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THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST

SECURITY COUNCIL
Thirty-seventh year

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

I have the honour to enclose herewith the verbatim record of an interview with Mr. Ralph Schoenman and Mr. Mya Shone, two correspondents who witnessed the barbaric slaughter of the Palestinian refugees in the Shatila and Sabra camps, all of whom were unarmed elderly men, women, children and infants. This eyewitness interview proves two ghastly facts:

1. That the entire savage operation was planned, commanded and executed by the over-all command of the Israeli regular armed forces;
2. That most of the slaughter and mutilation had been carried out with axes, knives and other weapons of butchering on a mass scale. The worst of this, according to the two eyewitness correspondents, was that the free-flowing blood and pools of blood showed that torture and mutilation of thousands of victims had preceded death.

There are no words which can even remotely describe the incredible and barbaric massacres.

I request, Your Excellency, that the enclosed interview with the correspondents be circulated as an official document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 34, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Hazem NUSEIBEH
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

INTERVIEW WITH RALPH SCHOENMAN
AND MYA SHONE

- Q. Much of the debate and discussion surrounding the massacres which took place in Sabra and Shatila camps center on the question of Israeli responsibility for the killings. What evidence do you have pertaining to this?
- A. We have evidence that the murder of Palestinian and Lebanese civilians in Sabra and Shatila was part of a coordinated military operation under full command of Israeli armed forces.
- A. Could you elaborate?
- A. First, it should be made clear that what took place in Sabra and Shatila had already been prepared for by the destruction of the camps in the South of Lebanon and the nature of the occupation there. Bear in mind that the aerial bombardment had reduced these camps to rubble and caused terrible destruction resulting in tens of thousands of casualties. Then after the Israeli invasion of West Beirut, the intense shelling of the camps caused further devastation. This shelling continued from Wednesday, September 15th. It was an important factor in preventing people in West Beirut from knowing about the massacre immediately, because people couldn't reach the camps.
- Q. When did the killing inside the camps begin?
- A. It began on Wednesday night. It began, moreover, after Israeli armed forces had sealed off the camps, preventing the civilian population from escaping. It is crucial to realize that the Israeli army had total military control of the area. The killer units which carried out the slaughter did so in full coordination with Israeli armed forces. They could not enter the camp or carry out a military operation without full cognizance of Israeli command officers.

- Q. But why assume that Israeli officers and soldiers knew that the militia were slaughtering civilians inside the camps?
- A. It is no assumption. By Thursday, despite the Israeli fire directed against escaping civilians, some 1,500 refugees managed to reach Gaza hospital in the north of Sabra camp. They were in panic and hysteria and filled the basement and corridors of the hospital. They told the Norwegian, Finnish and German doctors and nurses about the killing in the camps and that Israeli forces were firing on the camp, having sealed it off.
- Q. What did the hospital personnel do?
- A. They asked the International Committee of the Red Cross to enter the camps and to ask the Israelis to halt the slaughter.
- Q. Did they do so?
- A. The International Committee of the Red Cross stated that the shelling was too intense and that they could not reach the camps. Nor, it should be pointed out, would Israeli forces permit them to do so.
- Q. What happened on Thursday?
- A. People in Sabra met in houses and shelters during the shelling and took a community decision to appeal to the Israeli Command Post at the Kuwaiti Embassy for an end to the killing in the camps. Four men were sent as a delegation to the Israeli Command Post under white flag to inform Israeli commanders that: a) The camps were offering no resistance and were in a state of surrender. b) There were NO arms in Sabra or Shatila - arms having been turned over to the multi-national force before its departure. This four man delegation did not survive its mission. All four were shot dead around 5 p.m. Thursday afternoon. Their bodies were found at the Israeli army checkpoint near the Kuwaiti embassy.

The names of the four men were:

Abu Suald, age 62

Abu Hamad Ismail, age 55.

Tewfik Abu Hashmeh, age 64.

Abu Ahmad Said, age 65.

Q. How do you know this?

A. We interviewed with tape recorders survivors of the massacre in Sabra. They described to us the decision to send the delegation, its mission and its fate.

Throughout this period of Thursday and throughout Friday and Saturday morning Israeli forces continued to ring the camps and to direct fire at people.

Q. What was the relationship between the killer militia and Israeli forces?

A. The Israeli army supplies the militia with uniforms, arms, rations - even shoelaces. Moreover, at the checkpoints of the Kataeb and Haddadi militia, there is always an Israeli in charge. Indeed, the uniforms are the same except that Haddadi forces often have "Free Lebanon" stitched on their uniforms and Kataeb have a Phalange insignia.

Q. Were there witnesses that you interviewed who survived the massacre?

A. We interviewed in Shatila and Sabra over seventy people who survived the massacre. Their accounts are consistent. People from different parts of the camps who did not know each other gave very similar accounts of what took place. Person after person described to us the integral nature of the military operation between Israeli forces and the militia.

Q. Be specific.

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A. Hussain O. was arrested by Israeli forces on Thursday night as he tried to distribute bread during the shelling. He was taken through checkpoints manned jointly by Israeli forces and Haddad militia. He saw people marched to these checkpoints, separated out and shot by the militia in the immediate presence of Israeli soldiers who were in command.

On Friday morning, several witnesses described how Israeli armed forces entered Shatila and the southern part of Sabra. They entered from the road which connects the Kuwaiti embassy to Akka hospital. One of the survivors saw the killing of Safih Khalid Hamoud, age 38 and her two children, Hassan, age 2 and Mohammad, age 8.

Q. What did the Israeli forces do?

A. They entered the main road of Shatila and south Sabra. They fanned out into the small streets. They met no resistance. They then formed a phalanx inside the camp, 100 yards from the house of Safih Khalid Hamoud. The militia units then came through the Israeli lines which reformed behind them protecting their rear flank. The militia began to slaughter people systematically with Israeli forces present. They had uniforms identical to those of the Israeli troops except that "Free Lebanon" was stitched on them. They painted the Kata'eb insignia on houses. They killed with axes and knives.

Q. What took place on Saturday?

A. In the early morning, about 5 a.m. the slaughter began again as Israeli troops ringed the camps. The killing took place until 10:30 a.m. Bulldozers were brought into the camps to pile up bodies and pour rubble over them. One Lebanese man was saved by the screaming child he was holding. For some reason he was left unscathed while all around him soldiers cleaved people

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with axes and knives. Another witness, Sadik K., age 60, hid while militia hacked people with axes. One boy hid in his mother's blood and was left for dead but had his finger chopped off while lying there,

Q. How did you enter the camps?

A. We tried on Saturday morning to gain entry but were turned back at Israeli checkpoints. We then walked through Fakhani and behind buildings until we gained entry into Shatila and Sabra. It was a charnel house. We photographed piles of bodies, pieces of people. In the small streets and in the houses and shelters we saw hundreds of people in one small area. With the exception of one family which consisted of two parents and three small girls, who had been machine gunned in their bedroom, all the rest were mutilated. Heads were smashed with axes. Eyes were cut out. Brains lay next to heads. Skin was stripped from neck and face. Limbs were severed. Abdomens were laid open. It was butchery on a sustained scale. The worst of this was that the free-flowing blood and pools of blood showed that the torture and mutilation had preceded death.

Q. Did you see any Israeli soldiers while you were there?

A. At approximately 1 p.m. Saturday, we had gone to the Akko hospital facing the camp. It was burning. The rehabilitation center had been set afire. As we left the building, Israeli tanks, half-tracks and combat units in flack jackets descended on the camps enveloping us. They were using loudspeakers as well broadcasting into the camp that any who did not surrender would be killed. There was no call to any killer units to desist as claimed falsely by the Israeli government.

Q. What did you do?

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A. We photographed the tanks and the combat units. We entered Shatila and continued to take pictures of the butchered bodies. There was machine gun fire from the Israeli troops which went unanswered.

Q. What do you conclude from this?

A. Israeli forces were engaged in the military operations of which the massacre was a component from Wednesday, September 15 through Saturday, September 18.

Israeli forces fully control the area. The militia are under their command. If, for example, the troops of an occupying army use special forces trained and recruited by them and under their direction to carry out a slaughter in their presence, how can one speak of this as the action of the individual soldiers who wielded the axes and knives? It is an insult to our intelligence to say such things. Israeli forces ringed the camps. Israeli command posts have complete view of the camps. Israeli soldiers were inside the camps during the butchery. Four delegates from Sabra were shot dead when they appealed for an end to the slaughter. This was a coordinated military operation from beginning to end.

Q. How many were killed?

A. The Lebanese Red Cross personnel counted over 3,000 bodies not including those buried under rubble placed over them by the bulldozers on Saturday morning. The mass grave is 150 feet by 150 feet by 25 feet deep which was prepared by the Lebanese army and Red Cross to receive the bodies and it is full.

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Q. Are there other witnesses besides the survivors in the camps?

A. The Norwegian, Finnish and other foreign doctors and nurses at Akka and Gaza hospitals saw patients shot dead in their beds. When the doctors and nurses were marched out of Gaza hospital on Saturday morning, they saw bodies everywhere. About 1,000 people were lined up on the street. As the doctors and nurses marched, people were being taken in groups to the side streets and machine-gun fire was then heard. The Egyptian hospital accountant was shot dead. In Akka hospital Dr. Ali Osman, a Palestinian, was taken and shot dead.

Moreover, an Israeli military unit entered Akka hospital and lined up the medical personnel. One Israeli officer gave a piece of paper with his name on it to the Palestinian nurse, Antisar Ismail, and told her to show this paper to the soldiers who were due to come shortly. When the Israeli soldiers left, the militia unit followed them into Akka hospital. They were shown the piece of paper by Antisar Ismail. They laughed and took her into the basement of the building behind the hospital. She was raped and mutilated. The disfiguring was so terrible that her aunt could only identify the body from the rings on her finger. Here is an Israeli unit entering a hospital and then sending in a militia unit which butchers people. This is the pattern. Where else in the world, in what occupied country, would you exonerate the occupying army when indigenous militia under its control are used to carry out murderous operations?

People, everywhere we have gone, in and out of Lebanon, understand this.

Q. Was this massacre the major atrocity of the war?

A. It is perhaps the emblem of the occupation but it is in its essence little different from what has taken place throughout the South.

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Q. Have there been massacres in the South?

A. There are mass graves throughout the South. Some are the result of the saturation bombing. Some are the result of the fire power on the ground directed at shelters, schools and the small houses found throughout the camps.

Q. Where were you in the South?

A. We spent three weeks in the South and travelled extensively throughout the villages and the refugee camps as well as the cities of Nabatiya, Tyre (Sur) and Sidon (Saïda). In Ain el Helweh, a refugee camp which once held 80,000 people, the Israeli airforce bombed this camp in a period of ten days with unrelenting intensity. The camp was taken as a grid and each quadrant was subjected to carpet bombing in sequence. When each part of the camp, which is about 1 mile by 1½ miles in size, was levelled, the bombing began with the first segment. This carpet bombing continued day and night. After ten days, shelling began of similar intensity. This camp was reduced to rubble. Shelters collapsed. In one shelter 500 people died; in another 250 died. Incendiary weapons were used. Phosphorous shells were fired into the shelters broiling people alive. The U.N.R.W.A. clinic is located opposite the Government hospital of Sidon. This hospital has been gutted and its roof converted into an observation post overlooking the camp. The U.N.R.W.A. clinic personnel complain that fluid from the mass grave keeps flowing into their clinic!

Q. What caused these mass graves?

A. The Israeli army buried nearly one thousand people in a mass grave next to the hospital. It is a shallow grave. There is a similar mass grave opposite the St. Joseph Convent School where the road to Tyre begins.

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Q. What has happened to the surviving population?

A. The Palestinians have been scattered. They live in store fronts and garages. They live out in the streets. They have tried to return to the rubble in Ain el Helweh but they are prevented by the Israeli army from performing any repairs which would rebuild houses. Wherever this destruction occurs, Israeli bulldozers follow and make huge piles of rubble. We have witnessed this.

Q. What of the wounded?

A. Hospitals have been shut down. The Red Crescent, which was the medical service organization of the P.L.O., has been destroyed. Virtually all its medical personnel have been imprisoned. Private hospitals do not want to admit Palestinians because of the constant arrests which occur in hospitals where Palestinians are treated. Because Palestinians in the camps are poor and because medical treatment in the private hospitals is very costly, most Palestinians are refused admission because they lack funds. Almost all cases of infection, major wounds, burns or even amputations result in infection and subsequent death because there is no medical care.

We have spoken to many people who described how family members still alive in the rubble were buried alive by bulldozers which piled rubble further on top of them, ignoring their cries and the pleas of relatives. This was told by many people in Sidon and Ain el Helweh, describing to us the fate of their families.

Q. Where else do these conditions apply?

A. In all the camps in greater or lesser degree. Rashidiya has been virtually destroyed, with the exception of some buildings. But there are constant arrests which continue to this day. The Kataeb come into the camps and shoot them up. Women are raped. People are robbed. And Israeli units are always near by.

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Q. What is the relationship between the militia and the Israeli army in the South?

A. At every checkpoint of the Haddadi militia, an Israeli soldier or officer is present. The Haddadi are supplied by the Israeli army with weapons, uniforms and shoelaces. They share barracks with the Israeli army. This is also true of the Kataeb. We saw many barracks where Phalange and Israeli were together. And checkpoints of the Kataeb are invariably monitored by Israeli soldiers who are clearly in charge. None of the killing by the militia occurs without Israeli knowledge. It is safe to conclude this after seeing the total military control exercised by the Israeli armed forces.

Q. Is this situation uniform in the South?

A. The pattern is clear. In the villages, Israeli armed forces enter and go house to house. Most of these are Lebanese villages. But if they are Muslim or if the National Movement has a following or if Palestinians live in the villages, the Israeli army destroys the contents of every house in the small villages. Many houses are bulldozed or blown up at random. The male population is rounded up in the center of the village or town. Masked informers then point out people. They are taken away. Sometimes their bodies are found. Usually they are never heard from again.

Q. Is this continuing?

A. It is an ongoing process. While we were in one part of Rashidya, at night, Israeli soldiers would be beating people and arresting them in another part. Constant sweeps continue in the villages and the hospitals or clinics which still function.

Q. What about prisoners and those taken away?

A. We have taken over 6,000 affidavits - powers of attorney which have been signed by family members - authorizing lawyers such as Lea Tzemel in Israel to act as the lawyers for these prisoners.

Q. How many prisoners are there?

A. The International Committee for the Red Cross has spoken of approximately 9,000 prisoners in Ansar which is between Tyre and Nabatiya. But we have spoken to numbers of prisoners who were released. We have learned of between eight to ten detention centers in the North of Israel. Megiddo has held as many as 8,000. We have sought to estimate the total number of people taken prisoner but it is very difficult. For example, the women of Tyre spent two weeks, day and night, calculating the number of prisoners by having women from the surrounding villages and from Tyre visit the residence and office of Bishop George Haddad. They painstakingly wrote down the name of the prisoner, the date he was taken, his father and grandfather, his age etc. They compiled a list of nearly 16,000 names just from the area surrounding Tyre. In Sidon some women compiled a list from a small area. There are 2,500 names on this list. We believe that between 20,000 and 30,000 men have been arrested and held at some or another time. Their fate is not known. A few hundred have been released and they tell a horror story.

Q. What do they describe as the conditions in the camps?

A. Throughout the villages and the camps we hear the same account. The prisoners are subjected to sustained and savage beatings with heavy sticks, pipes and electric wire. We have many accounts of deaths. People are deprived of water for extended periods of time. They have been left in the broiling sun. One young boy was hanged from his wrists with wire for 36 hours. The wire cut to the bone. He was beaten around the head so severely that he became amnesiac. All his teeth were smashed. Electric torture is widely reported. One man, an engineer, described how nine prisoners were subjected

to torture with electricity in front of him. Electrodes were attached to the feet, the genitals, the fingers, the abdomen and the face. One victim's body jumped nearly two feet. He died instantly. Another died a seizure. One young boy in one of the camps described how boiling water was poured over one man. The boy had been beaten systematically himself. Two youngsters had fractured skulls when we saw them. Wherever we went - in every village, refugee camp and town that we visited we have come across this. The stories are consistent. We have precise detail, day by day accounts on tape. In some instances we have photographed the scars. There are many accounts of sustained cigarette burns on the hands and faces of prisoners. One woman who was so burned has lost the use of her hands. In the case of electric torture, we have the names of the Israeli guards and officers who participated in the electric torture. This pattern of abuse in the camps has been so widespread and reported to us by so many people that we are certain that it was a policy. The uncontrolled behavior was that of the random Israeli guards who tried to stop the torture. The sustained and controlled behavior was that of systematic beating, deprivation and torture.

In Ansar, for example, prisoners are appointed who must beat the other prisoners if there is any infraction. They get favors if they do this and are punished if they refuse.

Q. How are prisoners arranged, identified and selected?

A. Prisoners are stamped - some on the backs, some on the arms.

The distinction between Palestinians and Lebanese is made in this way. The overwhelming majority of these prisoners are civilians including large numbers of professional people - lawyers, doctors and teachers, engineers and administrators. Mohammad Maki,

to take one example, was the financial director of the Secours Populaire, a medical relief agency which had on its board four hundred prominent Lebanese including the Minister of Home Affairs, Minister Labban.

When he was arrested, no one knew where he was taken. We only learned of his imprisonment in Ansar when we spoke to two youths, of 16 and 17 respectively, who had been released from Ansar and who had seen Mohammed Maki there. It should be mentioned that these two youths were themselves savagely beaten and told that if they described what had happened to them or described prison conditions the Israeli army would know and they would be killed. The house of Mohammed Maki was dismantled stone by stone by Israeli soldiers. His wife and children were harassed and continually visited by soldiers.

Q. What about the International Red Cross?

A. They do not perform well. They refuse to make any public statement about conditions in the camps although individual International Red Cross personnel have seen such conditions in Ansar and said so to us. All of them have heard accounts from ex-prisoners. Yet all the identification cards provided family members by the International Red Cross for prisoners held in Ansar are marked "En Bonne Sente". It is pathetic.

Q. But what of family members or former prisoners who make complaints to the International Red Cross?

A. We have many examples of this. First, it must be remembered that it is very dangerous for former prisoners and family members to complain. There are constant spies. The people are subject to re-arrest and to savage reprisals by Haddadi and Kataeb militia followed by destruction of homes by the Israeli army and even the arrest of the entire family.

Despite all these hazards, some released prisoners have gone to the International Red Cross and related their experience. They have done this out of a sense of urgency and concern for the fate of those still in prison.

Q. What has been done?

A. In every case, the International Red Cross has passed on the complaint, with the name of the complainant, to the Israeli armed forces. The International Red Cross will make no public statement. Their rationale is that they put the Israeli armed forces on notice of the complaint. But the net effect is to collaborate with the Israeli army and to expose the complainant and his family to severe jeopardy.

Q. Why did people speak to you?

A. Because we are known for work on behalf of political prisoners in other countries and we came with recommendation or with local trusted people.

Q. How does the population manage?

A. The situation of the Palestinian population and that of the poor Lebanese is dreadful. There is no means of income. All the men are in prison, in hiding or dead. Only a few men, most of them sick or injured, remain. People are faced with constant harassment and without the means of sustenance. Medical care is virtually non-existent. The destruction of the camps results in an absence of hygienic facilities. There are cases of typhoid and much skin disease. The people try in all ways to keep areas clean but it is very difficult.

Q. What of the Lebanese authorities?

A. In the South, they are reduced to Vichy puppets. You find all

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the road signs in Hebrew. Israeli officers are signing two year contracts for apartments in Tyre and Saida. It is an occupied country and the Lebanese authorities do nothing. There are spies everywhere and the Kataeb and Haddad militia intimidate, loot and kill?

Q. Is there much looting?

A. The worst looting has been performed by the Israeli armed forces themselves. The steelworks in Saida were stripped of \$30,000,000 of iron and rolling stock, loaded onto trucks and shipped to Israel. The technical equipment of the U.N.R.W.A. trade school was looted of its lathes, machine tools and typewriters. The offices of Middle East Airlines were stripped of their computers and electronic guidance systems - all these were shipped to Israel. But perhaps the most shameful examples of this vandalizing of the country has been documented in Beirut.

Q. What are you referring to?

A. Israeli officers have occupied the apartments and homes of some of the most distinguished scholars and intellectuals of Beirut. They also entered and occupied cultural institutions such as the French cultural center, Cernaoc. They entered the National Library. Wherever these occupations have occurred, books, carpets, paintings and biblos have been gathered in piles. Soldiers have shit and pissed on them. In the home of Amara Salam, the sister of Sa'eb Salam, soldiers shit on the Turkish carpets and valuable paintings. They gathered small objects, antiques and statuettes and shit on them. Shit was left in every room, on the walls. At the French cultural research center which belongs to the French government, the Israeli officers and soldiers threw shit everywhere. There is shit all over the ceilings! They took showers and baths on the large carpets. They took all the books. There is

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shit in the drawers of desks and cabinets.

In the home of one woman known for her library, the Israeli army occupied it and left shit in every floor and in every room. They gathered her towels, draperies and clothes and pissed and shit on them. The stench of shit is throughout the house. An Israeli officer had told her the house would be given back to her in the "condition it deserved."

In the Laboratory near Barbir hospital which is a blood research center, Israeli soldiers occupied the entire building. There is shit everywhere including all the receptacles and blood samples.

The feeling that this has engendered amongst everybody - Lebanese, Palestinians, foreigners, journalists - is palpable. Perhaps even more than the massacre, this desecration has made people feel the horror of this occupation. The fouling of the libraries, cultural centers and homes of Lebanese contrasts with the language constantly used by the Israeli army with regard to the Palestinian population: They are being "cleaned out", areas are being "sanitized" - euphemisms which refer to bombing without mercy, mass arrests with torture and now massacre.

Q. But the Lebanese army itself is now making arrests.

A. Yes in the thousands. But what is this army? It is under the control of the Phalange, to all intents and purposes. Katab speaks of "reducing" the Palestinian population from 500,000 to 50,000. This begins to make clear what has been the real purpose of the destruction of the refugee camps by such unimaginable fire power, the sustained targeting of the hospitals and now the massacres, punctuated by mass arrests and torture. This is an attempt to destroy the Palestinian community as an integral society. It is the destruction of

the social fabric of the Palestinian people. They are being forced to disperse or die - or to disperse AND die.

Q. But will the situation not change when foreign troops withdraw.

A. We see what has happened to the population when their own fighters have withdrawn. We think the demand of the moment is for the immediate withdrawal of the Israeli armed forces. We think that what we have seen in Lebanon is a rehearsal for the West Bank. We think that the occupation of Lebanon is the work of Judeo-Nazis and that the people of Israel must awaken, must recognize the Palestinian people as their victims and must cease to give license to governments which use words like "security" and "settlement" as a euphemism for the destruction of a people.
