

PHYSICIANS FOR HUMAN RIGHTS: FACT-FINDING MISSION TO THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES

The following notes reflect the opinions on the situation in the Occupied Territories of a group of prestigious American scientists, members of Physicians for Human Rights, during a press conference which took place in Chicago on February 11, 1988.

The members of the delegation were: H.Jack Geiger ; Arthur C Logan , Professor of Community Medicine, City University of New York Medical School, expert on problems of health and poverty Jennifer Leaning, faculty, Department of Medicine, Harvard Medical School, expert on trauma and emergency medical service. Lec Shapiro, psychiatrist, Massachusetts Mental Health Center, faculty Harvard Medical School. Bennett Simon, psychiatrist, psychoanalist writer, Cambridge Hospital, faculty, Harvard Medical School.

This press conference had a tremendous impact on the American public opinion.

Geiger: In four days in the field the delegation had visited government hospitals, Palestinian hospitals, clinics, Hadassah the Red Crescent, the Gaza Blood Bank, Izaq Saver -Health Directc of the Civil Administration-, patients and some Israeli Knesse members. They had been caught up in demonstrations, observed traum care in emergency rooms and ridden in ambulances.

Geiger summarized what they had witnessed as an "uncontrolled epidemic of violence by the army and the police". He emphasized that what they had witnessed could not be considered deviations but represented a current "norm". The types of injuries they had seen led to conclusions about the type of violence used.

Leaning: Addressed the problem of scope. She noted there were extreme problems in estimating the scope because of the problem with registration in the hospitals and clinics (both because the doctors are overwhelmed with treatment and have no time for records, and because many patients are treated quickly and released without registration for "security" reasons). They estimate that a very high percentage of the injured are treated in the village by their families, medical committees, or traditional village healers.

Dr. Saver told the group that between December 21 and February 3 there were 250 injuries on the West Bank. During the same period there were between 350 and 500 injuries reported in the press. Extrapolations from time samples taken by health professionals on the West Bank lead to estimates of between 630 and 766 on the West Bank and 450 to 1,320 in Gaza. The breakdown by population category: 5-10% aged between 10 and younger; 5-30% over 30 years old; 20% are women, with a higher mean age than men.

PHR's estimate, based on the fact that they had sampled 10% of the possible sites during a 4-day period, extrapolating to a 60-day period:

West Bank	10%	3,300	100%	33,000
Gaza	10%	500	100%	5,000

There are obvious problems in extrapolating this way. During the period they were here, for example, there were many more injuries reported in the West Bank than in Gaza, while Gaza had been much worse during earlier periods. The valid conclusion, however, is that the proper estimate of injuries is in the "thousands" and not the low hundreds, as reported by the authorities.

Nature and pattern of injuries

1. Beating

The pattern of injuries in the West Bank indicated a measure of "restraint" in that they tended to avoid torso injuries, focusing on limbs. Most of the limb injuries were "midshaft breaks" (for example, of hands, legs, arms, kneecaps). This indicates that the limb was stretched out and deliberately smashed to disable. She stressed that such injuries could not have been sustained by victims' acts of self-defense or hitting. In Gaza, there is similar evidence, but in addition there is a greater incidence of head injury and more fractures per person -often all the limbs. One example: a 40-year-old man who had been beaten arrived at the hospital with 0 blood pressure, 4 limb fractures -including a midshaft hand fracture- scalp lacerations and subcutaneous emphysema (subcutaneous emphysema occurs usually when a rib has been fractured and punctured the lungs. Air then escapes into the tissues of the chest, shoulders and sometimes neck, causing swelling of the tissues).

Leaning said that the word "beating" does not convey the social and medical reality of the injuries they saw. She noted that beatings on the body could have more serious and long-term effects than bone structures, particularly because the muscles will have fibers and not pliant, without strength for normal activity. The kind of beating occurring also sends excess proteins through the blood, which can result in a kidney failure, as has happened in some cases. Beating on the head, even beating that does not result in skull fracture, can cause brain hemorrhage.

2. Gunshots

They estimate that 50% of gunshot wounds are in the torso and are "disabling". The bullets used are "high velocity", which means that they fragment, causing extensive internal damage producing what Leaning called a "lead snow" effect. Low hits of the torso result in mono- or quadriplegic situations; high hits are usually fatal. Hits to the eye are a "high probability" accident. In response to a reporter's inquiry whether it was possible for a bullet to enter the leg and "travel up" to the groin or pelvis area (military officials claim) she said it was highly improbable, not impossible. There are a high number of groin injuries.

The physicians defined injuries as evidence on the surface of the body as a result of beating, rubber bullets or bullets.

Situation in hospitals and clinics

The physicians reported that the hospitals they had visited were "overwhelmed" by a steady stream of trauma -up to 50 times normal, both in terms of need for blood and treatment. Gei said it was "worse than MASH". In addition, to begin with, hospital conditions and resources were terribly inadequate, if not substandard. The delegation was most impressed with the physicians who did extremely well under appalling conditions. One doctor who had seen many Third World health care systems, said that the care by those standards what they saw did not meet an acceptable standard. They noted that Alia Government Hospital in Hebron was "frightening"; that the hospital had only 2 blood pressure cuffs, only one of which was working; that there was an ambulance shortage; that they were dealing with patients with catheters, colostomies, fractures, bleeding, etc.

The physician did not see how the medical professionals could

maintain the present level of trauma treatment into the next few weeks. There is bound to be a collapse.

Simon: Talked about possible long-range psychiatric problems. He predicted that the situation would probably lead to a hardening of the Palestinian position and to increasing "irrationality" in the political process. Added to the "humiliation" of occupation was the high level of beating and other humiliations. Young men, not just stone-throwers, were angry, defiant, outraged and unified. The high level of unification was shown, for example, by the incredible amount of blood donated on a regular basis. The situation is also leading to an interruption of education and job training.

The adults in the homes they visited were stunned, outraged and just assumed that the level of brutality they and their children experienced was acceptable to the Israeli public. One could expect a high level of illness, but also a generalized anxiety in the population, which would be expressed in many ways. Small children could be expected to show signs of chronic anxiety, depression and nightmares, and the development of a fundamental attitude that the world is a dangerous place and that everything is "black and white", "my tribe vs. their tribe".

Shapiro: Interviewed an army psychologist who is supposed to be issuing a report in the near future. The psychologist said that a minority of the soldiers enjoy or are unaffected by their present tasks. Most feel it is bad, but something that they have to do. About 10-15% are torn apart by it. There seems to be developing a sort of "Vietnam" syndrome; the left is accusing them of atrocities and the right says they are not tough enough. He quoted some troops agonizing over "hitting women", etc. They noted Shamir's official statement that everything was under control and that maximum restraint was being used did not correspond to "what we observed."

The physicians also commented on miscarriage and intrauterine fetal deaths. Detailed information on this subject can be found on Chapter I, page 36.

Medical human rights and ethics

- 1) Health personnel have been refused entry to camps and other areas under curfew to give treatment. Ambulances have been hijacked at gunpoint and used as "Trojan Horses" to enter areas in order to beat and arrest people.
- 2) Hospitals have been assaulted, medical personnel beaten, machines smashed and patients pulled from beds and arrested.
- 3) There has been a disruption of prenatal care, especially in Gaza, and a halting of the immunization program.
- 4) There is a shortage of water. Water supplies to camps are often cut for 3 to 4 days. Babies have been delivered without water. It is incredible that such problems, especially in hospitals, have not resulted in more serious infections related to operations. Many camps have suffered food and medicine shortages and garbage collection has been disrupted.

According to one doctor, "If this were a war, much of what we observed would be considered atrocities." What is most worrisome is that the situation does not seem to call for this war response on the part of authorities.

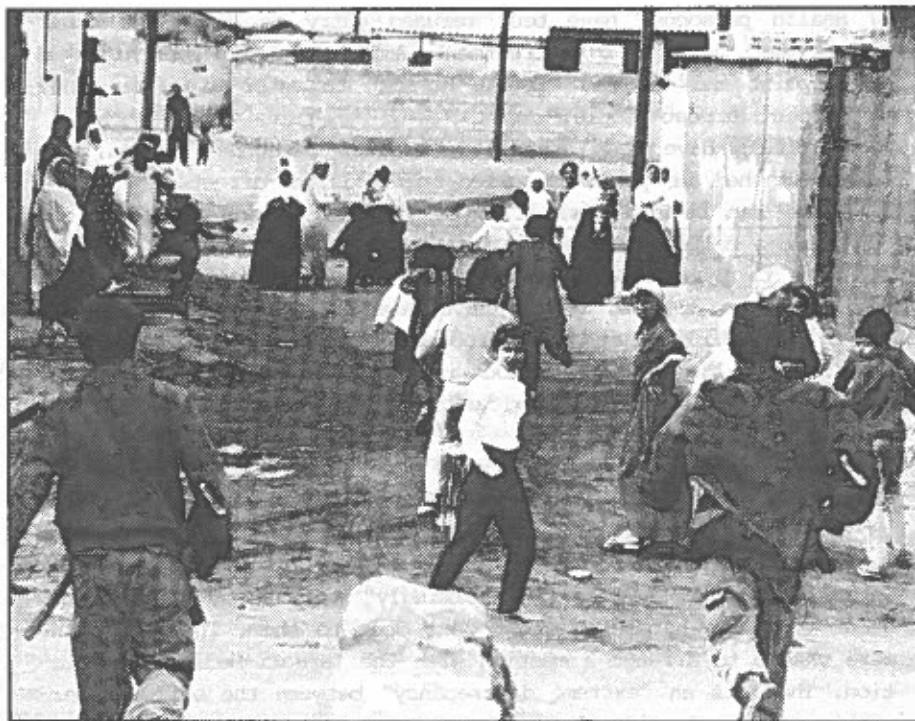
Israeli doctors seemed "overwhelmingly" unaware and uninformed about what was happening right next door to them. The physicians were unable to arrange a meeting with the Israeli Medical Association. There is an "extreme discrepancy" between the official perception (even of the Health Director) and reality. And the discrepancy seems "unnegotiable"; the officials they met with disagree totally regarding numbers, evaluation, everything, they were also unable to meet with military officials, despite repeated attempts. While the physicians described the violence as "epidemic", they noted that there was a potential for even greater violence which indicates that, at least for the time being, at least in the West Bank, some "restraint" is being used, apparently in an attempt to avoid a high number of deaths.

Recommendations

These were, by the physicians' own admission, rather modest.

- 1) Stop treating a civil disturbance by unarmed civilians as major attack by an armed enemy.
- 2) Israeli doctors should do as they did: i.e., see for themselves what is happening from a medical point of view.

Note: nous tenons à la disposition des francophones un article paru dans Le Monde le 13.2.1988.



Jaffa Service

The Parliamentary Association for Euro-Arab Cooperation sent factfinding mission to Israel and the Occupied Territories from Sunday 31st. January to Friday 5th. February, 1988

The delegation comprised three Members of the European Parliament and three members of national parliaments. They were: M. Lanigan, R. Hicks, A. Billon, G. Bersani and P. Price. It covered the political spectrum and several European nationalities.

One of the members of the mission, MEP Peter Price, commented "I was appalled to learn how ill-disciplined force is being used against the Palestinians in the refugee camps by the Israeli army. It was commonplace for people of all ages to come up to me to show their broken arms and other injuries. I accepted the evidence of UNRWA officials, journalists and the people themselves that most of these injuries were inflicted deliberately by the use of clubs. I saw groups of half a dozen young soldiers, without experience or leadership, swaggering through the camps, carrying their clubs. I saw them fire 5 CS gas canisters towards a group of women who were retreating into a community centre after holding up posters of Yasser Arafat and chanting support for him. Such use of force cannot be justified."

Mr. Price also said: "I visited two hospitals and learned from doctors about the injuries which they have been treating. Convincing evidence was submitted to me that 'dum-dum' bullets are being used so as to cause maximum injury. I saw a young man who had lost part of his leg as a result. I also saw a small girl who was badly burnt when an Israeli soldier in her home kicked a kettle toward her."

In an article published by the Daily Telegraph on Friday 5, 1988 Con Coughlin, correspondent in Jerusalem, quotes a declaration of Mr. Michael Lanigan, head of the fact-finding mission delegation and member of the Irish Senate concerning the use of dum-dum bullet by Israeli soldiers. Mr. Lanigan said: "The X-rays taken of these injuries show clearly that the bullets have fragmented on impact. Instead of causing a clean wound, the bullets are causing far more extensive damage... As a result, victims who in ordinary circumstances

tances would make a full recovery will be maimed for life."

Commenting the recent developments in the Occupied Territories, Mr. Price affirmed that "this kind of violence is uniting the Palestinian people in a way which has not been seen in 40 years. They feel let down by the other Arab countries as well as bitter towards the Israelis. They are determined to achieve the creation of their own Palestinian State in the West Bank and the Gaza strip." And he concluded by saying that "the events of the last few weeks have caused the world to turn its attention again to this long outstanding problem of the Palestinians, so many of whom are still living in refugee camps. I shall now be playing my part in the European Parliament to help in the use of Europe's influence to achieve a settlement. It is a desperately difficult problem but a solution must be found."

The main conclusions of the fact-finding mission were:

- unanimous and determined support of the Palestinian population for their youth and the PLO;
- the brutality of the repression carried out by an army of very young draftees confronted with a popular uprising; in this respect the parliamentarians were shocked by the number of persons from all age groups who were victims of bone fractures due to beatings;
- faced with this situation of political stalemate in Israel, there is an urgent need for the international community and Europe in particular to increase activities towards peace in the region;
- the conviction that Europe has the means and the possibility to act.

A detailed report on this fact-finding mission, written by Mr. A. Billon (in French) and an interview of Mr. Michael Lanegan to Maghreb Flash, are available on request.

Nous avons reçu de Mr Billon, député socialiste français, membre de la délégation de l'Association Parlementaire pour la Coopération Euro-Arabe, le témoignage suivant : L'ORDRE REGNE A KALANDIA ...

LUNDI 1er FEVRIER 1988

Il est 8h 30 du matin quand notre délégation, accompagnée de fonctionnaires de l'UNRWA, dans des véhicules des Nations-Unies arrive aux abords immédiats du camp de réfugiés de Kalandia qui regroupe environ 5200 habitants une dizaine de kilomètres au nord de Jérusalem. Les habitations faites souvent de brique et de brique se sont à des ans transformées en " dur ", accrochées de façon très dense au flanc d'une colline escarpée, un peu en retrait de la route. Il fait froid et humide, le vent souffle en rafales violentes, les rues du camp sont pleines de boue.

A l'entrée du camp l'école est fermée ainsi que quelques boutiques, et quatre véhicules de Tsahal sont déjà sur place : on a signalé des " troubles ". Sans grande enthousiasme, la petite escouade de très jeunes soldats israéliens qui en descendent, se préparent à pénétrer dans le camp à la poursuite d'une vingtaine de gamins qui le narguent à bonne distance en jetant quelques pierres.

Le chef de l'escouade, guère plus âgé que ses camarades, debout près du véhicule radio qui crachote des ordres, s'enquiert du but de notre visite, s'inquiète de nous voir pénétrer dans l'agglomération " pour notre sécurité " mais ne s'y oppose pas.

Pas d'hommes en vue, hormis quelques commerçants désœuvrés devant leur boutique close, et quelques vieillards. Par contre un groupe de femmes en longues robes traditionnelles ignorant délibérément les soldats nous entourent et nous assurent de façon véhément de la détermination de leur peuple à poursuivre la lutte jusqu'à la victoire. " Il faut que les israéliens s'en aillent. Elles racontent que les soldats ont frappé durement leur enfant il y a deux jours.

La grande rue ayant été dégagée par les soldats, nous traversons le camp de part en part jusqu'à la maison Bachir HAMMAD, l'un des militants Palestiniens que le gouvernement israélien vient de bannir. La maison est infarcte, mais toutes les ouvertures ont été murées en représaille. Son vieux père et deux de ses frères, qui tous deux déjà fait de la prison, nous offrent le thé et nous disent : " Malgré ce qu'ils nous ont fait, nous n'aurions rien contre les juifs. Nous sommes prêts à leur donner main. Nous voulons votre témoignage pour nos paroles... ".

Sur le chemin du retour nous croisons à nouveau des soldats, matraque à la main, qui poursuivent de très jeunes enfants. C'est absurde, on dirait presqu'un jeu...

Mais quand nous sommes de retour à l'entrée du camp, le jeu s'est gâté : d'autres soldats sont arrivés en renfort et c'est maintenant un lieutenant qui commande.

L'officier - à la différence de celui qui nous avait accueilli plus tôt - est dans un état de totale surexitation. Il semble hors de lui et gesticule, une mitraillette dans une main, un fusil lance-grenade dans l'autre. Son exemple est contagieux : ses troupes s'enervent également.

La raison de leur comportement est évidente : face à l'école de l'autre côté de la rue il y a un jardin d'enfants. Là, dans la cour, une trentaine de fillettes, sont rassemblées avec leur monitrices et à notre approche, elles brandissent... des portraits de Yasser ARAFAT en scandant " Palestine Vaincra ".

Notre intention de photographier cette scène, manifestement préparée à notre intention, mais totalement inoffensive (des fillettes, dans une cour, brandissant des portraits) achève de faire perdre tout sang froid à l'officier, qui tente de nous arracher nos appareils photographiques, puis veut nous confisquer nos passeports. Je lui explique que je suis membre du groupe d'amitié parlementaire France-Israël, sans le calmer, bien au contraire.

Les responsables de l'UNRWA conseillent la retraite avant que tout ne dégénère complètement.

Soudain, alors que les voitures démarrent, incapable de se retenir plus longtemps, l'officier tire une grenade lacrymogène à bout portant sur les fillettes, imité par d'autres soldats, déclenchant une indescriptible panique...

Quant la fumée se sera dissipée, il y aura eu en fin de compte ce jour-là plus de peur que de mal.

L'ordre règne à Kalandie... Mais pour combien de temps ?

De retour à Jérusalem le soir, nous apprendrons qu'à Tulkarem deux nouveaux adolescents ont été tués...

CHAPITRE II

THE ISRAELIS AND THE DIASPORA

CONFRONTED WITH THE PALESTINIAN DRAMA

FACE AU DRAME PALESTINIEN DES ISRAELIENS

ET DES JUIFS DE LA DIASPORA S'EXPRIMENT