

ISRAEL: A WELCOME ASSISTANCE

When the Oslo-agreement was signed, our partner Ha Moked (Center for the Defense of the Individual) could have been expected to decide its dissolution shortly afterwards. Peace was within sight, and were going to cease: all the arbitrary arrests, bad treatments and torture, the destruction of homes, the violence, all these violations of the human rights of the Palestinians by the Israelis, military in particular....

Ha Moked has sent us their Annual Report for 1996. The organization has had 1.752 filed cases to deal with!

The majority of these still concern requests to locate persons detained by the army. In spite of an agreement, signed in September 1995 between Ha Moked and the Association for Civilian Rights in Israel on the one hand, and the Army on the other hand, according to which the army has committed itself to phone, without delay, to the number given by the prisoner, to report his arrest and place of detention. Very often, the army doesn't stick to its engagements. The families then appeal to Ha Moked which, almost every time, obtains the information.

Moreover, Ha Moked has taken legal action in the name of 55 Palestinians who were submitted to torture while being questioned. The lawyers have pointed out that often, they have been able to meet those prisoners only after weeks of torture, finding them "physically and mentally broken". For Israeli law-courts, this is practically a taboo: they refuse to adopt an official position regarding the matter.

The legalization of torture by the Supreme Court in November 1996 will not incite them to increased

audacity ("Lettre du Mois" n° 48). Thence, Ha Moked along with several other Israeli associations, conduct other types of action against torture.

As far as the cases concerning homes which were demolished due to a member of the family having taken part in terrorist-activities, all were rejected by the High Court.

Pleas on the part of Palestinians who were the victims of deliberate acts of violence or damage against their property, sometimes obtain results: Thus, four officers who beat up a young Palestinian who was discovered in a Jerusalem-suburb without a permit to enter Israel, have been taken to justice.

Also, Ha Moked has been systematically asking for compensation on the part of all the Palestinians who so wish. Action which has begun to bear fruit in 1996: A considerable number of Palestinians who were victims of violence have really received compensation after several years of action....which they wouldn't have been able to start and follow up without Ha Moked.

If Ha Moked is one of several associations fighting for the respect of Human Rights in the Occupied Territories and in Jerusalem, it is the only Israeli association which grants Palestinians a multiform assistance in case of violation of their rights.

In this way, Ha Moked contributes a lot to the chance of friendly relations between the two peoples in the future, and whatever else, it shows to the Palestinians, too often victims of the arbitrary, that an Israeli face can also be a friend's face.