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Full account of Muhammed Omer's hair-raising encounter with the Shin Beth

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Palestinian Memory Bank

01 July

2004

Israeli Occupation Forces stormed into Jericho and Nablus, sealed off and imposed curfew on both West Bank cities, continued their siege of the northern Gaza Strip town of Beit Hanoun, where they began bulldozing a five-kilometer deep

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From Khalid Amayreh in the occupied Palestinian Te

From his hospital bed at the European Hospital in Gaza and with barely audible voice, award-winning Palestinian journalist Muhammed Omer has given a full account of the hair-raising encounter he had last week with Shin Beth agents at the Allenby Bridge border-crossing between Jordan and the West Bank.

Omer, a co-winner of the 2008 Martha Gelhorn Prize for Journalistic Excellence, said he was abused, assaulted, humiliated, ridiculed, kicked, and strip-searched at



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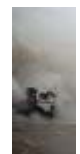


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gunpoint by undisciplined Shin Beth officers until he had a nervous breakdown in which case he lost consciousness for at least 90 minutes.

A resident of Rafah at the southern edge of the Gaza Strip, Omer said he didn't know for sure why the Shin Beth people treated him in such a barbaric matter apart from the characteristic sadism and savagery routinely meted out to Palestinians.

"They behaved with unimaginable hatefulness and vindictiveness. They couldn't accept the very idea of a Palestinian journalist winning a renowned journalism prize. They wanted to punish me for being a successful journalist and especially for exposing Israeli barbarianism to the people of Europe."

The following is Muhammed Omer's story as intimated by him to this writer:

"On Thursday, 26 June, the Israeli authorities finally allowed me to return to Gaza after several days of waiting and uncertainty in Jordan. When I arrived at the Allenby Bridge Border Crossing, I was dragged away rather unceremoniously to a special room where I was made to wait for more than 90 minutes. This happened as Dutch diplomats who were accompanying me were waiting outside.

"When I arrived on the Israeli side of the Allenby Bridge, I encountered an Israeli female officer who started mocking me in a brazenly insulting manner.

"She asked me repeatedly where Gaza was. She then said I had no permit to return to Gaza via Israel.

"Then a Shin Beth officer who introduced himself as "Avi" showed up and took me to an isolated room where I was kept stranded for an hour and a half.

"He asked me "Oh, You are Muhammed Omer.

"Yes, I said.

"You know you are a fool," said Avi, adding "how could you leave Europe and return to Gaza where there is no water, no electricity, nothing.

"I told him Gaza was my country, and I was a journalist and wanted to be a voice for the voiceless.

"A voice for the voiceless," Avi spoke sarcastically.

"He then asked me if I was carrying any contrabands or guns or knives.

"I said no, I had none.

"Then he asked me to produce the money of the prize I won. I told him that the money would be transferred later to my bank account."

"Then one Shin Beth agent demanded in a stern tone that I hand all the money I was carrying with me over to them. They didn't believe I didn't have the prize money with me.

"Disappointed, Avi, who was carrying a pistol in his hand, ordered me to take off all my clothes, which I did, leaving my underwear. At the same time, another officer was pointing an M-16 rifle in my face.

"Take the underwear as well," he said. "I told him I wouldn't. What do you want from me," I protested in a suffocated voice.

"Then he ganged up on me and forcibly removed my underwear piece, leaving me completely naked."

"Avi, training the pistol at me, told me to turn right and turn left, before telling me to get dressed again.

"At that point, I was nearly totally broken emotionally. I felt I was being raped. I cried and pleaded to them to leave me alone, but to no avail"

"Telling me I haven't seen anything yet, they dragged me to another room where they interrogated me on my speaking tour in Britain, Sweden and Greece.

"Oh, you have not left a place in Europe without speaking at...You know these Europeans, they hate Israel.

"Then another Shin Bet officer began kicking me and pushing me. This lasted for more than ten minutes after which I fainted and lost consciousness. Eventually they began dragging me along the floor by my feet with my head banging on the floor.

"I don't remember much of what happened to me during this period, but remember a Shin Beth officer piercing his finger right below my eyes and at the lower end of ears. Also, another Shin Beth officer was pressing his large boots against my neck as I was lying unconscious on the ground.

"I thought I was dying. I remained in a state of unconsciousness for up to 90 minutes until a medical doctor, who was carrying an M-16, performed an (electrocardiogram) or ECG on me.

"Then I heard someone saying the word 'ambulance.'

"However, before a Palestinian ambulance from Jericho arrived, a Shin Beth officer came to me and asked me to sign a form that I was not being maltreated by the Shin Beth.

"I was too distraught, too confused and too unconscious to say anything.

"Eventually, I was taken to the Jericho hospital where I was assured by doctors that I was fine."

Muhammed Omer said the Israeli Shin Beth inserted a special electronic device into his mobile phone which would enable them to know his whereabouts.

He also called upon his colleagues around the world to condemn in the strongest words the "criminal and disgraceful Israeli behavior" which he said "only befits criminals and thugs, not states, let alone states that claim to be civilized, western and democratic."

The Dutch Foreign Ministry has protested the traumatic treatment meted out to Muhammed Omer and demanded an explanation.

Similarly, the Dutch Embassy in Israel reportedly has raised the issue with the Israeli Foreign Ministry.

The Shin Beth, Israel's chief domestic security agency, controls all aspects of Palestinian lives and is widely believed to systematically and grossly violate the basic human rights of Palestinians.



Comments

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| israli are thugs and eventually will be collapse | |
| BRITISH FORCE | |
| Name: Paul Donaldson | Date: 01/07/2008 14:38:48 |
| Country: United Kingdom | Job: writer |
| Individuals such as Kahlid need to be STRONGER in the face of such Israeli/Zionist aggression. The Israeli security forces need to face the rath of BRITISH TROOPS, then THEY shall know what fear truly is. KEEP UP THE GOOD WORK. PAUL, ENGLAND | |
| Omer Treatment | |
| Name: robert | Date: 01/07/2008 21:47:17 |
| Country: United States | Job: |
| At least we know where the US got it's training in torture. This country is becoming more like Israel every day. And the general population is blind. We are in for a rude awakening..soon | |

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