO WERE IN ANSAR CAMP. THEY ADDED THAT THE OCCUPYING AUTHORITIES TRY THEIR BEST TO AVOID THE NEWS OF THIS CEMETARY FROM SPREADING. SO THEY HAVE ARRESTED THE MENTIONED LEBANESE LABOURER.**

DAMASCUS 21st JANUARY 1983

•Testimonies

Most of the detainees arrive in Ansar after initial interrogation in detention camps in Israel or elsewhere in Lebanon. A trickle of prisoners have been released, but more constantly arrive. Ansar's population — two thirds Palestinians and one third Lebanese — changes little. Few of those released have been willing to relate their experiences. They have been explicitly warned by Israeli troops that to do so will invite rearrest and reprisals against their families. It is nevertheless clear from the testimony of those who

ANSAR CONCENTRATION CAMP



The P.S.C. demands the immediate release of all Palestinian and Lebanese Political Prisoners.

JOIN THE MONTH OF ACTION for the release of the prisoners.

Support the hunger strike and vigil at St Martins-in-the-Fields, Trafalgar Sq., on Feb 18th from 6pm until Feb 20th, 9am.

There will also be a Rally on March 18th at Conway Hall, 7pm.

Contact: Palestine Solidarity Campaign
BM P.S.A.
London WC1N 3RXY

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