

Voices From the Occupation



Name: Mohammad T.
Date of arrest: 26 January 2011
Age: 15
Location: An Nabi Salih, occupied West Bank
Accusation: Throwing stones

On 26 January 2011, a 15-year-old boy from the village of An Nabi Salih, in the occupied West Bank, is arrested by Israeli soldiers and taken to the nearby illegal settlement of Hallamish, for interrogation.

At around 8:30 am, on 26 January 2011, 15-year-old Mohammad was returning home from the village shop with his cousin. When the two boys arrived home, Mohammad's grandmother warned them that Israeli soldiers were arresting young men from the village. *'We wanted to escape,'* explains Mohammad, *'because soldiers usually arrest children and young men our age.'* Mohammad's village is situated adjacent to the illegal Israeli settlement of Hallamish, which is built on village lands, and a source of constant tension.



Hallamish – illegal Israeli settlement in the occupied West Bank - Photo credit: GhtH

As the boys were leaving the house, they were surrounded by six Israeli soldiers. *'The soldiers ordered us to get down on the ground. When we did so, they started kicking us and also hit us with their rifles,'* recalls Mohammad. *'My mother and grandmother tried to defend us but the soldiers prevented them and kept beating us for like five minutes while we were still on the ground. They also insulted and offended us.'* The soldiers searched the two boys and found some empty bullet casings and rubber bullets in Mohammad's cousin's pocket, probably left scattered around after the **weekly demonstrations** against the settlement. The boys hands were then tied tightly behind their backs and they were led away to the Israeli military watchtower that controls the entrance to the village nearest the settlement. Mohammad reports being kicked, pushed and slapped on the short walk to the watchtower. *'When we reached the watchtower, a male and a female soldier climbed down and ordered us to kneel and lower our heads. Then, a soldier stood on my head and kept pressing down, forcing my head to touch the ground ... it was very painful,'* says Mohammad. Sometime later, a military jeep arrived and the two boys were placed on the floor and driven the short distance to the settlement. *'When we arrived, the soldiers pulled us out and forced us to kneel down facing the wall. At this point, they blindfolded us. Whenever I moved, somebody would kick me in the back. We kept sitting there for about 20 minutes and my legs started to feel numb.'* Mohammad was then taken for interrogation. There were two men, one speaking Arabic, and the other Hebrew. *'He asked me about who was throwing stones. Then, he removed the blindfold and showed me photographs of people. He asked me about them and I told him I didn't know them.'* Mohammad was then taken to see a doctor and his hand ties were removed. *'The doctor examined my hands because they were turning blue,'* recalls Mohammad. *'Then I was taken to another room with my cousin. The soldiers blindfolded us again and made us sit in very small, low chairs and our hands were tied behind our backs. Sitting in this position was very painful and tiring. They pushed me and knocked me down three times. My cousin asked the soldiers to let him use the bathroom twice, but they refused. Then, they took him away and never brought him back. About half-an-hour later, four soldiers came to the room, removed my blindfold, and untied me. They put me in a military jeep and released me near my house at around 3:00 pm.'* Mohammad later learned that his cousin was taken away to Ofer Interrogation and Detention Centre, and will be tried before a military court.

On 29 January 2010, DCI-Palestine submitted 40 cases to the UN involving allegations of ill-treatment of children by Israeli forces. In 47.5% of the cases, the children report being mistreated whilst held in an illegal Israeli settlement – **In their own Words: A report on the situation facing Palestinian children in the Israeli military court system**