

ANSAR III:

The Camp of Slow Death



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Friends of Palestinian Prisoners

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Cover Illustration: Drawing done by anonymous West bank artist and former detainee from Ansar III.

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Introduction

It is hard to imagine the devastation experienced by Palestinian families who are awakened in the middle of the night by Israeli soldiers bursting into their homes to kidnap a brother, daughter, son, father or some times mother. The detained are hauled off into the darkness, often beaten on the way, and spend the following uncertain days and weeks in various interrogation centers, prisons and military compounds. There are no charges presented, no Carmen-Miranda rights read to them. There are also no answers given to the anxious relatives who wait, day in and day out, in front of the gates of those centers, searching for the whereabouts of their loved ones.

After weeks of searching, they may receive word that the person in question has been sent to Ansar III detention center—which is a barbed wire compound in the heart of the Negev desert. Israeli officials are careful to use this term ‘detention center’ and to stress the distinctions between this prison and a concentration camp.

The term concentration camp conjures up horrific images from the past when entire populations were imprisoned and even exterminated. Several years ago, the ratio of the Palestinians in the occupied territories who had passed through Israeli prisons was one in every five. In one year, since the Intifada began, more than 25,000 Palestinians have been arrested. At this moment, nearly every family has one or more of its members in prison.

The establishment and maintenance of prison camps—of which Ansar is but one—is a clear violation of the Geneva conventions that were signed by Israel and were written to protect civilian populations under occupation. Israeli occupation authorities retain only a dim memory of those conventions as the toll of arrests continues to rise week by week, and new prison camps are opened while schools remain closed.

For the Palestinian, dragged from his home without explanation and imprisoned in Ansar III, without charge or trial, the delicate distinction between the terms ‘detention center’ and ‘concentration camp’ hold little meaning.

Janet Jubran

Friends of Palestinian Prisoners

Ansar III Prison Camp:

The sand sifts into everything; the clothes, the blankets, the food and water. Soaring temperatures by day and the desert cold at night make living and sleeping on the ground an agony. Days creep by. There are no watches; no way to tell the time except by the burning sun's passage across the sky. And the waiting and uncertainty are more deadly than the lack of water or the filth from the latrines. 3,500 souls wait. Most of them were never told why they are here or when they will leave.

The factors that govern their lives are more basic than political analyses:

'Will there be enough water to drink today?'

'Will it be possible to bathe this month?'

'Whose turn is it today to fry in the solitary cell—a windowless metal coffin?'

'Whose turn is it to be interrogated?'

How many hours will we sit under the desert sun during the head count?'

The isolation of Ansar III, located in a remote section of the Negev desert, provides a convenient outlet for the sadistic tendencies of the Israeli guards. There are no television cameras here to record the breaking of bones. There are only scorpions, snakes and flies and the eyes of 3,500 Palestinians—who record everything, who remember everything.

* * *

Why Ansar III?

Ansar III, Ketsiot, as it is known by the Israelis, was opened March 22—25, 1988, but it is not a new story. In order to understand why Ansar III exists, one has to look back to June, 1982.

When Israeli forces invaded Lebanon and moved north to besiege Beirut, they began sweeping through towns, villages and refugee camps, rounding up all males between the ages of 14 and 60. The official excuse given was that they were arresting PLO fighters, but the high percentage of doctors, lawyers, teachers, civil servants and students among the detainees disproved this claim. The intention was clearly to dismantle the very infrastructure of Palestinian society and nationalist expression by eliminating some of its most vital elements. Depriving the population of its males meant the dismemberment of each family.

The tens of thousands of detainees were held in a large concentration camp in South Lebanon, called Ansar. Conditions in this prison were much the same as those prevailing in Ansar III today: barbed wire, soldiers with machine guns and tanks, opening fire with little or no provocation, persistent brutalization of the detainees, horrid sanitation facilities, virtually no medical care and inadequate food and water supplies. An Israeli soldier, Dr. Portnoy, accurately summed up Ansar as "a concentration camp not fit for animals to live in."

By the time a prisoner exchange was effected, some eighteen months later, the Ansar detainees had turned the situation around. They organized themselves and confronted their Israeli guards until the latter were too intimidated to enter the compound.

Israel did not learn the lesson from its failed experiment in population control however, and in 1986 Ansar II prison camp was opened in Gaza.

The detainees of Ansar II were mainly Palestinian boys from Gaza between the ages of 13-20, who were rounded up in mass raids and held for varying periods in the prison as a means of collective punishment.

In its special report on Ansar II, the Data Base Project described the harsh conditions experienced by these youths.

"... excess prisoners were kept outside, then moved into rooms with armed soldiers guarding 24 hours per day inside and the door kept open. Prisoners could not walk, talk to one another or eat without permission. Army surveillance was constant. They could not wash or even take a drink of water. They were taken only once a day to the outside toilets—holes dug in the open sand—where they were watched under gunpoint."

A former guard at Ansar II recounts a particularly brutal occasion in the prison when Israeli soldiers avenged themselves upon the detainees:

"They beat up everybody and tortured the prisoners. Before the situation was cleaned up, other people who did not belong there joined them and used the occasion for a celebration of torture."

—Davar, 16 January, 1987.

Ansar II remains open.



The New York Times/June 3, 1988

Map of Ansar III (Ketziot)

What Is Ansar III (Ketsiot)?

"It is a barbed wire enclosure, within which tents have been planted in endless rows. The tents, one almost on top of the other, are filled to overflow with detainees, who spend their days stretched out on their wooden bunks. The only piece of greenery that meets the eye is in the vicinity of prison headquarters. The detainees, who have lost all semblance of individual identity, are kept incommunicado from the outside world, and in enforced idleness. They are cut off from everything but the here and now."

—Tamar Peleg, an attorney for the Association for Civil Rights in Israel, who visited Ansar III in March and April, 1988.

Located in the heart of a desert, Ansar III presents a challenge of survival for prisoners that is further compounded by the negligent and even deliberate abusiveness of the Israeli authorities. Restrictions such as refusing to allow the detainees to lower the flaps of their tents during the day, not permitting them to cover their heads during the count while they sit under the intense desert sun or not allowing them to remove their shirts, restricting the use of water, bathrooms and showers, border on the sadistic.

Living Conditions: Lack of Water, Sufficient Clothing and Sanitation

Bathroom facilities are primitive and insufficient for the needs of 3,500 prisoners. The toilets are mere holes dug into the ground, exposed to the open air and swarming with insects. Use of them is restricted. At night, the prisoners are forced to use buckets in their tents. Sanitation is totally non-existent.

"Sanitary facilities are beneath contempt and constitute a health hazard, according to the affidavit of Dr. Abdul Azziz al-Rantisi, a medical doctor and an administrative detainee. In the month since he has been in prison, the outhouses have been drained only once. "They are now full and when we use them, they soil our clothes," he declared in his affidavit. I myself saw the

state of these facilities and can confirm his statement."

—Tamar Peleg

There is not enough water to drink or to cleanse themselves. This situation has produced an outbreak of skin diseases and other infectious diseases.

Prisoners have complained about the fact they are not provided with a change of clothing and the facilities for washing the clothes they do have are extremely limited.

"They wear the uniform provided to them when they were arrested. Even those who have been detained for over a month have yet to change their clothes—or underwear. Not even once. Taking off their clothes is prohibited, but there is a secret roster of undressers, who wash their clothes in drinking water. And there also isn't enough water."

—Avi Katzman, Koteret Rashit, 20 April 1988.

A serious problem exists with regards to personal hygiene.

"For about two and a half months after its opening the prison authorities did not provide extra underwear. As family visits were not taking place, some detainees had to remain in the same underwear for periods as long as two months. This problem became less acute only in May through June, when the ICRC and lawyers were permitted to provide some underwear for the detainees. Since mid-July this process has been stopped."

—Al Haq report on Ansar III

On 17 and 18 July, the prisoners went on a two day hunger strike. One of their five demands was allowing the delivery of clothes, especially underwear. Repeated appeals for basic items have been issued by the detainees. The prison authorities' refusal to allow ICRC or family packages with clothing is unnecessarily cruel, considering the harsh environment in which the detainees live.

Several of the detained doctors have repeatedly appealed to the prison authorities about the health situation in Ansar III, which is directly linked to the deleterious sanitation facilities.

"Dr, Ibrahim Salqan, who is detained at Ansar III, confirmed that the health situation is deteriorating. He reported that many detainees are suffering from skin diseases, such as scabies, and stomach diseases, due to the quality of the food and the terri-

ble hygienic conditions of storage and serving."

—News From Within, newsletter of the Alternative Information Center, 10 May 1988.

In his affidavit, taken by the Jerusalem based Database Project, on 13 August 1988, former Ansar III detainee, Kamal Abdel Ghazaq al-Rifati confirmed *"They use suction machines to clean the excrement only when the toilets are so overflowing that there is no human possibility of using them. Prisoners forced to use them anyway come out covered in excrement. Only at this point do they clean them. The stench coming from the toilets, especially at night, is disgusting."*

It is not difficult to surmise why the number of cases of skin diseases have reached serious proportions within the prison population.

Health Conditions

Further complicating the health situation in Ansar III is the number of prisoners with previously existing medical problems who are not provided any treatment. There are prisoners suffering from diabetes, heart disease, kidney problems, mental disorders, ulcers and cancer. Other Palestinian detainees imprisoned in Ansar III are wounded, some of them were arrested directly from hospital beds, suffering from broken limbs and gunshot wounds. Regardless of the severity of their ailments, prisoners are treated only with acomol (an aspirin equivalent) or tranquilizers. Detainees are transported to hospitals only when they are near death.

The poor quality of food has greatly contributed to the declining health situation.

"On April 19 it was learnt that about 200 prisoners in Ansar III were suffering from stomach diseases after eating rotten cheese and margarine. Hadashot (April 25) quotes 'military sources at Ansar III', who tell of dozens of cases of food poisoning from rotten food, and of 15 cases of dehydration due to lack of drinking water. In a letter which the administrative detainees sent to the commander of Ansar III, Colonel Tsemach (Hadashot April 19), they complained that 'we are being given

worm-ridden matza because there is not enough bread.' They also complain that the toilets are blocked and flooded with excreta, so that it is impossible to use them.'"

—News From Within, 10 May 1988.

Another incident of mass food poisoning occurred on 26 June, when 22 detainees from section B were stricken after eating tinned meat. Former prisoner Kamal Abdel Ghazaq al-Rifati reports *"I personally never got fish to eat except for one can of sardines, which was divided among three prisoners. The expiration date written on the can was 1984. . ."* He goes on to say that none of the tinned meat given to the prisoners had expiration dates more recent than 1985 and the margarine dated back to 1982. After the second incident of poisoning, the prisoners refused to eat any tinned food offered to them.

Collective Punishment and Abuse

Abuse, humiliation and harassment are part of the daily fare of Ansar III prisoners.

"A prisoner who has been in the camp more than a month complained that there had been three cases of collective punishment. Prisoners had to get down on their knees, lower their heads and remain in that position all through the cold night. Anyone raising his head was cursed and beaten."

—Tamar Peleg.

Even the daily head counts are used as occasions for humiliation by the guards. The practice in itself is merely designed as a humiliation, since escape from Ansar III into the desert is unlikely. Counting takes place three times a day and can drag on for more than an hour as each is compelled to undergo a ritual of jumping up, turning around and calling out his number. The other prisoners must wait under the desert sun until the entire process is completed. Frequently, guards extend the counting period and search the tents and destroy the meager possessions of the prisoners. It is not uncommon for detainees to faint from sunstroke during the noonday count.

During the count a rigorous adherence to rules and conformity must be preserved. Failure to comply may mean the entire prison

camp would be forced to endure the sun for an additional hour. Worse yet, they could be beaten or dragged off to solitary confinement cells.

Al-Rifati describes the procedures thus. *"Anyone who moves or even tries to get rid of a fly is punished by standing in the sun for four hours. Sometimes the whole group is punished. During the count the soldiers curse us and beat us, calling us names like lunatics, cowards and donkeys. At night it is forbidden to go out to the toilet, only after begging and humiliating ourselves are we permitted."*

One of the few western journalists allowed to visit Ansar III on 2 June 1988, Glenn Frankel of the Washington Post revealed that *"An Israeli reservist who did not give his name, sought out this correspondent during today's visit and alleged that beatings occurred regularly."*

"If someone talks back or has his shirt unbuttoned, they'll hit you," said the guard, who said he had been serving at the camp for nearly two weeks. 'They take them into the shower room and beat them, not with instruments but with their hands and feet. It's just done out of sadism—people are bored.'"

The beatings are not only arbitrary and common practice among the guards, but they are encouraged by the example set by the Israeli camp commander himself. Col. Tsemach was witnessed personally beating prisoners during the Edi al Adha feast. On 16 August, during a clash, he pulled out his pistol and shot a prisoner to death at close range.

The most frequently used method of punishment is however, the solitary cell; a prefabricated corrugated metal box, similar to a stand-up coffin, which has the effect of becoming like a toaster oven under the intense desert sun.

"The zinzanis (cells) are small and unbearably hot and smell from uncleared excrement. The prisoners are handcuffed or bound hand and foot during the time they are in isolation."

—Al-Haq

Former prisoners recall that not one day passed when the isolation cell was not full. The dimensions of these boxes are two square meters. At times twenty people are crammed into their confines at once.

Another form of punishment is cutting the water supply for several hours. The seriousness of this abusive practice cannot be overly stressed when one considers how dependent the prisoners in a desert detention center are on water for their very lives.

The severity of these punishments is not even as disturbing to the prisoners psychologically as the arbitrariness of the guards in administering them. No explanations are given for punishment. The prisoners are completely subject to the whims and moods of their guards.

On several occasions, the guards have attacked the prisoners with tear gas and live ammunition. During the Eid al Fitr, Palestinian detainees were gassed for praying too loudly. On 16 August, two prisoners were killed and a number wounded. One of the fatalities died because medical treatment was not provided in time.

Administrative Detention

Imprisonment in Ansar III, located in a remote section of the Negev Desert, hundreds of miles away from their families, is in itself a severe punishment. The psychological impact of the isolation, denial of family visits and deliberate separation of family members within the prison has a profound effect on the morale of more than 3,000 Palestinian political prisoners. The isolation is made even more severe because the majority of the detainees were never told why they were arrested and they have no indication how long their prison terms are likely to last.

After several months of detention, over two-thirds of the prisoners were suddenly informed that they were being held under 'administrative detention orders.'

"... more than 2,000 Palestinians who have not been charged with a crime, given a hearing or even told what offense they committed spend their days here sitting under tents in a desert prison, swatting at flies and growing increasingly angry . . . (administrative detention) is Israel's name for the detention rules that in essence date from the British Mandate period. The regulations now allow a military commander to order a six-month prison sentence without filing formal charges or even telling the prisoner exactly what he is supposed to have done

wrong. When the six months is up, the order can be renewed."

—Joel Brinkley, New York Times, 3 June 1988.

Few of the prisoners were allowed to enter a court or to know what security offenses they had supposedly committed. Those who did go to court were not allowed to see their files or hear the evidence presented against them.

After the Intifada began, in December 1987, Israel announced that certain amendments had been made in the regulations governing administrative detention. These changes had the effect of streamlining the process for the Israeli authorities, excising the last vestiges of due process of law from this antiquated procedure.

"Prisoners are informed by way of loudspeakers that they are administrative detainees rather than by way of forms . . ."

—Avi Katzman, Koteret Rashit, 20 April 1988

The use of administrative detention has been strongly protested by the international community. Under the earlier Israeli uses of this practice, Palestinians were detained as supposed 'threats to the security of the state.' During the uprising, massive arrests have taken place without regard to charges or legal precedents. Even Israeli apologists are hardpressed to defend such arbitrary practices.

"Holding such an incredible number of prisoners, perhaps arbitrarily, keeping them ignorant of the charges against them and without recourse to legal defense, is a deep stain on the rule of law in Israel."

—Member of Knesset, Dedi Zucker of the Citizens Rights Movement, who visited Ansar III on 24 April 1988.

Who Are The Prisoners of Ansar?

These thousands of Palestinians who have passed through the gates of Ansar III—the 'security threats'—are actually a cross-section representing all classes, ages and religious groups within Palestinian society. Joanna McGeary of Time Magazine visited Ansar III on 13 June 1988 and observed that:

"As of now, well over a third of the 5,000 people jailed for involvement in the intifadeh have not been charged or tried. The

detained population includes doctors, lawyers, labor leaders, students, human-rights activists, close to 30 journalists . . ."

A profile of the detainees of Ansar III includes:

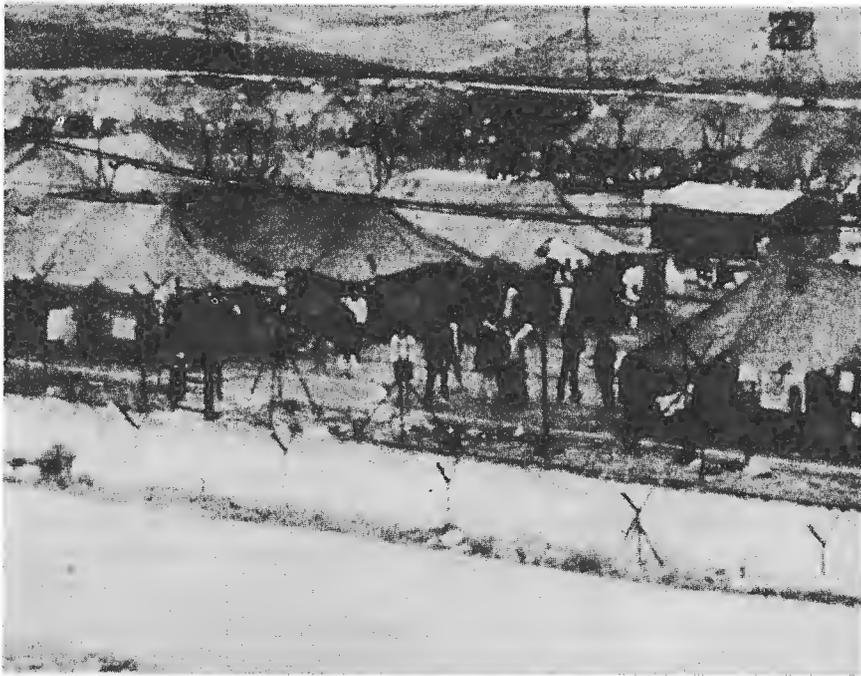
- Fadi Ibrahim Sharabati—secretary of the union of shoe factory workers, arrested 2 July 1988.
- Talal Abu Afifeh—editor at Al-Fajr daily Arabic newspaper.
- Mousa Qous—Al-Fajr editor.
- Mahmoud al-Ramahi—Al-Fajr correspondent in Ramallah.
- Qaddouma Mousa—Al-Fajr correspondent in Jenin.
- Mousa Jarradat—Al-Fajr correspondent in Hebron.
- Samir Abu Jundi—Al-Fajr sports editor.
- Salah al-Dairi—journalist from Bethlehem, arrested on unspecified charges and given 6 months administrative detention.
- Imam Mohammad Abdel Majeed Awadallah—age 55, Muslim priest of a Gaza mosque.
- Ibrahim Salqan—medical doctor.
- Suleiman Zeada—a fifteen years old boy from El Breij Refugee Camp in Gaza.
- Hanna Halas—age 16, taken from his home on 2 February 1988 as hostage for his brother.
- Ezzedine Aryan—a 51 years old pharmacist and head of the Ramallah Red Crescent (similar to the Red Cross).
- Dr. Abdul Aziz Rantisi—a pediatrician from Khan Yunis Refugee Camp in Gaza.
- Raji Saalim—age 28, a journalist from Jabalia Refugee Camp.
- Mutawakel Taha—a journalist from Qalqilya.
- Jajib Farraj—a journalist for Al-Quds Arabic newspaper.
- Abdal Karim Kana'an—fieldworker for Al Haq (an affiliate of the International Commission of Jurists), married with four children.
- Raji Sourani—a lawyer and head of the Gaza Bar Association.
- Ghazi Sheshtari—a fieldworker for Al-Haq.
- Zahi Jaradat—fieldworker for Al-Haq.
- Sha'wan Jabarin—a graduate from Bir Zeit university and fieldworker for Al-Haq.
- Yusuf Azril—a civil engineer from Ramallah.
- Dr. Zakaria Al-Agha, director Gaza Medical Association

Conclusion

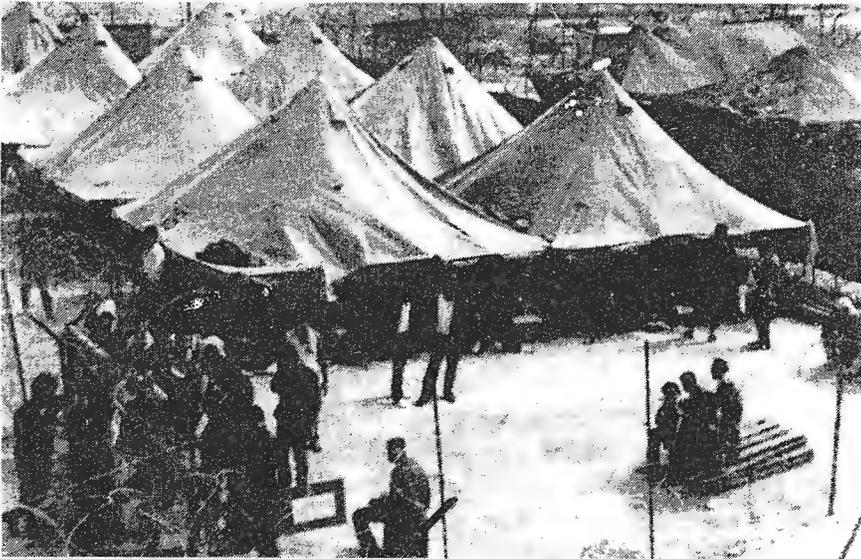
Detainees of the Ansar camps—and Israel's other concentration camps—share a common experience.

- The majority of the detainees are never charged or tried by law, and as such, have an uncertain status or no status at all. In Ansar I, they were referred to as the 'brought ins', for lack of any official term, those held in Ansar II or Ansar III are simply arrested. Only after weeks and sometimes months of imprisonment are informed that they are administrative detainees.
- They are completely subject to the whims of their guards who carry out orders according to their own political attitudes about Palestinians. In Ansar I, dozens of prisoners were shot and killed, with no justification or investigation provided by the prison authorities. The shooting death (see Appendix) of in Ansar III and tear gas poisoning of an inmate on 16 August 1988 was dismissed by Israeli authorities. Numerous cases of beating and torture in all the Ansar Prisons have gone unreported and uninvestigated.
- They are isolated—whether from family visits, lawyers, media or even humanitarian agencies. The absence of any contact with families and the outside world is the most devastating aspect of detention for the prisoners. Many of the detainees are heads of households and their imprisonment has a disastrous impact upon their families, socially and financially.

A commonality of deeper significance is Israel's underlying intention in setting up these concentration camps: the attempt to destroy Palestinian nationalism and identity. This was very evident in South Lebanon, when Israeli forces imprisoned not just suspected PLO members but all community leaders and those providing social, educational, medical services and heads of households. In the recent past, Israel has jailed painters and poets, researchers, journalists, mothers and even relatives of suspects. The intention clearly is not



Ansar I, South Lebanon, 1983



Ansar III, Negev Israel, 1988

just to suppress the Intifada, but to extinguish the flame Palestinian nationalism.

As Anthony Lewis stated in the New York Times, 8 September 1988,

"The Israeli government, hardening in its response to the uprising in the West Bank and Gaza, is trying now to suppress any meaningful expression of Palestinian identity. The policy goes beyond the banning of Palestinian organizations. Another important feature of it is the detention, without trial, of people who have in some way become symbols of Palestinian consciousness. Editors, lawyers, teachers and other community leaders are among the thousands of Palestinians being held under so-called administrative detention."

Following the killings on 16 August, the International Committee of the Red Cross in Geneva issued a press release calling for the closure of Ansar III. The ICRC had previously warned Israeli authorities on several occasions of the danger of tragic incidents that seemed imminent.

In the words of a former Israeli guard at Ansar III, Doron Ben Sira, *"The reigning perception is that if we killed off all the Arabs there wouldn't be an Intifada, and that if there was no Intifada, we would be able to do our reserve service in the middle of the country and not in the broiling Negev..."*

Undoubtedly, there will be more such tragic events, more deaths, unless Ansar III is closed immediately. The use of detention camps and concentration camps has been proved to be an ineffective means of obliterating a race or a nation. The Israeli decision makers should heed the lessons of history before the time bomb they are creating explodes in their faces. Ansar III must be closed.

* * *

APPENDICES

- A. Grudge and Fear Pulled the Trigger
- B. Chronology of Ansar
- C. Letter From Ansar Prisoners
- D. Appeal From Ansar

A. "Grudge and Fear Pulled the Trigger"

It was a "normal day" in the desert detention camp which the army set up in the Negev and became to be known as Ansar III. Ansar III is more like a concentration camp.

Tuesday, 16 August 1988, was a "normal day", a bloody day, when a Palestinian prisoner was killed, a typical happening during any given day under Israeli occupation. The Defence Minister approved it and did not see in that a violation of existing regulations.

It was a hot day. The stench of what they call "food" filled the air, and mingled with that which emanated from holes they call "toilets." The heat was stifling for the prisoners and a drop of water was so dear to the tongues of some 2,000 detainees.

The heat was nerve-wracking for the soldiers but the difference was that the detainees were unarmed, and the wardens were equipped with every state of the art weapon available.

The detainees "rebelled", so the Israeli army claimed in justifying the killings. Some Israelis said the prisoners threatened the lives of the soldiers (Ha'aretz, 17 August 1988)

"They started cursing and throwing stones. We mobilized ourselves and threw tear gas at them. When rioting continued seriously, we decided to fire in the direction of the demonstration...two were killed and a third was wounded."

What stones are they referring to: When the army built the camp, the army made sure the ground was cleaned of all stones. Only pebbles were left, not more than 1 inch in diameter. Does the officer think that the detainees devised a way to enlarge those pebbles?

The prisoners were unarmed, living in tents, and enclosed within barbed wire...What really happened on 16 August 1988?

On that day, the situation became intolerable for the detainees. It was the last straw. Even Israeli officers began to look at it as a time bomb, ready to go off any minute. On that day, Red Cross officials were there. They had come to inspect the facility, on an unplanned visit.

The Israelis fired tear gas on the detainees inside and outside the tents. They fired live and rubber bullets.

Two men fell: Bassam Al-Samoudi, age 30 and a father of five, and Aziz al- Harayrah, age 32, from Hebron was wounded.

Bassam was shot from a distance of 2-1/2 yards. Detained physicians tried to save his life, but in vain.

Asad Jabra al Shawa had asthma and the tear gas literally choked him to death.

Two Israeli helicopters came and picked up the bodies.

—Jerusalem Press, interview with a former Ansar III prisoner,
20 August 1988.

B. Chronology of Ansar III

- March 22-25, Ansar III detention center opened in Negev Desert;
- April 19, First incident of food poisoning reported in Hadashot Israeli newspaper;
- June 26, Second incident of food poisoning (al Haq);
- June 27, Ansar III appeal in a letter through Ittihad newspaper;
- July 17—18, Detainees went on two day hunger strike;
- August 10, hunger strikes
- August 16, two detainees killed.
- September 18, hunger strike to protest deaths of two detainees

C. Letter From Ansar III Prisoners

COMPLAINT CALLING FOR THE IMMEDIATE CLOSURE OF ANSAR III (Q'TISEOT)

We, the undersigned, in the name of all Ansar III administrative detainees who are currently serving 6 months administrative detention in Ansar III (Q'tiseot) prison camp, hereby file a complaint to the international relief organizations and other concerned groups, as stipulated in Article 101 of the IV Geneva convention, regarding the violation of our rights and privileges under the IV Geneva convention.

1. Israel's administrative detention policy is illegal under the IV Geneva convention. Article 6 paragraph 3 states that administrative detention is not permitted beyond one year after the cessation of military operations.

2. It is illegal to detain Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza in the Negev according to Article 49 of the IV Geneva convention 1948 which states that it is illegal to transfer the inhabitants of the occupied territories to any place outside the occupied territory.

3. Under conditions contrary to Section 4 of the IV Geneva convention 1948 we do not have:

- a. 24 hour access to water for drinking and washing.
- b. Enough food to keep us in good health, nor are we provided with facilities to prepare our own food (according to our religious eating traditions) that we have rightfully received as gifts from our families.
- c. Civilian clothing; instead we are given army uniforms which are too heavy for the hot desert sun.
- d. Visits by our families, which we are supposed to receive at least twice a month. These visits should be facilitated by the Red Cross and not conditional to the IDF's rigid approval which consists of a security clearance, proof of payment of all taxes and an unreasonable travelling fee.

- e. Access to all medical facilities and to a Palestinian doctor of our choice including one who is detained with us.
- f. A religious minister who is detained with us who has free access to all prisoners and free access to visit all detainees in military hospitals outside the camp.
- g. A canteen and money for the canteen that will provide cigarettes, food, toiletries and other such amenities that will improve the quality of life for us in the camp.
- h. Families housed together.
- i. Sufficient protection from the sun during the 45 minute prison counts under the blazing noon time sun which has caused many of us to faint from the heat and lack of water.
- j. Regular housing: instead we are housed in tents which are not sufficient to protect us against the desert heat and the cold desert nights.
- k. Access to send at least 4 postcards and 2 letters a month (at the authorities' expense) to our families and friends.
- l. Access to a postcard immediately upon our detention that will list our location, an address to reach us at and our state of health, to be sent to our families.
- m. Sufficient pens, pencils and paper.
- n. Regular cutlery nor do we have sturdy dishes: instead we are forced to eat our food with our hands using one tray for 2 persons.
- o. Daily newspapers, nor do we have access to radios, televisions, books and educational and recreational materials.
- p. Access to all our possessions (like extra clothing) that are currently in storehouses in the camp,

4. In addition we demand an end to:

- a. Military punishments like prolonged standing under the sun;
- b. To all collective punishments.

We call upon all those concerned with the preservation of the human rights guaranteed under the IV Geneva convention 1948 to support the closure of Ansar III Q'tiseot).

Signed:

1. Mohammad Elias
2. Anwar Rataab
3. Hafez Ismail Abu Shalbak
4. Mohammad Alham
5. Hassan Mohammad Ali Na'eman
6. Mohammad Shehadah Altamaari
7. Azaat Ayman Khader
8. Saker Elias Nazaal
9. Rashid Dib Abdalhamid
10. Ali Othman Naddaaf
11. Mahmoud Waluil
12. Adnan Daoud
13. Ahmad Ramadan
14. Raafat Abu Aker
15. Ibrahim Hassan AlHayik
16. Muhammad Abdalkader AlWaluil
17. Nabil Ahmad Assad Aniraat
18. Yassin Hassan Mahmoud Darwish Hakuasmi
19. Ali Awad Salah Gamal
20. Mahmoud Amin Abu Hamra Kamal
21. Nasser Jaber Teheh Hamarah

June 28, 1988

D. An Appeal from Ansar III: 18 August, 1988

"IN THE NAME OF GOD THE MERCIFUL, THE COMPASSIONATE"

We appeal to the world, to humanitarian and legal organizations and to all peace-loving people from the heart of the desert with its burning sun and numbing cold, where the basic requirements of human beings are absent and creatures like snakes, scorpions thrive. We are more than 3,000 Palestinians living in the large detention center of Ketziot 7, Ansar III under conditions that contravene all international, human and legal covenants. We present this document as another testimony of the Zionist measures against our Palestinian people, and in order to bring about the end to all these barbaric practices.

1. First, in the political sphere:

We believe that opening the concentration camp in Kili 7 and Ansar III is nothing more than an extension of the oppressive policy that Israel has practiced against the Palestinians inside and outside the occupied areas over a 20 year period. Such policies were aimed at emptying Palestine of its people by forcing them to emigrate, on the one hand, and absorbing all the attempts by the Palestinian people to achieve progress and independence.

2. Conditions and components of the detention center:

The detention center is composed of tents and barbed wire. The detainees are distributed in three main areas; each is made up of five units. Each unit has eight tents in which 25 people live, and sleep on wooden boards, normally used to move stones and cinder blocks, with 4 cm thick mattresses. The earth is very lumpy.

3. Health and Sanitary Conditions:

The detainees are deprived of health facilities and of nutritious meals. Toilets are nothing more than metal sheets and wooden booths,

somewhat like a large hole. Both the showers and the toilets have no drainage, and that invites flies, mosquitos and other insects. As for drinking water, the only available supplies are from water tanks which are never adequate to meet the basic needs of the detainees. Our lives hang in the balance at the whim of the guards who fill the water tanks. The water supplies are totally inadequate to meet the needs of laundry, bathing, shaving, washing and cleaning dishes. Food is actually a diluted form of poison; served in tins whose expiration date has long since passed.

Here is a list of types of health problems that the detainees are suffering from:

- a. Food poisoning: About 500 detainees have had food poisoning which caused repeated vomiting, dehydration and severe diarrhea.
- b. Sunstrokes: More than 200 detainees have suffered severe complications following sunstroke.
- c. Heart seizures: Over 10 cases, some of which were severe strokes.
- d. Nervous breakdowns: More than 20 such cases of hysteria.
- e. Stomach ulcers: Shortness of breath, hemorrhoids, back and joint pain, as well as the deterioration of the health of many prisoners suffering from rheumatism and kidney problems.
- f. Also the absence of a medical clinic in the professional sense, and of specialists and of medicines for all types of illnesses. Medicines are restricted to two or three types for all ailments. There are no ambulances available to transport emergency cases to outside hospitals. The prison authorities will not agree to send the ill outside for treatment, except if the victim is near death, as doctors and nurses have told us.
- g. The detainees have also been afflicted with various skin diseases and in constant danger of scorpion and snake bites. There are no dental services available other than those provided by a dentist who visits the camp rarely.

4. Daily routine and headcount.

The prison administration is supervised by soldiers and military police who take a head count of the detainees three times a day. During the count, the prisoners are forced to sit with their heads bowed under the blazing sun for hours on end. This practice has caused many health problems and has aggravated already existing ones. Despite our protests, the prison administration remains apathetic. Detainees are forced to stand in the sun with arms raised at times or even throughout sandstorms. Any attempt to protest this treatment is answered with tear gas, which the army uses from time to time. Tear gas has resulted in one death and numerous cases of asphyxiation and chest seizures. Detainees are also subjected to repeated body searches and are forced to stand in the sun while their tents are searched. This is also meant as a harassment, since there is nothing to look for among their meager possessions. Sometimes the duration of these searches is ten hours.

5. Hard labor, beatings and killings

The prison authorities frequently try to force the detainees to work inside the huge camp facility, but we refuse. In retribution, the authorities cut off cigarettes, cleaning supplies and materials provided by the Red Cross. On other occasions, we were tear-gassed, clubbed and kicked for refusing to work. Even the commander of the camp joins in cursing and humiliating us.

Dozens of detainees were crammed into solitary cells, naked. Others were closed into their tents while guards beat them. Their screams could be heard ten meters away. This occurred on 27 July 1988, when the commander, his deputies and soldiers raided section B unit 3. The searches and beatings continued for hours, although the prisoners had only been moved to that unit the day before.

6. Demands

We call on all the democratic forces, Red Cross Committees, and the UN to shoulder their responsibilities.

(1) End our administrative detention and incarceration in the Negev desert and the inhuman treatment that is practiced here. Close the Negev facility.

(2) We demand prosecution and due process of law before genuine courts, open to the media so as to disprove the mendacious charges against us.

(3) We demand the formation of an international commission of inquiry to look closely into the legal and humanitarian violations against us.

Let the whole world know that our people is peace-loving and aspires to attain the same freedom enjoyed by other peoples.

—The Palestinian Detainees of Ansar III and Kili 7
Negev Desert
18 August 1988

E. Resources:

1. Al Haq: Law in the Service of Man

West Bank affiliate of the International Commission of Jurists
P.O. Box 1413
Ramallah
West Bank, via Israel

Al Haq has produced several well-documented reports on prison camps such as Dhahriyeh and Ansar III.

2. Legal Defense Coordinating Committee

Al-Asfahani Street, Alami Building
East Jerusalem via Israel
(202) 283-512

A Jerusalem-based group of attorneys who are coordinating the legal defense for Palestinian administrative detainees. Their objectives are to place every detainee with a lawyer, help families locate prisoners, endeavour to obtain release of prisoners, guarantee lawyer visits for each prison and file appeals.

3. The DataBase Project for Palestinian Human Rights

220 South State St Suite 1308
Chicago, IL 60604
(312) 987-1830

The Database Project has an office in Jerusalem which provides carefully researched and documented information on human rights issues. They have produced an extensive report on Ansar II and are currently compiling one on Ansar III.

4. Friends of Palestinian Prisoners

P.O. Box 15288
Washington, D.C. 20003
(202) 547-7818

A correspondence network with a database of over 5,000 names of Palestinian prisoners. The purpose of 'friends' is to secure sponsors to correspond with these prisoners. Materials available include reports on Ansar I, II, and III as well as translated documents from legal and humanitarian organizations in the occupied territories.

ROOTS Publications

- **Tear Gas**—An examination of Israel's chemical warfare program
- **Beita; Lidice Revisted**—A first-hand account of the clash between Beita villagers and Israeli settlers April 6, 1988
- **Ansar I**—An analysis of Israel's first concentration camp erected during the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982, by Salah Ta'amari, the president of the prisoners' committee of Ansar I.
- **Ansar III**—A detailed expose of conditions and human rights abuses in Israel's illegal desert concentration camp.
- **". . . All Relevant Resolution . . ."**—A reprint of Chairman Arafat's address before the European Parliament including all U.N. resolution pertaining to the Question of Palestine.
- **Counting: Impressions of the Palestinian Intifada**—a collection of personal vignettes by American author, Mark Perry from a June visit to the Occupied Territories.
- **People Under Siege**—A socio-political analysis of 'democratic Israel' and its response to the Palestinian Intifada, by Nancy Murray, a Boston journalist.

ROOTS has the largest collection of photographs chronicling the Intifada since its inception, along with an inventory of posters produced by artists in the U.S. and abroad

ROOTS has available for loan 'Faithful Witnesses', an exhibit featuring 56 images of the Intifada painted by Palestinian children, Catalogue available upon request.

Please contact ROOTS for more information.

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