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B'Tselem – The Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories

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## **TORTURE OF PALESTINIAN MINORS IN THE GUSH ETZION POLICE STATION**

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## **Introduction**

In recent weeks, B'Tselem has taken testimonies of Palestinians, among them minors, whom Israeli security forces arrested and detained at the Gush Etzion police station between October 2000 and January 2001. Following short interrogations, they were tried on charges of throwing stones, convicted, and sentenced to several months' imprisonment. The testimonies, taken after their release, describe the arrest procedure, the interrogation, and the period of detention.

The testimonies reveal that Israeli security forces, some of them masked and some with their faces blackened, arrested them at their homes late at night. In some of the cases, the security forces made grave threats and acted violently against the minors detained and their relatives. The security forces also destroyed property in their houses. In most of the cases, the security forces beat the detainees while en route to the police station.

After arriving at the police station, policemen used severe torture when interrogating the detainees and attempted to compel them to admit to committing the offenses of which they were suspected or to provide information about others. The testimonies reveal that a number of interrogation methods were commonly used. These included, in part, severe beatings, splashing cold water on detainees (the events occurred during the winter), putting the detainee's head in the toilet bowl, threats, and curses.

Most of the detainees were taken for a medical check-up immediately upon their arrival at the Etzion police station. According to the testimonies, the physician performed a superficial examination, based in some cases on a quick glance, after which the physician signed a form confirming that they were healthy. At times, the detainees were handcuffed and blindfolded during the medical check-up. Some detainees were taken to the physician after being tortured during interrogation, were treated, and were returned for further interrogation.

The testimonies indicate that the Israeli authorities committed numerous human rights violations during the detention, interrogation, trial, and imprisonment. This report will focus on torture during interrogation of minors in the Gush Etzion police station. This issue was selected because of the severity of the violations and because of the special protections granted to minors under Israeli and international law.

This report does not deal with the torture of Palestinians over age 18 at the Gush Etzion police station or with other human rights violations of detained Palestinians, whether minors or adults, that are indicated in the testimonies given to B'Tselem, such as the use of violence against the detainee's relatives, violence en route to the detention, breach of due process, improper prison conditions, and refusal to allow family visits.

The report includes ten testimonies of minors who were recently released from Israeli prisons. Nine of the minors are residents of Husan Village, Bethlehem District, where the army executed several detention operations starting in October 2000. One minor is a resident of the al-'Arub refugee camp, Hebron District. B'Tselem, other human rights organizations, and attorneys took additional testimonies from Palestinians over age 18 who had been detained in the Gush Etzion police station. These testimonies portray a similar picture to that presented in this report.

## List of Cases

1. Mansur Yasser Salim Za'ul, 15, resident of Husan Village, Bethlehem District, arrested on 25 October 2000 at 1:00 A.M.
2. Sultan 'Abd al-Jabber Sultan Mahdi, 15, resident of al-'Arub Refugee Camp, Hebron District, arrested on 5 November 2000 at 12:30 A.M.
3. Mufid Hussein Muhammad Hamamreh, 15, resident of Husan Village, Bethlehem District, arrested on 9 November 2000 at midnight.
4. Isma'il Ahmad Hassan Sabatin, 17, resident of Husan Village, Bethlehem District, arrested on 14 November 2000 at midnight.
5. Mahmud Na'im 'Abd al-Qader Hamamreh, 16, resident of Husan Village, Bethlehem District, arrested on 14 November at 1:00 A.M.
6. Muhammad Yasser Muhammad Za'ul, 14, resident of Husan Village, Bethlehem District, arrested on 25 December at 1:00 A.M.
7. Muhammad Nasser Raheb Sabatin, 14, resident of Husan Village, Bethlehem District. On 25 December at 2:00 A.M., soldiers came to his house. He slept at his grandfather's home that night, and the soldiers ordered his parents to bring him to the Gush Etzion police station the following morning. The next morning, he arrived at the station at 10:00 A.M.
8. Hamzeh Muhammad 'Abd al-Fatah Za'ul, 15, resident of Husan Village, Bethlehem District, arrested on 6 January 2001 at 2:30 A.M.
9. Ashraf 'Aeid Ibrahim Za'ul, 17, resident of Husan Village, Bethlehem District. On 12 January 2001 at 1:00 A.M., soldiers came to his home. He slept at his grandfather's home, in Batir, that night, and the soldiers ordered his father to bring him to the Etzion police station the next morning. The next morning, he arrived at the station at 5:00 A.M.
10. Ibrahim 'Aeid Ibrahim Za'ul, 16, resident of Husan Village, Bethlehem District, arrested on 20 January 2001 at 1:00 A.M.

## Use of Torture to Obtain Confessions

The testimonies given to B'Tselem by Palestinians who were interrogated in the Gush Etzion police station indicate that the Police interrogators maltreated minors with the objective of compelling them to confess to committing the offenses of which they were suspected and to provide names of persons whom the police interrogators believed were also involved in those offenses.

From the testimony of Mahmud Hamamreh:

They brought me to the interrogation room and the interrogator told me to admit that I had thrown stones. He left the room, came back a few minutes later, and told me: "You had time to think. Do you confess?" I told him that I had nothing to confess. He called two people and they laid me down on the floor. One stepped on me with great force while the other beat me severely all over my body. They beat me for two hours, during which the interrogation continued. The interrogator held an object and said, "This is the Koran, if you swear on it that you did not throw stones, I'll let you go." He brought the object close to my mouth. From the scent, I knew it was a piece of soap, and I swore on it that I had not thrown stones. The interrogator again told me to confess, and when I refused the second time, he again called to the other two, and they beat me all over my body with truncheons for about an hour... One of them kicked me in the chest, which hurt a lot. I lay on the floor and began to scream. The interrogator came up to me and asked if I was ready to talk. I told him that I had nothing to say. I was taken to the courtyard. There were some thirty soldiers there. The interrogator told me that if I didn't confess, he would tell the soldiers to break my bones. We went back to the interrogation room. I confessed to throwing stones and signed the confession.

From the testimony of Mansur Za'ul:

They continued to beat me and interrogate me about throwing a petrol bomb. This time, they brought cold water and splashed it on my face and chest... After two hours of interrogation about the petrol bomb, I didn't confess to anything. They continued to interrogate me about throwing stones at a white, Jewish Subaru. They beat and kicked me for another fifteen minutes, after which I admitted that I threw stones at an army jeep. The interrogators took off the handcuffs and leg shackles, removed the blindfold, and I saw the four interrogators.

From the testimony of Sultan Mahdi:

The soldiers took me to a room and sat me down on a chair. One of them took off the handcuffs and tied my hands and feet to the chair's legs. My eyes remained covered. About a half an hour later, they removed the blindfold. I saw five or six people in civilian clothes. They asked me questions about my involvement in clashes with soldiers. They asked if I threw stones at army vehicles on the main road. At first, I denied that I did. But two or three of them started to beat me in the face and head. The interrogation lasted for around five hours. I was very tired from sitting all the time on the chair and from the beatings. At the end, they took me to the bathroom near the interrogation room. One of the interrogators grabbed me by the hair and put my head in the toilet. I was frightened. When they took me back to the interrogation room, I decided to confess. I told them that I threw five stones at a settler's vehicle. They wrote up a detailed testimony and forced me to sign it.

Some of the minors reported to B'Tselem that during the interrogation, the interrogator read them a list of names of people from their village and demanded that they indicate which of them threw stones. For example, Muhammad Za'ul stated that, "They took me to a room where one person interrogated me. The interrogator claimed that I threw a petrol bomb. He kicked me in the abdomen. He read out a list of thirty names of people from Husan and told me to say who among them had thrown stones." Hamzeh Za'ul stated that after being beaten for about two hours, the interrogator "read the names of young fellows from Husan and wanted me to inform on them."

Maltreatment during interrogations, particularly in the case of minors, is forbidden and a grave offense in its own right. When the maltreatment is used to force the detainee to confess to offenses that he allegedly committed and to provide information, the gravity of the acts are many times greater and constitute torture.

Torture is absolutely prohibited under international law, whatever the circumstances.<sup>1</sup> Even emergencies do not justify breach of this prohibition, and "No exceptional circumstances whatsoever, whether a state of war or a threat of war, internal political instability or any other public emergency, may be invoked as a justification of torture."<sup>2</sup>

Israeli law also prohibits torture. Section 277 of the Penal Law provides:

A public servant who does one of the following is liable to imprisonment for three years:

- (1) uses or directs the use of force or violence against a person for the purpose of extorting from him or from anyone in whom he is interested a confession of an offense or information relating to an offense;
- (2) threatens any person, or directs any person to be threatened, with injury to his person or property or to the person or property of anyone in whom he is interested for the purpose of extorting from him a confession of an offense or any information relating to an offense.

The prohibition on torture and the use of force during interrogations also appears in other provisions of the Penal Law. For example, the prohibition is found in sections relating to the protection of helpless persons,<sup>3</sup> assault,<sup>4</sup> and extortion by force and threats.<sup>5</sup>

In September 1999, the High Court of Justice ruled that the General Security Service does not have the authority to use "physical means" during the interrogation of Palestinians. The Court based its ruling on the fact that GSS interrogators have no statutory basis and, therefore, "GSS investigators are [as regards the conduct of interrogations] tantamount to police officers in the

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<sup>1</sup> Article 5 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, of 1948; Article 7 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, of 1966; Article 2 of the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, of 1984; Article 37 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, of 1989; Article 31 of the Fourth Geneva Convention Relative to Civilians in Time of War. See, also, B'Tselem, *Position Paper: Legislation Allowing the Use of Physical Pressure and Mental Coercion in Interrogations by the General Security Service*, January 2000, pp. 25-38.

<sup>2</sup> Article 2(2) of the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, of 1984.

<sup>3</sup> See, Penal Law, 5737-1977, section 322, 337, 368B, 368C.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, sections 379, 380, 382.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, sections 427, 428.

eyes of the law.”<sup>6</sup> The justices’ underlying assumption is that police officers are forbidden to use “physical means” during interrogations:

Similarly, the individual GSS investigator – like any police officer – does not possess the authority to employ physical means which infringe upon a suspect’s liberty during the interrogation, unless these means are inherently accessory to the very essence of an interrogation and are both fair and reasonable.

An investigator who insists on employing these methods, or does so routinely, is exceeding his authority.

## **Methods of Torture Used in the Gush Etzion Police Station**

The testimonies given to B’Tselem indicate that several principal methods of torture were used against minors detained in the Etzion facility. Similar descriptions appeared in the testimonies of adult Palestinians, in testimonies given to other human rights organizations, and in affidavits given to detainees’ attorneys.

### **Beatings and violence**

All the minors’ testimonies reported severe beatings by the interrogators during interrogation. In some instances, the interrogators used various objects when beating the youngsters.

Interrogators beat Mufid Hamamreh for more than an hour:

Then I was taken to the interrogation room. The interrogators beat me and tramped heavily on my legs. The beating lasted for around an hour. Then they stood me up in the middle of the room. The interrogators stood on opposite sides of the room. They turned me into some kind of ball, throwing me from one to the other for about fifteen minutes.... One of them stood me up and punched me with great force. I fell to the floor and my nose started to bleed. The interrogators brought a bottle of water. I thought that they would try to stop the bleeding, but they poured it on my back. They took me to the doctor, who treated me and gave me medication. After a few minutes, my nose stopped bleeding. Among the things that they did to me during the interrogation were... beat me with a metal ruler.

Ashraf Za’ul gave the following description:

The interrogators brought an object - I sensed that it was a rubber-coated metal coin – and beat me in the chest with it. Then they hit me on the face, then they hit me between my legs and then they lay me down on the floor and kicked my legs. That really hurt... A policeman in a blue uniform (I managed to see him because the blindfold fell off) took me to a small room, about two meters square. He forced me to crouch and covered my head with my winter jacket. He kicked me and beat me in the head... He started to kick me again, mostly to the head, for about half an hour. He spit in my face and shackled my feet.

Hamzeh Za’ul stated that:

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<sup>6</sup> HCJ 5100/94, the *Public Committee Against Torture in Israel et al. v. Government of Israel et al.* (not yet published), paragraph 20.

It was about an hour before they took me into the room where the interrogator was. I didn't see him because I was still blindfolded. The interrogator demanded that I immediately confess, otherwise he would beat me like he beat the others. I told him that there wasn't anything for me to confess to. He began to beat and kick me all over my body, particularly my chest and neck. He beat me for around thirty minutes.

Four policemen beat Muhammad Sabatin for approximately four hours:

Four policemen took me, searched me, beat me in front of my parents and ordered them to get out immediately. A strong, dark-skinned fellow of average height who was dressed in civilian clothes arrived. He beat me with great force, kicked me for about five minutes, and put me in a room where four policemen were seated... Two of the policemen bound my hands and feet, blindfolded me, and took me to a room that I couldn't see. The four of them took turns beating me for around four hours. They struck me with a mop stick, kicked me all over my body, and swore at me in filthy language.

The testimonies also reveal other kinds of violence. Mufid Hamamreh stated that the interrogators used his body to extinguish cigarettes, and he pointed out the scars. Two of the minors informed B'Tselem that the interrogators fired small pellets from a plastic pistol at their face, causing them enormous pain. In his testimony to B'Tselem, Muhammad Za'ul stated:

I heard the sound of a trigger being squeezed and small plastic pellets striking me in the face. Maybe they were from a toy pistol or something like that. That really hurt and my mouth and nose bled. The interrogator told me that I had five minutes to confess. After five minutes, with my face still bleeding, three soldiers came in and, for about an hour, beat me all over my body with their hands and feet.

Hamzeh Za'ul described a similar method:

Then I felt small plastic pellets, apparently from a toy gun, strike me with great force. He fired the plastic pellets, from a close distance, at my head, neck, and face. He did that several times and it hurt a lot.

Two minors contended that the interrogators blindfolded them very tightly for a prolonged period of time, which caused them splitting headaches and loss of sight for a short time. Mansur Za'ul stated that, "The kerchief that covered my eyes had two knots that pressed on my head and gave me a headache." Mahmud Hamamreh said that, "They blindfolded me so tightly that I thought my eyes were going to pop. They took me to the bathroom and kept me there for about half an hour, with my blindfold still on very tightly. Finally, I screamed from the pain and sat on the floor. Someone came and removed the blindfold. For ten minutes I couldn't see a thing."

### **Use of water**

In their testimonies, some of the minors stated that the interrogators placed the minors' head in the toilet bowl and flushed the toilet. Sultan Mahdi related that, "they took me to the bathroom near the interrogation room. One of the interrogators grabbed me by the hair and put my head in the toilet." Isma'il Sabatin stated that, "they took me to the bathroom, put my head in the toilet and flushed the toilet. I fainted and the interrogators dragged me outside."

In other instances, the interrogators splashed the detainees with cold water, and in some cases, also used hot water after they were taken into the courtyard in the wintry weather. Isma'il Sabatin stated: "They threw a bucket of cold water on my head and immediately afterwards a

bucket of hot water. I fell to the ground. They took me into the room. They turned on the air conditioner for several minutes. Then they put on the heat. One of the them took off the handcuffs and let me wring out my shirt, which was drenched.” Ibrahim Za’ul stated that, “they took off my jacket and, for about fifteen minutes, threw cold water on me. I recognized the voice of the officer ‘Moshe.’ He told me to confess, and then he threw cold water on me for another fifteen minutes.”

Mufid Hamamreh stated that the interrogators used a water sprayer and ice cubes:

They took a water sprayer filled with very cold water and splashed me, mostly in my ears, mouth, and on my chest.... Two interrogators took me to the courtyard. Because of the nosebleed, the covering over my eyes had been removed, and I could see the two soldiers. They were in civilian clothes and their faces were covered. I remained in the outer courtyard. They put an empty pail on my head and for about half an hour splashed water on the upper part of my body. They brought pieces of ice and forced me to swallow a piece and rubbed another piece along my chest.

### **Painful positions**

Some of the minors described how the interrogators ordered them to stand in extremely painful positions. Ibrahim Za’ul related that:

They put a sack on my head and, around my neck, tied a string to it that was connected to a heavy bag. I couldn’t keep my head straight because it was so heavy. The officer beat me and ordered me to lift my head up.

Muhammad Za’ul’s description was as follows:

They took me to the room and told me to stand with my face against the wall and my right leg raised. My hands were still cuffed, as they had been ever since I was arrested. I stood that way from 5:00 A.M. to 7:00 A.M.. Whenever I lowered my leg, they beat me.

Isma’il Sabatin described a number of the positions that the interrogators ordered him to take:

The interrogators ordered me to get into a position with my legs up and my head down while I was leaning on the wall. They left the room and ordered me to stay there until they returned. Later, they stood me on a chair and told to grab a pipe that was fixed to the wall. They removed the chair from under me and left me hanging in the air, with my bound hands holding onto the pipe and the weight of my body, hanging in the air, drawing my hands downwards. They left the room.

Mahmud Hamamreh related that:

After thirty minutes passed, they came and took me to the interrogation room. They sat me on a chair and told me to get up and then sit down on the floor time many times. I got up and sat down repeatedly for about an hour until I couldn’t get up, and I remained on the floor. The interrogator ordered me to get up, and I told him that I couldn’t. Again he told me to get up. I couldn’t.

The interrogators also ordered minors to pick up a heavy set of several metal steps. Mufid Hamamreh contended in his testimony that, “they brought three iron steps, tied me to them, and told me to lift them up, but I fell and couldn’t do it. My shoulder hurt a lot when I fell. I still have a scar from the steps.” Mansur Za’ul said that, “they brought three iron steps, and put them between my hands, which were tied behind me. They wanted me to carry them, and

they beat me so that they would fall on my legs. They did that twice, each time for several seconds.”

### **Threats, curses, and degradation**

In addition to the physical brutality described above, the minors reported that they had been threatened, cursed, and degraded.

Ashraf Za’ul stated that the interrogator “threatened that he would kill me and break my head.” Ibrahim Za’ul described how they said that they would kill him, lied to him that his friend had died, and threatened him with electric shock:

They brought me to another room. Inside was an officer who identified himself as “Ayub.” He said that he was a merciless person and was prepared to kill me if I didn’t tell him the name of the young fellows who threw stones... One fellow opened the door and said in Arabic that Ahmad ‘Aref Sabatin had died during interrogation. The officer turned to me and said, “What are we going to do with the body of Ahmad Sabatin, what do you say Ibrahim, what do you think? Do you want to change places with Ahmad? [...] I was blindfolded. The interrogator said that he was going to electrocute me and that I would die like Ahmad. I felt the sensation of two iron wires being stuck on me, but nothing happened.

In at least two of the testimonies given to B’Tselem, Palestinians stated that they were forced to watch others being tortured. Ibrahim Za’ul testified that right in front of his eyes, the interrogators beat his friend: “I was taken to the room where Ahmad Sabatin was. The interrogators began to beat him right in front of me. Ahmad began to cry and scream loudly. I asked them to stop because Ahmad did not throw stones, and I told them that I was ready to confess that I threw stones.”

Mufid Hamamreh described how the interrogators beat his brother while he was present:

I was taken back to the cell and that same day, between four and five o’clock in the afternoon, two soldiers came and took me to the interrogation room. There were three interrogators in the room. My brother Hasnin was also there. He had turned himself in the day after I was arrested. Right in front of me, the three interrogators beat my brother, kicking him in the abdomen and legs. One of them burned my brother with a cigarette and told Hasnin that he would shoot me if he didn’t confess to everything. Then they took me back to the cell, so I did not know what happened to my brother.

Muhammad Za’ul and Muhammad Sabatin maintained that the interrogators cursed them grossly during the interrogation. Mansur Za’ul stated that, “they cursed me in a filthy manner. One of the interrogators told me to curse my mother and call her by bizarre names. I cursed the interrogator’s mother and then they jumped on me violently, beat me, kicked me, and struck me with blunt objects.”

In several of the cases, the interrogators stood the minors in a small, crowded bathroom and left them there for several hours. Mahmud Hamamreh related that, “they took me to a one-meter square bathroom in which there were four young guys from Husan who also were arrested the same night... They stood the five of us in the bathroom, and when I tried to speak with the person next to me, one of them [the interrogators] hit my legs so hard with a truncheon that I collapsed from the pain.” Hamzeh Za’ul stated:

I was taken to a bathroom that was one meter square. Inside were the three detainees from Husan who had been arrested with me that night. They [the interrogators] demanded that we stand along the bathroom wall and not move. Five minutes later,

the commander came in, went to the bathroom, and did not flush the toilet. The stench was horrible. The room was very small and had no window. We stood in the bathroom until 7:00 A.M. Then they took us to the police station to sign the confessions.

### **Handling of cases by the Department for Investigation of Police**

Rami Yasser Za'ul, 16, a resident of Husan Village, was tortured during his interrogation in the Etzion police station. According to his affidavit to attorney Hanan Khatib, his interrogators left him standing in the courtyard exposed to the cold, ordered him to undress, threw cold water on him, beat him severely, put his head in a toilet bowl and flushed the toilet; and cursed him with gross epithets. From time to time, the interrogators ceased the torture and asked him if he had anything to say to them. When he said that he did not, they forced him to sign a confession, written in Hebrew, the content of which he did not comprehend.

As a result of the torture, Rami Za'ul was taken to Hadassah Hospital. After being treated there, he was returned to detention at the Gush Etzion police station. At the hearing to extend his detention, it emerged that he had confessed, without knowing it, to acts that he never committed.

LAW, a Palestinian NGO, requested that the Department for Investigation of Police (DIP) to investigate the policemen involved in the torture of Rami Za'ul. In his response, Herzl Shviro, a senior official in the DIP, wrote: "Your claims should be considered in a court hearing, in the event that one is held in your matter, as a 'trial-within-a-trial.' Under these circumstances, I did not find any public interest in initiating a criminal investigation of your complaint."

A trial-within-a-trial is held when the defendant argues that the confession that he signed was not admissible because he did not give it voluntarily. The main trial is interrupted, and an interim trial is conducted to determine the admissibility of the confession.<sup>7</sup> This procedure is completely unrelated to a DIP investigation, which is intended to investigate whether a criminal offense has been committed and, if so, to recommend the prosecution of those responsible. Therefore, Shviro's suggestion that LAW's complaint be handled in the content of a trial-within-a-trial is no more than a pretext, with no legal foundation, to justify avoiding an investigation.

DIP's determination that there is no "public interest" in investigating the complaint is surprising. This assertion, that the torture of a sixteen-year-old youth by police officers, that resulted in the minor's hospitalization, is not of "public interest" indicates DIP's shameful disregard for the lives, dignity, and well-being of Palestinian minors.

On 21 January 2001, LAW appealed the DIP decision to close the file. DIP has not yet responded to the appeal.

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<sup>7</sup> See Crim. App. (Tel-Aviv – Jaffa) 70856/99, *Oded Yatzkan v. State of Israel, Takdin Mehozi* 2000 (3) 1537.

## Sample Cases

### Interrogation of Sultan Mahdi, age 15

*Testimony of Sultan 'Abd al-Jabber Sultan Mahdi, born on 10 October 1985,  
resident of Al-'Arub Refugee Camp, Hebron District*<sup>8</sup>

I live with my parents, three brothers, and sister in a small, three-room house in al-'Arub Refugee Camp, which is located eight kilometers north of Hebron. My father, who is sixty years old, has been sick for fifteen years. He recently obtained a part-time position as a guard at al-'Arub Farm, which lies on the main road between Jerusalem and Hebron (Route 60). He earns NIS 900 a month. My two elder brothers, 'Emad, 28, and Mamdukh, 24, have been unemployed since the *intifada* began. My brother Muhammad, 18, has been detained [by Israel] since 5 November 2000.

On Sunday, 5 November 2000, around 12:30 at night, I was awakened by pounding on the door of our house. My parents, brothers, and sister also woke up. A voice from outside told us in Arabic to open the door, saying they were from the Israeli army. Before my father could open the door, they kicked the door, breaking the handle and lock. Other soldiers broke two window panes and called out to us to open the door.

As soon as the door opened, more than fifteen soldiers came into the living room. They included soldiers, who had blackened their faces, and two policemen. As they entered, they aimed their weapons at my family and me. A soldier asked me who I was. I told him that my name was Nadir and that I was ten years old. They asked me where my brother Muhammad was. My father answered, telling them that he was upstairs, in the empty room. Soldiers went upstairs and came back down with him. He was in handcuffs and his eyes blindfolded. In the meantime, several soldiers conducted a quick search of the bedrooms. They turned over the carpets and chairs and made a mess of the clothes.

When they were finished, the soldiers left with Muhammad, but returned two minutes later. The door was still open. They came over to me. The policeman said that I was a liar, and that my name was Sultan. I told him that he was right. They told me to come with them. I said that I didn't have my shoes, and that I wanted to get them. One of the soldiers went to the bedroom with me. I took my shoes and put them on.

Then the soldiers cuffed my hands behind me and blindfolded me. Two soldiers held me by my shoulders and pushed me into the jeep, which was parked on the main road, one hundred meters from my house. While I was walking, the two soldiers who were holding me hit me on the head. Inside the jeep, I sat on the floor, and the soldiers sat around me on the benches. Several of them beat me with their hands and feet. My eyes were covered, so I don't know how many beat me. They hit me on the head and back. As they beat me, they asked me questions in Hebrew. I didn't understand what they said, so I didn't answer.

The jeep did not drive for long before stopping. Later, I was told that we were in Gush Etzion. They pushed me outside. The soldiers took me to a room and sat me down on a chair. One of them took off the handcuffs and tied my hands and feet to the chair's legs. My eyes remained covered. About a half an hour later, they removed the blindfold. I saw five or six people in civilian clothes. They asked me questions about my involvement in clashes with soldiers. They asked if I threw stones at army vehicles on the main road. At first, I denied it. But two or three of them started to beat me on the face and head. The interrogation lasted for around five hours. I was very tired from sitting on the chair all the time and from the beatings. At the

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<sup>8</sup> The testimony was given to Musa Abu Hashash at the minor's home on 30 April 2001.

end, they took me to the bathroom near the interrogation room. One of the interrogators grabbed me by the hair and put my head in the toilet. I was frightened. When they took me back to the interrogation room, I decided to confess. I told them that I threw five stones at a settler's vehicle.

They wrote up a detailed testimony and forced me to sign it. Then they took me to a cell. I knew that it was the police station in Gush Etzion. It was already morning.

I was in the cell there for more than forty-five days. The next day, a child from Sa'ir (a village eight kilometers east of Hebron) was brought into my cell. We stayed together until we were transferred to Tel Mond Prison to await trial. From Tel Mond, they took me to the court in Beit El. There were two court hearings. At the second hearing, I was convicted and sentenced to seven months' imprisonment and a fine of NIS 1000. My father paid the fine, and my sentence was reduced by a third for good behavior....

None of my relatives visited me while I was in prison. I was released on 7 March 2001 at 5:00 P.M. A patrol van dropped me off near the Palestinian checkpoint in Tulkarm. I had no money and my family did not know when I would be released. I walked to the checkpoint and asked a Palestinian soldier to help me. He said that I couldn't go home because it was too late. I spent the night at the checkpoint. The next day, Palestinian policemen took me to Ramallah, where my father, mother, and brother were waiting for me in my brother's car.

## **Interrogation of Mufid Hamamreh, age 15**

*Testimony of Mufid Hussein Muhammad Hamamreh, born on 14 November 1984,  
resident of Husan Village, Bethlehem District<sup>9</sup>*

At midnight on 9 November 2000, fifteen soldiers entered my house. Some of them had masks on and some had colored lines painted on their faces. They were looking for my brother Hasnin and me. Hasnin, who is twenty years old, was not at home. I was asleep in my room.

The soldiers took me outside, covered my eyes with a kerchief and tied my hands and feet. We walked for about three hundred meters to their jeep. They put me inside, with my head next to the speaker of a tape recorder that they played at high volume for a few minutes. One of the soldiers hit me in the head. We drove for twenty minutes before getting to Etzion. They left me lying on the ground in a summer shirt in the freezing cold for around twenty minutes.

Two soldiers came took me to the clinic. I remained blindfolded. At the entrance to the clinic, they told me to walk straight and I bumped into the door. Then I was taken to the interrogation room. The interrogators beat me and tramped heavily on my legs.

The beating lasted for around an hour. Then they stood me up in the middle of the room. The interrogators stood on opposite sides of the room. They turned me into some kind of ball, throwing me from one to the other for about fifteen minutes. They took a water sprayer filled with very cold water and sprayed the water on me, mostly into my ears and mouth and on my chest.

Then they brought three iron steps, tied me to them, and told me to lift them up, but I fell and couldn't do it. My shoulder hurt a lot when I fell. I still have a scar from the steps. One of them stood me up and punched me with great force. I fell to the floor and my nose started to bleed. The interrogators brought a bottle of water. I thought that they would try to stop the bleeding, but they poured it [the water] on my back. They took me to the doctor, who treated me and gave me medication. After a few minutes, my nose stopped bleeding. Among the things that they did to me during the interrogation were to extinguish cigarettes on my body and to beat me with a metal ruler.

Two interrogators took me to the courtyard. Because of the nosebleed, the blindfold had been removed, and I could see the two soldiers. They were in civilian clothes and their faces were covered. I remained in the outer courtyard. They put an empty pail on my head and, for half an hour, splashed water on the upper part of my body. They brought pieces of ice and forced me to swallow a piece and rubbed another piece along my chest. Then they took me to the bathroom, and for about five minutes flushed the toilet and splashed water on my face.

Then they took me to the Police offices. There were two people there. One of them was Alex, who was around forty years old and was wearing a police uniform. He limped and was bald. The other fellow was nicknamed "Captain John." He was around thirty, tall, and had white hair. The two of them kicked me and asked me how many times I threw stones. I told them that I never did.

The interrogation lasted for around thirty minutes, until two soldiers came and took me to a room with seventeen detainees. When they placed me in the room, my throat was really hurting, and I told the soldiers. They took me to a cell where I remained alone for three days. I was tired and very sick and couldn't eat the food because my throat hurt. After three days had

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<sup>9</sup> The testimony was given to Suha Ziyad at the minor's home on 3 May 2001.

passed, attorney Khaled al-A'arj came to see me. He saw my condition and told them to take me to the doctor.

First they took me to court, and the court extended my detention until 17 November. After the court hearing, I was taken to the doctor. He gave me medication and told me to take it after eating. I was taken back to the cell and that same day, between four and five o'clock in the afternoon, two soldiers came and took me the interrogation room.

There were three interrogators in the room. My brother Hasnin was also there. He had turned himself in the day after I was arrested. Right in front of me, the three interrogators beat my brother, kicking him in the abdomen and legs. One of them burned my brother with a cigarette and told Hasnin that he would shoot me if he didn't confess to everything. Then they took me back to the cell, and I did not know what happened to my brother. I stayed there until 17 November. On the 17<sup>th</sup>, they took me to the Gush Etzion military court, and I was ordered to be detained until the end of the legal proceedings. After all the procedures were taken care of, a policeman and policewoman took me to Megiddo Prison. At Megiddo, I was put in a tent with eighteen detainees.

I remained in Megiddo for six days short of six months. I was released on 2 May at 8:30 A.M., and arrived home at four in the afternoon.

## **Interrogation of Isma'il Sabatin, age 17**

*Testimony of Isma'il Ahmad Hassan Sabatin, born on 8 June 1983,  
resident of Husan Village, Bethlehem District<sup>10</sup>*

I was arrested on Tuesday, 14 November 2000, around midnight. As soon as I got out the door, they handcuffed me and took me to the area outside the mosque in the center of the village. My brother told me, in the presence of the soldiers, "be a man." The soldiers blindfolded me, hit and kicked me, and one even said "be a man."

We drove to the Gush Etzion station. They did not beat me en route. At Etzion, while I was still blindfolded and handcuffed, they took me to the doctor. The doctor put his hand on my chest, on [and not under] my clothes, and on my forehead, and said that I was fine. He did not use any medical implement to check me.

After the check-up, they took me to a metal structure [container]. They removed the blindfold. Two masked interrogators, who sat behind me, were in the room. One interrogator spoke to me in a very friendly manner and the other was aggressive and wanted to beat me. The friendly interrogator prevented the other from beating me, and said, "If you confess to the allegations, I'll help you. Consider me a friend, confess to what you did and what others did, and everything will be fine for you. I'll even let you go." I told him that I had nothing to say to him, and that he took me from the house even though I hadn't done anything. The "good" interrogator said, "If you don't confess, there are bad men and crazy guys here who will break your bones. It would be better if the two of us talk."

Three more people in masks came into the room. They blindfolded me, put a hood over my head, and took me to a nearby structure, the second in the line [of structures]. They kicked and slapped me. They beat me with a plastic pipe and whatever they could get their hands on. I couldn't see anything because I was blindfolded. I just felt the blows. That lasted for ten to fifteen minutes. The interrogators ordered me to get into a position with my legs up and my head down while I was leaning on the wall. They left the room and ordered me to stay there until they returned. Later, they stood me on a chair and told me to grab a pipe that was fixed to the wall. They removed the chair from under me and left me hanging in the air, with my handcuffed hands holding onto the pipe and the weight of my body, hanging in the air, drawing my hands downwards. They left the room.

After they took a break for several minutes, they came back and beat me for about an hour. They took me out of the room. There was a cold wind outside, and I didn't have my jacket. I was still blindfolded. They took me to a facility with several metal steps leading to a structure. Two of the interrogators who had beat me sat on the steps and ordered me to lift them while they sat on them. Then they told me to carry the steps for thirty minutes to an hour. While I was carrying the steps, they threw a bucket of cold water on my head and immediately afterwards a bucket of hot water. I fell to the ground. They took me into the room. They turned on the air conditioner for several minutes. Then they put on the heat. One of the them took off the handcuffs and let me wring out my shirt, which was drenched.

I felt better after sitting in the heated room for ten to fifteen minutes. Then they took me to the bathroom, put my head in the toilet and flushed the toilet. I fainted and the interrogators dragged me outside. Following all this, I decided to confess to throwing stones. They took me to a room with five other young fellows. At 8:30 A.M., they removed the handcuffs and

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<sup>10</sup> The testimony was given to Najib Abu Rokaya on 3 July 2001.

blindfold and took us to the Police. I signed a confession. The interrogator read me a list of thirty names and asked if I knew them. He claimed that they had stated that I threw stones, and he wanted to know who among them threw stones.

Attorney Khaled al-A'arj visited me two days after I was arrested. Then the court issued an order that I be detained until the end of the legal proceedings. After being at Etzion for six days, I was transferred to Megiddo. I was sentenced to seven months' imprisonment and a fine of NIS 2000. I was released on 23 May 2001.

## **Involvement of Physicians in Torture**

The testimonies in this report indicate that physicians at the Etzion police station are involved in torture. The minors reported that they were taken for a medical check-up upon arrival at the police station, after which the physician signed a form certifying that they were healthy. The minors were then taken to interrogation and tortured. The medical examination was superficial. In some of the cases, the detainee was handcuffed and blindfolded during the examination. In at least one instance, the minor, according to his testimony, was taken to a physician after an interrogator hit him in the nose, causing his nose to bleed. The physician gave him medication to stop the bleeding and the interrogation of the minor continued.

The participation of physicians in torture is forbidden and violates medical ethics. The Tokyo Convention, adopted by the World Medical Association in 1975, and the UN Rules of Medical Ethics, of 1982, prohibit all involvement, active or passive, of physicians in torture. These principles prohibit physicians to take part in torture or be present where torture is being employed; physicians are forbidden to consent to interrogations conducted under torture; physicians are forbidden to supply information that will enable torture. These prohibitions apply without regard to the gravity of the offense of which the detainee is suspected and regardless of the circumstances.

The involvement of physicians in torture is not new. Their involvement received stinging condemnation in the context of torture committed by GSS agents, when physicians examined detainees before their interrogation under torture and treated the detainees during the interrogation itself.<sup>11</sup> Physicians for Human Rights (Israel) requested several times that the Israel Medical Association (IMA) condemn the involvement of physicians in torture and requested physicians to report every instance of torture that they encountered. The IDF's Chief Medical Officer requested the IMA to publish directives to physicians in GSS facilities. The IMA ignored these requests, despite receiving numerous follow-up requests. This silence discredits the body that is supposed to uphold medical ethics and inculcate them among physicians.

The involvement of physicians in torture at the Etzion police station flagrantly breaches international medical ethics. Legal action should be taken against the physicians involved in these cases. Also, the IMA should initiate disciplinary action against the relevant physicians and consider revoking their medical licenses.

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<sup>11</sup> See Physicians for Human Rights (Israel), *Physicians and Torture: The Case of Israel*, 1999.

## **Interrogation of Muhammad Za'ul, age 14**

*Testimony of Muhammad Yasser Muhammad Za'ul, born in 1986,  
resident of Husan Village, Bethlehem District<sup>12</sup>*

On Monday, 25 December 2000, around 1:00 A.M., I was asleep in bed and awoke to the sound of violent pounding on the door of the house. My father opened the door and ten soldiers came in. Some of them wore in masks and others, among them their commander "Rami," had black lines drawn on their faces. Within a few seconds, four soldiers came into my bedroom. They demanded that I get dressed and told me that I was under arrest for throwing stones. They took me outside.

Four Israeli army jeeps and a white Toyota were parked on the main road around ten meters from the house. The soldiers threw me into the back of a jeep after handcuffing and blindfolding me. I was alone there for about five minutes, and then they brought two more people they had arrested: Shawqat Sarif Sabatin and Fahdi Ahmad Sabatin. They also threw them into the jeep. Several of the soldiers got into the front of the jeep. We weren't sure how many there were because we were blindfolded. The soldiers kicked us to get us to crouch.

We drove for about twenty minutes before reaching Etzion. They took us out of the jeep and then immediately to a doctor for a check-up. Then they took me to a room where one person interrogated me. The interrogator claimed that I threw a petrol bomb. He kicked me in the abdomen. He read out a list of thirty names of people from Husan and told me to say which of them had thrown stones. I mentioned one person, who was already in jail. I remained blindfolded and handcuffed throughout the interrogation.

One of the soldiers, whom I couldn't see, removed my winter jacket and struck me in the legs and back around twenty times with a mop stick. Then he used another stick and beat all over my body for about an hour, until the stick broke. He grabbed my head with his two hands and slammed it into the wall five times. He swore at me. At this point, I heard the sound of a trigger being squeezed and small plastic pellets striking me in the face. Maybe they were from a toy pistol or something like that. That really hurt and my mouth and nose bled. The interrogator told me that I had five minutes to confess. After five minutes, with my face still bleeding, three soldiers came in and, for about an hour, beat me all over my body with their hands and feet.

About to lose consciousness, I confessed to throwing stones. The soldiers took me to a room. They told me to stand with my face against the wall and my right leg raised. My hands were still cuffed, as they had been ever since I was arrested. I stood that way from 5:00 A.M. to 7:00 A.M.. Whenever I lowered my leg, they beat me.

After that, they took me to the police station, where they took my testimony. I was in great pain and was tired and half asleep. The soldiers jostled me so that I would wake up, but I couldn't open my eyes. At that moment, I saw Muhammad Nasser Sabatin, whose parents had brought him that day to Etzion, as the Israeli soldiers had ordered. When the soldiers came to arrest him the night before, he was at his grandfather's house, where he spent the night.

They took us to a 1.5 meter square cell. I slept from the moment I entered the cell. They gave us rice and tomatoes in the afternoon. I didn't eat anything and went back to sleep. I woke up in the evening and ate only yogurt. Muhammad Nasser and I were in the cell for six days. The meals were terrible and were not brought at regular intervals. After the six days there, a trial

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<sup>12</sup> The testimony was given to Suha Ziyad on 17 June 2001.

was set and postponed. I went back to the same cell, with Muhammad, where I stayed for another four days. Then they put us in a Police vehicle with four police officers and took us to Tel Mond Prison.

Three times trials were set and postponed. I was later convicted and sentenced to seven months' imprisonment and a NIS 2000 fine. I was in Tel Mond Prison for five months and paid the fine. I was released on 2 May 2001.

## Interrogation of Hamzeh Za'ul, age 15

*Testimony of Hamzeh Muhammad al-Fatah Za'ul, born in 1985,  
resident of Husan Village, Bethlehem District<sup>13</sup>*

On Saturday, 6 January 2001, around 2:30 A.M., I awoke to the sound of an Israeli soldier who ordered me to get up. I opened my eyes and thought that I was dreaming that a soldier was waking me, but there were in fact five masked soldiers standing over me. Their appearance frightened me a lot. I got dressed and they took me outside. On the main road near our house were Israeli soldiers, six large army jeeps, and a white Toyota Police Intelligence vehicle.

My cousin, Muhammad 'Ali al-Fatah Za'ul, who is called "King," Ibrahim Hassan Shusha, and 'Abd al-Fatah Sabatin were in the back of the vehicle. They had also been arrested the same night. The soldiers blindfolded and handcuffed me and put me into the car. It took about twenty minutes to get to the detention center at Etzion. We were immediately taken to the doctor, who examined us very quickly. Then the four of us were taken and stood in the corridor between the interrogation rooms. The interrogations began, one after the other. First they took my cousin, Muhammad 'Ali Za'ul. They beat him and we heard him screaming. Then they took Ibrahim Hassan Shusha, and after him, 'Abd Hassan al-Fatah. I remained alone. I heard them crying out.

It was about an hour before they took me into the room where the interrogator was. I didn't see him because I was still blindfolded.

The interrogator demanded that I immediately confess, otherwise he would beat me like he beat the others. I told him that there wasn't anything for me to confess. He began to beat and kick me all over my body, particularly my chest and neck. He beat me for about thirty minutes. Then I felt small plastic pellets, apparently from a toy gun, strike me with great force. He fired the plastic pellets, from a close distance, at my head, neck, and face. He did that several times and it hurt a lot. Then he again beat and kicked me for about an hour. He read the names of young fellows from Husan and wanted me to inform on them. I told him that I threw stones by myself and that I don't know anyone else who threw stones. I signed a confession stating that.

I was taken to a bathroom that was one meter square. Inside were the three detainees from Husan who had been arrested with me that night. They demanded that we stand along the bathroom wall and not move. Five minutes later, the commander came in, went to the bathroom, and did not flush the toilet. The stench was horrible. The room was very small and had no window. We stood in the bathroom until 7:00 A.M. Then they took us to the police station to sign the confessions.

They put me into a cell by myself and the other three in another cell. I remained alone and fell asleep until they brought me a meal in the evening, I did not eat it, and I do not know what it was. I went back to sleep, awaking in the morning. Around 9:00 A.M., they put me in a room with the other young fellows from Husan, and at 7:00 P.M., took me back to my cell. This continued for nineteen days, the whole time that I was at Etzion.

Ten days after I was arrested, on 16 January, a Tuesday, a court hearing at Etzion was held for Ra'id Hamid Hamamdeh, my cousin Muhammad 'Ali Za'ul, Fahdi Ahmad Hassan Sabatin, and me. The judge order that we be held until the proceedings ended. That was the first time

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<sup>13</sup> The testimony was given to Suha Ziyad on 29 June 2001.

that I saw attorney Khaled al-A'arj. We were taken back to the detention center. On Thursday, 25 January, around six in the morning, I was taken along with Ashraf 'Aeid Za'ul and Ra'id Hamid Hamamdeh from Etzion to Tel Mond Prison....

About a month later, I was tried in the court in Beit El. I was convicted and sentenced to seven months' imprisonment and a fine of NIS 3000. Ahmad 'Aref Sabatin and I were released from Tel Mond Prison on Saturday, 7 April. We arrived home around seven in the evening.

## Conclusions

The testimonies in this report present a shocking picture of torture and maltreatment of minors by Police interrogators. In most of the cases, the actions occurred after the minors were taken from their homes late at night. Following a night of interrogation under torture, the minors were brought before police officers, where they signed confessions that they had thrown stones.

These are not isolated cases or uncommon conduct by certain police officers, but methods of torture adopted at the police station and used against dozens of detainees, with many police officers at the station cooperating and aware of what was taking place. A few months ago, several attorneys reported to the authorities incidents that were occurring there and demanded an investigation. B'Tselem also requested the Department for Investigation of Police to investigate the cases. However, according to information received by B'Tselem, there is a strong suspicion that detainees continue to be tortured and that no meaningful measures have been taken to end the phenomenon.

In a Supreme Court decision on the appeal of the conviction of two policemen who beat a suspect to force him to admit to committing an offense, Justice Y. Maltz, writing for the Court, stated:

In my opinion, the offense that the appellants committed was extremely grave precisely because they are police officers. The work of Israel's police officers is hard and entails responsibility, and often is subject to danger and abuse, and they deserve all the sympathy that the courts can give them. But when does this apply? As long as they remember and are aware that the authority and control given them are only to perform their duties, and that it is forbidden to misuse them. They must review this day and night, precisely because their work at times requires rigidity and even the use of force. The transition from "reasonable force" to unnecessary violence is rapid and tempting, and Heaven forbid that they should cross the line.<sup>14</sup>

The Police did not attend to these comments, which were made fifteen years ago. B'Tselem has previously reported on police violence against Palestinians in matters not related to interrogation.<sup>15</sup> Despite the authorities' repeated promises, and despite the comments of senior officials condemning police violence, the authorities have made no serious effort to address the root of the problem. Similarly, they have made no attempt to prosecute the violent police officers. The cases described in this report are, in part, a result of the failure to efficiently enforce the law vis-a-vis police officers who harmed Palestinians. When senior Police officials refrain from transmitting an unequivocal message to police officers in the field that any offense against Palestinians is prohibited and that those who violate this prohibition will be severely punished, it is no surprise that torture takes place in Police interrogations.

B'Tselem urges the government of Israel to:

- Make it clear to all security forces that it is absolutely prohibited to physically harm detainees or their dignity, and that this is especially true of minors. They must review the

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<sup>14</sup> Crim. App., 64, 126/86, *Meir Ahsash et al v. State of Israel*, Takdin Elyon 86 (2) 952, 956.

<sup>15</sup> B'Tselem, *Beatings, Maltreatment and Degradation of Palestinians by Israeli Authorities during June-July 1996*, September 1996; B'Tselem, *Sheer Brutality – The Beatings Continue: Beatings and Maltreatment of Palestinians by Border Police and Police Officers during May-August 1997*, August 1997; B'Tselem, *Builders of Zion: Human Rights Violations of Palestinians from the Occupied Territories Working in Israel and the Settlements*, September 1999; B'Tselem, *Standard Routine: Beatings and Abuse of Palestinians by Israeli Security Forces during the Al-Aqsa Intifada*, May 2001.

existing procedures at the Etzion police station and the cases mentioned in this report, and, where appropriate, prosecute those involved in torturing detainees;

- Demand that all interrogators identify themselves to the detainees so that they can be subsequently identified if a complaint is filed. Security forces should be forbidden to detain or interrogate while their faces are covered;
- Make it clear to the medical staff in the interrogation facility that they must act according to medical ethics, including their obligation to report any instance of degradation, abuse, or torture of detainees. Legal proceedings should be taken against physicians who fail to comply and cooperate with the interrogators;
- Instruct Police interrogators that confessions are to be written in Arabic to enable the detainees to understand the contents of the document they are signing.

## Response of the Ministry of Justice

### Ministry of Justice Office of the Spokesperson

Jerusalem, 10 July 2001

Attorney Yael Stein  
B'Tselem  
Via Fax: 02-6749111

Re: **Response of the Department for Investigation of Police to B'Tselem's report regarding the complaint of Rami Yasser Za'ul, resident of Husan Village**

On 9 July 2001, you forwarded for review by the Department for Investigation of Police (DIP), through the Spokesperson of the Ministry of Justice, the draft of B'Tselem's report of July 2001 entitled "Torture of Palestinian Minors during Police Interrogations in the Etzion Detention Facility."

You requested that the DIP relate to the case of Rami Yasser Za'ul, 14, resident of Husan Village, Bethlehem District.

Rami Za'ul complained to DIP through his attorney that, following his arrest, he was, inter alia, severely beaten all over his body by truncheons and punches, as a result of which he was taken to Hadassah Hospital, Jerusalem. According to him, as a result of the severe violence used on him, he confessed to the offenses attributed to him. Since a medical report was not attached to the complaint, the complainant's attorney was requested to provide DIP with a medical report. **Based on the medical documentation submitted to DIP, the complainant was not found to have any injury, external cut, or any other sign of the alleged violence.**

Taking into account the contention that forbidden methods were used, as a result of which the complainant admitted the offenses attributed to him, DIP informed him that this contention should be raised at his trial, if he deems it proper to do so. **Under these circumstances, DIP was of the opinion that it would not be proper to replace the court as regards the examination of the confession's admissibility.**

DIP received the complainant's appeal. The attorney's attention was drawn to the fact that the medical documentation ostensibly refutes his client's contention, and he was recently requested to inform DIP if, under these circumstances, he still wishes to appeal.

Sincerely,

Ya'akov Galanti  
Spokesperson, Ministry of Justice

**Response of the Israel Police Force, SHAI District\***

SHAI District Headquarters

Tel: 02-6279211

Fax: 02-6279239

10 July 2001

Attorney Yael Stein  
B'Tselem

Re: B'Tselem's report on torture during interrogation by police officers in the Etzion detention facility

1. I acknowledge receipt of your letter, which was received via the Police Spokesperson.
2. A reading of your letter raises the suspicion that police officers beat Palestinian minors during their interrogation at the Etzion detention facility.
3. The Department for Investigation of Police, and not SHAI District, is responsible for opening an investigation of such a complaint. Therefore, your letter will be forwarded to DIP, which will respond to you.
4. A similar document was sent to the District Commander by a B'Tselem data coordinator. This, too, was forwarded to DIP for investigation.
5. Attached is our reply to the *Yediot Aharonot* journalist who published an article on the matter.

Sincerely,

Rafi Yaffe, Superintendent  
District Commander Spokesperson

\* Translated by B'Tselem

SHAI District Headquarters  
Tel: 02-6279211  
Fax: 02-6279239  
12 July 2001

Attorney Yael Stein  
B'Tselem

Re: B'Tselem report on torture during interrogation by police  
officers in the Etzion detention facility – additional reply  
Ref. S.M. 9550, 9 July 2001

1. The cases described in B'Tselem's correspondence arrived at the office of the SHAI District commander at the end of the week and were forwarded to the Department for Investigation of Police for investigation. Until the investigation is completed, therefore, we are forbidden to respond substantively to the contentions. There are stages in which detainees can complain about brutality by police officers in the event that such occurred. For example:
  1. during the interrogation
2. when being checked into the  
prison facility
3. when meeting with an attorney
4. at a hearing to extend the  
detention

The District's police officers are working diligently in battle against Palestinian violence and initiate actions in which they detain hundreds of Palestinians suspected of committing security offenses that include: shooting, setting bombs, and hurling petrol bombs and stones at Israelis and security forces in Judea and Samaria, which have resulted in death and many persons being injured.

2. Over the past six months, 3785 security offenses *were recorded*, in comparison with 2413 last year, an increase of sixty percent. Thanks to the District's activity, 1107 files were solved, compared to 529 last year, a thirty-percent increase of all files that were opened. The District's wide-scale activity on the subject significantly affects the level of violence, while being extremely careful to ensure that the interrogations are conducted fairly and in accordance with the procedures and the law.

In this context, legal review by the military prosecutor's office and the courts in Judea and Samaria exists regarding the reliability of evidence and the manner in which it is obtained.

Sincerely,

Rafi Yaffe, Superintendent  
District Commander Spokesperson

