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Agenda item 61

REPORT OF THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE TO INVESTIGATE
ISRAELI PRACTICES AFFECTING THE HUMAN RIGHTS
OF THE POPULATION OF THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES

Letter dated 7 December 1982 from the Permanent Representative of Jordan
to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

I have the honour to enclose a report based on statements made by
Dr. Steinar Berge and child-care worker Øyvind Møller at a meeting in the Department
of Foreign Affairs of Norway, held on 24 June 1982.

The testimony of the two Norwegian doctors speaks for itself. It is a gruesome
account of the savage behaviour of the Israeli forces towards the Palestinian
refugees and the Lebanese citizens of south Lebanon.

I request Your Excellency to circulate the attached report as an official
document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 61, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Hazem NUSEIBEH
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

ANNEX

Note dated 6 June 1982 from the Department of
Foreign Affairs of Norway

The enclosed report (see appendix) was based on statements made by Dr. Steinar Berge and child-care worker Øyvind Møller during a meeting in the Department of Foreign Affairs of Norway on 24 June 1982, at 04-07 a.m. Both were members of the health team of the Palestine Front of Norway in Saida.

The team worked in accordance with an agreement between the Norwegian Palestine Front and the Palestine Red Crescent Society.

Present from the Department of Foreign Affairs were:

- (1) Hans Wilhelm Longva, regional advisor
- (2) Bjarne Lindstrøm, officiate chef du bureau/assistant secretary
- (3) Lars A. Wensell, first consultant
- (4) Peter N. Raeder, first consultant
- (5) Steffen Kongstad, aspirant.

The following members of the health team of the Palestine Front were also present:

- (1) Marianne Møller
- (2) Liv Berit Bredby
- (3) Berit Fiksdal.

The purpose of the meeting in the Department of Foreign Affairs on 24 June 1982 was to obtain a thorough account of the circumstances concerning the arrest of Dr. Berge and child-care worker Møller on 13 June 1982 and of the treatment of Berge and Møller while in Israeli captivity from 13 until 20 June, and to hear Berge's and Møller's eyewitness accounts of the treatment of their fellow prisoners during captivity.

The meeting took place on the initiative of the Department for Foreign Affairs. The meeting was taped, and the tape recording has been, to a great extent, the basis for the compilation of the report. The report compiled by the Department of Foreign Affairs was read and approved by Dr. Berge and child-care worker Møller.

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They have also signed the report and thereby have confirmed that it gives a correct description of what they have experienced.

Department of Foreign Affairs
Hans Wilhelm LONGVA

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The translation from Norwegian into English is "unauthorized"; it was done hastily by the Palestine Front. Any complaint concerning the inaccuracy of the English version is therefore the responsibility of the Palestine Front and not the Department of Foreign Affairs.

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APPENDIX

Report

1. The circumstances under which Dr. Steinar Berge and child-care worker Øyvind Møller were arrested

Berge and Møller were arrested at a "check-point" established by the Israelis in Saida on the street leading down to the beach where they had to come for passport control. Those who passed the check-point received a stamp in their passports. In the opinion of Berge and Møller, the stamp meant that the recipient was recognized by the Israelis, and the stamp gave freedom of movement within a certain area.

Berge and Møller presented themselves to the control point on 12 June, and were passed. Berge received the necessary stamp in his passport and on his Red Crescent identity card, while Møller received the stamp on his arm. The next morning Møller's stamp was transferred to his passport and to his Red Crescent identity card.

On 13 June Berge and Møller again, presented themselves at the check-point to accompany a Canadian and a Palestinian doctor whom they had been prevented from meeting on 12 June. The reason why Berge and Møller accompanied the two doctors to the control point on 13 June was that they wanted to see if they would be arrested. The rest of the Palestinian personnel at the hospital had already been arrested, including the anaesthetist, so if the surgeon, a Canadian, was also arrested, the hospital would have to close. When Berge and Møller had both passed the control point and received the necessary stamps the day before, they felt that they were already recognized or approved of, and that they had the freedom of movement the stamp gave.

The way the control point operated was that those who presented themselves had to pass from one check-point to another on each side of the street. Between the two check-points there were three parked cars with informants whose faces were masked and who were to point out whom to arrest. Berge and Møller do not know the identity of these informants. When they passed between these two check-points together with the Canadian and the Palestinian doctors, Berge and Møller were arrested by persons they identified as Israeli soldiers. Neither Berge nor Møller was given any opportunity to identify himself or explain himself at the moment of arrest. According to Berge and Møller the persons arresting them did not necessarily know that they were arresting health workers.

After the arrest Berge and Møller were taken to a school where arrested persons were gathered. Between one and five minutes after their arrival at the school - that is about 15 minutes after their arrest - Berge and Møller were given the opportunity to identify themselves. They had shown their valid Norwegian passports with valid Lebanese entrance visas, valid Lebanese identity cards - from which it was clear that they had valid residence in and work permits for Lebanon - and identity cards issued by the Palestine Red Crescent Society, from which it was clear that they were civilian health personnel. These identity cards were white,

clearly "labelled" with the Red Cross and the Red Crescent emblems and included a picture of the owner with the PRCS stamp. Møller's identity cards were taken from him during his imprisonment, while Berge kept his and showed it during the meeting at the Department of Foreign Affairs.

In addition to the fact that they had identified themselves as health personnel about 15 minutes after their arrest both Berge and Møller were convinced that they were recognized the same afternoon at the place of internment by the highest-ranking Israeli officer in Saida, a man named Arnon Mozer.

Berge and Møller had already met Colonel Arnon Mozer at the check-point on 12 June. They had complained about the difficult conditions prevailing at the hospital following the arrest of 90 per cent of the male personnel on 11 June and said in particular that they "were short of" anaesthetists for the many operations which should have been performed immediately. At the meeting with Colonel Mozer on 12 June it was agreed that there would be a meeting with the same Mozer on 13 June at 10 a.m. After having waited for two hours at Mozer's office, until noon on 13 June, Berge and Møller took part in a meeting held for civilian health personnel in Saida to discuss the further organization of health care in the town. The meeting was led by an Israeli doctor (a self-styled psychiatrist). The Red Crescent Hospital, just across the street, was not on the list of co-operating hospitals, so Berge subsequently considered their representatives' presence at that meeting a mistake on the part of the Israelis. Berge and Møller were coming directly from this meeting when they were arrested. The same afternoon Mozer saw Berge and Møller, now as prisoners. Berge and Møller do not doubt for a moment that Colonel Mozer recognized them, although no conversation took place between Mozer and either Berge or Møller. Mozer was standing about two metres from Møller and they looked at each other.

Neither Berge nor Møller was given any reason for his arrest during their captivity from any responsible official among the Israeli personnel. The furthest any responsible Israeli official had gone in giving an explanation for the arrest was that at one point Møller asked the reason for the arrest and had received the answer: "We are interested to know who you are". On the other hand, soldiers, whom Berge and Møller took to be guards of the prisoners, accused them of belonging to the "Baader-Meinhof gang" and of being "murderers" or having "worked for murderers" and of having "helped to hide PLO".

Marianne Møller, Øyvind Møller's wife, stated that on her inquiry she had received the information from Colonel Arnon Mozer that the reason for the arrest of Øyvind Møller was that he "had helped the PLO and terrorists to escape from the hospital". Arnon Mozer had not been willing to give Mrs. Møller information about Steinar Berge. Øyvind Møller said that during his imprisonment he had not heard any accusations of the kind that Mozer had given to Mrs. Møller. Both Møller and Mrs. Møller stressed that this accusation was unjustified, and that in any case it would have been impossible to help anybody whom the Israelis were after to escape from the hospital because of the intensive Israeli control.

2. Treatment of Steinar Berge and Øyvind Møller in Israeli captivity

Immediately after their arrest on 13 June, Berge and Møller were taken to a schoolyard in Saida, where they were kept for about 36 hours. On 15 June, in the morning, they were taken to another collection-camp in the Safar Citrus Corporation, 2 to 3 km south of Saida. The next day, 16 June, they were taken to the Magido prison in Israel. On 20 June in the evening they were released and handed over to the Norwegian Embassy in Tel Aviv.

Shortly after his arrest Møller had had a red cross and some sort of crescent sign painted on the back of his shirt. Berge, for his part, had had a number of Hebrew letters painted in black on the back of his shirt. All prisoners were labelled in the same way. Berge and Møller did not know what these labels meant, and they could not tell if prisoners with different labels were treated differently.

After they reached the school in which they were interned while in Saida, they were first taken into a small schoolyard, and later into a larger open ground nearby. In the small schoolyard they had to kneel with their hands tied behind their backs. They could not remember whether they had to sit with their heads bowed even at this place.

While they were still in the small schoolyard they could hear people scream - "screams of pain" - from the larger ground near by. They also heard salvos of shots from the larger ground, but they could not tell whether the shots were fired just for a scare effect or whether some people were actually shot.

Later, they were themselves taken into the larger open ground, where they were forced to kneel with their hands tied behind their backs and with their heads bowed. Later their hands were tied in front of them and the guards permitted them to "look up" without any particular reaction. They had to kneel like this for about 36 hours continuously without being permitted to move. During the daytime they were kneeling in the sun and were bothered very much by the heat. In the night it was rather cold.

Seven armoured cars, personnel carriers, each equipped with a heavy machine-gun pointing at the prisoners, encircled the ground.

Although a couple of times they were touched with batons and other objects, they were not submitted to physical violence during their imprisonment. But Israeli soldiers who were hitting other prisoners on several occasions gave the impression that they wished to hit Berge and Møller also, but this did not happen. Subsequently Berge and Møller were subjected to threatening behaviour from the Israelis, but not to physical molestation. The Israeli soldiers used abusive language. Berge and Møller had the impression that, while some soldiers wished to hit them, others had restrained them and prevented them from subjecting them to physical molestation. In this regard, Marianne Møller stated that she was visited by an Israeli soldier who told her that her husband had been taken to Israel two days before. The soldier in question said: "I saw to it that they got proper treatment." He did not identify himself and was not willing to explain what he meant by "proper treatment". In addition to this information from Mrs. Møller,

Øyvind Møller stated that he had asked his interrogator to go and see his wife and tell her that he was being taken to Israel - as the person leading the interrogation had promised.

Berge and Møller were given food - bread and water - for the first time the evening after they were arrested. Later they received "special" treatment: they were the first to receive food and water and they received more than the other prisoners.

Berge and Møller were treated correctly during the interrogation. During the interrogation on 14 June in the afternoon, Berge was told to examine a corpse which lay outside. He had the impression that the purpose was to check whether he was a doctor. Close to the body that Berge had to examine there were 56 other corpses lying in a car (estate-type). The examining magistrate had told Berge and Møller that in his view they could be released. This, however, did not happen.

Berge and Møller were treated correctly in the collection-camp in Safar. In the bus which took them to Israel, they were given preferential treatment. While the other prisoners had to sit blindfolded in the back of the bus with their hands tied behind their backs, Berge and Møller sat in front of the bus without any blindfolds and without being tied.

In the Magido prison in Israel, Berge and Møller had to lie for about 48 hours on what they described as "the interrogation ground". All the time they had handcuffs on and were blindfolded as well. However, even here they were given preferential treatment since, unlike the other prisoners, each of them was able to lie on a mattress most of the time. They had also been permitted to sit upright on the mattresses. In this period Berge and Møller could hear other prisoners on the ground being struck. On one occasion, stones were thrown at Berge and Møller. During the rest of their stay in the prison, Berge and Møller were treated fairly well. When they moved around in the prison they were blindfolded and were either handcuffed or placed in footcuffs.

3. Eyewitness account by Berge and Møller of maltreatment of prisoners

According to both Berge and Møller, there was extensive use of violence against prisoners in the larger open ground at the school in Saida. Berge and Møller estimate the number of prisoners on that ground at between 500 and 600 and they estimate that roughly one half of them were subjected to physical violence - that is to being struck or to blows.

Weapons used to strike with were thick, solid, round or square, torn off table legs. Also used were long, baton-like sticks with some elasticity. These sticks ranged up to one metre in length and were about two centimetres thick. Long stiff plastic tubes similar to gardenhose were also used for striking. Thick ropes, often with big knotted ends, were also used for striking. On one occasion Møller saw such a rope with a piece of metal attached to the end being used for beating. On another occasion he saw a club or table leg with a nailed end used for striking. The soldiers could use five, six or seven different plastic straps tied

together so that the bundle formed a whip. The captives were steadily hit with clenched fists and rifle-butts and were kicked with military boots. Shots were fired in the air right above the heads of the captives.

Although the extent to which violence was used varied, the use of violence went on for the whole day. The least violence occurred in the morning but increased throughout the day. During the daytime the use of violence did not cease, but was ended in the evening as the captives went to sleep. During the night no violence occurred.

The pattern of violence used was that small groups of prisoners in the outskirts of the ground were taken aside, and groups of two, three and up to four soldiers beat the captives with the tools described above. The captives were most often hit in the stomach, the chest, on the shoulders, in the head, and somewhat more seldom in the groin, depending on the captives' sitting position. The extent to which violence was used against an individual captive varied.

Another matter stressed by Berge and Møller was that the plastic straps which were used for tying the hands of the captives were flat and with sharp edges, so that they caused pain to the captives. Later, during their captivity, Berge and Møller saw a great number of captives with wounds caused by these straps. On a couple of occasions Berge and Møller saw that well-disposed Israeli soldiers removed the plastic straps with a knife for a captive who had complained of the pain. They also saw cases where the straps were tightened on captives who complained of pain.

Berge and Møller considered some of the cases of maltreatment they had witnessed at the school in Saida to be severe, and they made a special account of these.

The first day of his stay in the schoolyard Møller witnessed a group of prisoners being taken in. He was not sure of their number, but there were at least more than five. Their hands were tied behind their backs and they were blindfolded. When they came into the yard they were placed in a row beside Møller. An Israeli soldier whom Møller describes as fat and wearing a red armband took a position facing the captives. One Israeli soldier after another drove his knee at full force against each captive's groin. When the captive subsequently fell forward the soldiers hit his neck with his hand and the captive fell to the ground. Then the soldier kicked the captive right in the face and in the stomach. The prisoners were then gathered in a heap, where they doubled over with pain. They were not unconscious.

In another case, an old man, estimated by Berge and Møller to be around 60 years old - evidently in despair, got into an upright position and tried to kick an Israeli soldier. Four or five soldiers then at once fell upon the man, whose hands were tied behind his back but who was not blindfolded. The prisoner was beaten to the ground, and then the four or five Israeli soldiers beat him continuously with wooden sticks and cudgels. He was alternately hit and kicked in all parts of the body without exception: on the top and in the back of his head,

right in the face, in the stomach, in the shoulders and arms, and in the groin. This went on for quite some time. Møller did not try to estimate the duration of the treatment, but Berge estimated it to have lasted for some 10 minutes. The man remained on the ground, lifeless. In this condition the man's wrists were tied to his ankles and he remained lying on the ground. Neither Berge nor Møller saw that the man was removed from the ground. Later, while Møller was waiting to enter for his interrogation, he saw the man lying right outside the window of the interrogation office with three others. The four bodies lay at most six metres from Møller's position.

The second day, Berge and Møller were at the Saida school. They saw a medical doctor whom they knew from the Red Crescent Hospital, where Dr. Berge had worked before the Israeli invasion. The doctor whose name was Dr. Nabil, was originally from the West Bank (occupied Jordan) and had been educated at the University of Barcelona. Dr. Nabil had been responsible for preventive care at the Red Crescent Clinic. When Berge and Møller saw him in the schoolyard, he had a rope around his neck and was being towed around by Israeli soldiers as other soldiers hit him with sticks. The day after Berge and Møller saw him at the collection-camp south of Saida; he was then sitting, staring blindly ahead and had big wounds on his neck and big marks on his back.

At both ends of the schoolground in Saida there were poles with "basketball nets", as well as other poles which Berge and Møller thought to be either handball goals or swings. Captives were regularly tied up to these poles and beaten. Often the captives were just left there hanging from the pole.

Berge and Møller also pointed out that many of the prisoners on the ground by the school in Saida did not get enough water, in particular the captives in the middle of the ground. As the soldiers came by with water, these captives became "desperate", got on their feet and asked for water. The soldiers then distributed a little water to some of them and threw the rest of the water into their faces. Then the soldiers started to beat the captives so as to make them sit down again, and kept beating them after they had sat down. Afterwards they fired shots above their heads. This was repeated several times. At the collection-camp south of Saida, Berge talked to a man who was suffering severely and who claimed that he had not got any water for three days.

Berge also pointed out that many captives had minor injuries at the Saida schoolyard and were in need of treatment, but did not receive any.

It was the impression of Berge and Møller that the maltreatment of captives which they had witnessed in the schoolground in Saida occurred at the initiative of the soldiers and not on order from their officers. On the other hand, it was also their impression that the officers did not care what happened at the schoolyard. The officers were present all the time, obviously to consider the situation, but they did not intervene.

Berge and Møller hold that there were altogether about 30 to 40 soldiers guarding the ground in turn at the Saida schoolyard. The group that was guarding

at night was "nicer" than the daytime group, and there was no maltreatment of captives during the night. Berge and Møller also stress that a minority of the soldiers remained pasive and did not take part in the maltreatment of the captives. These soldiers treated the captives as well as they could, in view of the circumstances, and gave the impression of keeping aloof from what happened.

A majority of the soldiers participated to a greater or lesser extent in the maltreatment. One of the soldiers who was specially bad told Berge and Møller that he had many friends in Oslo, and that he came from a kibbuz in Israel where a Katyuska missile had killed an Austrian girl. This soldier was among those who had taken part in the maltreatment of the old man whom Berge and Møller believed had died as a consequence of the treatment he received. The soldier had curly hair and wore a string of mother-of-pearl beads around his neck. Both Berge and Møller believe that they would be able to recognize both this soldier and other soldiers who took part in the maltreatment of the captives.

According to Berge and Møller, there was less violence in the Safar collection-camp south of Saida than on the schoolground in Saida. In the collection-camp south of Saida there were instances of violence against prisoners, but there was no systematic violence. In this camp the first two Israeli doctors turned up to give some of the prisoners medical treatment. The captives still had their hands tied behind their backs and had to sit calmly on the ground. In the collection-camp the soldiers performed with more proper cudgels or batons, and Berge and Møller had not seen any of the objects used for beating at the Saida schoolyard there.

However Berge and Møller witnessed single instances of violence in the collection-camp as well, as mentioned earlier. On another occasion they saw captives standing with their arms in the air, in an upright position, who were beaten when they lowered their arms. On another occasion, they saw a blindfolded prisoner who had his hands tied behind his back put down on the ground and then hit with wooden cudgels in his stomach, in the groin and in the posterior. This lasted for about three or four minutes and the man howled in pain quite a while afterwards. A third instance of maltreatment which Berge and Møller saw was a captive being beaten for a long time until one of the other Lebanese captives who knew him called attention to the fact that the person being beaten was a lunatic.

Concerning the bus transport from the collection-camp south of Saida and to Israel, all the prisoners were beaten with bigger sticks before they entered the bus. This had happened at all the bus departures Berge and Møller had witnessed.

On board the bus that took Berge and Møller to Israel all the captives apart from Berge and Møller and the Canadian surgeon, Chris Giannou, were blindfolded and had their hands tied behind their backs. Berge, Møller and Giannou were sitting in front of the bus without being tied and without blindfolds. Apart from the driver, there were two soldiers with the bus; both had submachine-guns and clubs. The bus had one car in front and one behind as escorts. The soldiers on the bus regularly hit the captives in the head and on the body. On a couple of occasions one soldier also used an umbrella to beat with. En route the bus stopped at places that Berge

and Møller figured out were kibbuzim. On a couple of occasions soldiers and persons dressed in civilian clothes came on board the bus at such stops to "look at the prisoners". The people boarding the bus in this way also on a couple of occasions hit the captives.

On their arrival at the Magido prison in Israel both Berge and Møller were blindfolded. Before being blindfolded Berge had been able to see seven or eight soldiers with clubs. Berge and Møller did not leave the bus at the same place as the other prisoners. When the remaining prisoners left the bus, Berge and Møller, who were then blindfolded, heard that the prisoners were being beaten, that is, they heard the blows and the howling and the moaning afterwards. The captives then walked alongside the bus, not more than one metre away.

During their interrogation in the Magido prison, where Berge and Møller were kept for 48 hours, they heard several voices shouting to a captive, and they heard the captive being beaten. During their interrogation in the Magido prison both Berge and Møller saw clubs in the interrogation room. Møller clearly heard blows and howling from pain from the neighbouring room during his second examination. On another occasion they heard a person being beaten. Another morning they heard a repetition of the same. On these occasions Berge and Møller were blindfolded.

4. Other questions

In answer to a query on the effect of the use of violence on the prisoners or captives, Berge and Møller replied that all the captives seemed exposed to it. They had seen captives bleeding after having been hit in the face, and they had seen captives with cuts (lesions) in the face. Several of the captives they had met in the prison showed bruises. Most of the captives wore shirts and long trousers, and possible marks of the violence on their bodies were not visible. One exception was Dr. Nabil, whose injuries were described above.

In his capacity as a medical doctor Berge could not say for certain what had caused the death of the dead persons he had seen during his imprisonment, but considered it most likely to be a combination of blows and varying degrees of heat-shock and dehydration. Some could also have died as a result of injuries sustained before captivity and for which they had received no medical treatment.

In reply to a question about possible errors in their account, Berge and Møller answered that it could be that they had not registered what had happened around them well enough, and that their account was therefore incomplete and lacking in detail, in particular concerning injuries caused by the use of violence. On the other hand, both Berge and Møller are convinced that the account they gave correctly reflects the facts.

Neither Berge nor Møller mentioned any instances of the violence which they had witnessed during their captivity in front of Israeli officers. The reason for this, they state, was that they were afraid of what consequences could have ensued for themselves had they done so. They feared that the Israelis could have reached the conclusion that they had seen too much.

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Berge and Møller mentioned the use of violence for the first time to the Norwegian ambassador in Tel Aviv, immediately after their release on 20 June. During their stay in the Norwegian embassy in Tel Aviv from 20 June in the evening until 21 June in the morning, Berge and Møller also mentioned the use of violence to the President of the Norwegian Red Cross, Mr. Bjørn Egge.

Steinar Berge

Øyvind Møller

Marianne Helle Møller
