

Sworn Statement

After having been warned to tell the truth and nothing but the truth or else I shall be subjected to penal action, I, the undersigned, 'Ata Salah Khalil 'Reiqat, of Palestinian nationality, holder of ID No. 944828946, born on 14 April 1984, a truck driver, and a resident of Abu-Dis town, Jerusalem Governorate, would like to declare the following:

On 28 May 2009, I drove a Ford Transit with West Bank registration number plates. Nine youths were in my company. We planned to go on a picnic to the Dead Sea. At around 10:00 pm, we stopped at a petrol station along the road to the Dead Sea, past Jericho on the junction to the Dead Sea. We unloaded our belongings and sat on the grass. Five minutes later, an Israeli military jeep and a security vehicle arrived in the area. A number of soldiers stepped down and told us that it was prohibited to sit in that place. "Why?" we asked. "I don't want anyone here. Go!" a security officer replied.

I should note that the place was full of other cars, including Israeli and Arab cars. We left for another petrol station on Almoc road. Having stayed there for 15 minutes, we did not like the place and drove to the Dead Sea. At around 12:00 am, we stopped at a distance of 200 metres away from the 'Ein Jedi checkpoint. We parked at the beach, which was full of people because it was summer time. We took out our belongings such as drinks, food and nuts. When I reached the beach, I met with youths from my village and had a conversation with them.

Ramzi Salah, called me from an area near the car. The street was 100 metres away from the beach. When I went to see Ramzi, I saw some youths who tried to tamper with the car. However, they eventually drove off in their own car. Consequently, I decided to park my car near the checkpoint. Many people parked their cars near the checkpoint in order to prevent tampering or theft. I stopped the car at a distance of about 50 meters from the checkpoint, I got out of the car and locked it. Ramzi and other youths were with me. Suddenly, a soldier who hurried from the checkpoint called me. He was a soldier of the regular army; he was 165 centimetres tall, wore a light hat on his head and carried a short M16 rifle. He called me in Hebrew, which I understood a little. He told me to drive the car into the checkpoint. "I am not heading towards the checkpoint. My car bears West Bank registration plates and I do not have a permit." I replied.

When the soldier kept insisting, Ramzi Salah told me to obey the soldier's orders and I did. After I drove into the checkpoint, the soldier called Ramzi, forced him to sit on the ground, and tied his hands with plastic handcuffs to a metal pipe at the checkpoint. Then, the soldier demanded that I extend my hands so that he could tie them. I refused and asked him why. He told me not to raise my voice and hit my head with an M16 rifle, which he held in both his hands. I bled heavily. At that point, I yielded and extended my hands. However, the soldier told me to approach an electricity post. I put my arms around the post and the soldier tied them with plastic handcuffs.

Three other soldiers were positioned at the checkpoint. One soldier was on the watchtower and the other two were on the ground. When my friend Hisham Halabiyya came and asked the soldier why he had handcuffed us, he hit Hisham on the head, using his rifle once again. Youths gathered at the checkpoint, wanting to find out why the soldier had behaved like that. At that moment, a thin soldier of black complexion, 180 centimetres tall and wearing a helmet, took a sound grenade from a box and threw it towards the young Palestinians. As the youths did not disperse, the soldier threw another sound grenade, which was orange, towards them. Then, the

soldier who hit me arrived - I believe he was the officer because he acted as if he was in charge of the checkpoint - and prevented the black soldier from throwing a third grenade.

Later, an uncovered Border Guard jeep with a large machinegun arrived. Seven soldiers, wearing helmets and carrying weapons, got out of the jeep. "Where is he?" a soldier asked in Hebrew. "There he is." said the soldier at the checkpoint pointing at me.

At once, all seven soldiers severely kicked and beat me, using stones, rifles and fists for about one or two minutes. My face, mouth, teeth and head bled heavily. Then, they attacked Ramzi Salah, who was handcuffed and at a distance of four metres from me, and beat him. After a soldier kicked me with his foot on my head, I fell unconscious. When I came about, the soldiers were still beating Ramzi. The beating was severe. Ramzi had managed to cut off his plastic handcuffs and put his arms around his head for protection. Then I saw him drop to the ground. After the soldiers stopped beating him, one soldier forced Ramzi to sit on a chair and tied his hands behind his back. Other soldiers at the checkpoint watched what was happening and seemed amused. About 30 minutes later, the Border Guard officers climbed back into the jeep and left.

Then, the officer at the checkpoint started to curse in Arabic. I demanded that the Police come. "Go to hell you and the Police." he replied. "I am more of a bastard and more crazy than Arabs!" he continued. This he was saying in Arabic, although he would usually talk to us in Hebrew.

Later, another Border Guard Jeep, which had the word "Police" written on it, arrived. Soldiers in dark green uniforms stepped down. "I am the officer in charge of the area. Calm down. Why did this happen to you?" a soldier asked me. He sounded like an Arab Durzi. My face was swollen and my left eye and my head were bleeding. "I do not know." I replied. When the officer at the checkpoint cursed me, I replied with curses. The Border Guard officer, however, told me to shut up. I said I would not shut up if he cursed me. Then, the Border Guard talked to Ramzi. After I asked the soldiers for some water, the officer brought me a bottle of water. In the meantime and while I was still tied to the post, I had fallen to the ground out of exhaustion, so the officer poured water on my face.

Then a Border Guard soldier came and offered me a glass of water. I told him I wanted to smoke. He took a cigarette out of my packet, and put it in my mouth. As I started to smoke, a soldier from the checkpoint came along, took my cigarette, and broke it. At that time, an ambulance from the Red David Star arrived and stopped at the checkpoint. A medic, who was in civil uniform, stepped down and approached me carrying some cotton and iodine.

He said in Arabic "Calm yourself. What is it that you want?" he asked me. "Water." I said and he offered me some. Then, I said I wanted to smoke, and he gave me a cigarette from the packet in my pocket. He put the cigarette in my mouth and I started to smoke. "I want to offer you first aid." He said as I was bleeding. "No. I want the Police." I replied. "You are free, but let me offer you first aid." the medic continued. I refused and insisted that I wanted the Police to see me in that condition.

The medic then went to Ramzi and talked to him. Later, he came back to me and requested that he treat me. As I rejected, he told me to calm down so that the soldier would not beat me. The ambulance left shortly thereafter. A soldier at the checkpoint came and bandaged the wound on my head, to stop the bleeding. However, I removed the bandage. I was tired and exhausted. In the meantime, soldiers at the checkpoint as well as the Border Guard jeep stood in front of my

friends, fearing that something would happen. Ramzi was still tied to the chair. I estimated that it was around 3:00 am at that point.

While I waited, a grey Hyundai carrying a man and several women stopped at the checkpoint. The man, who was in civil uniform, stepped down and talked to the soldiers. Then, he approached me, speaking in Hebrew and in Arabic, and told me not to curse at the soldiers. "Leave me alone." I said. "I am a Police officer." He replied. As he was wearing a blouse and shorts I responded "You are wearing civilian clothes."

He went to the car, put on a shirt of the regular army, and stayed with the soldiers for a period of about 15 minutes. After he left, I fell asleep. I remember that the officer blindfolded me, and Ramzi. When my blindfold was removed, I saw a 190-centimetre-tall and bald-headed person wearing a military uniform. Two other officers were in his company. I recognised them as military officers because I used to see them in Abu-Dis.

"What happened to your face?" the tall officer asked me. "The army did this." I answered. The officer then approached the youths who stood near the checkpoint. He arrested Hamza Salah and Hisham Halabiyya, forced them into a white Skoda with Jerusalem registration plates, and drove off. Later, a Border Guard officer told a friend of mine to drive my car out of the checkpoint so that they would not arrest him. He also told him that Ramzi and I were under arrest. My friends left. After the officer at the checkpoint cut off my handcuffs with a knife, he untied Ramzi and told us to go home. According to my mobile telephone it was 7:00 am at that point.

Having walked for about one hour, I called my friends, who came to pick us up. It was very hot. We were exhausted and I was bleeding. In Abu-Dis, I went to the Emergency Room and received first medical aid. Then, my cousins and I went to the settlement of Ma'ale Adumim and filed a complaint at the local Police station. Police officers took my statement and photographed my injuries. They also took the medical report and x-rays. The Police interrogator requested that I pay a sum of 1,000 NIS as a bail because the soldiers had lodged a complaint against me, claiming that I had beaten them. That was untrue. I refused and explained the situation to the Police interrogator. Upon his request, I eventually paid a sum of 500 NIS. Then, the interrogator served me a summons for a trial on 19 August 2009 at 'Ofar Detention and Interrogation Centre. At around 11:00 am, I left the Police station. My cousins, who hold Jerusalem ID cards, bailed me out. They also bailed out Hamza and Hisham and paid a sum of 1,000 NIS for each. As far as I remember, the soldiers at the checkpoint claimed that Ramzi and I had fled from the checkpoint, instead of admitting that they had actually asked us to go home.

This is my declaration and hereby I sign, 16 June 2009

Signature: 'Ata 'Reiqat

Name not withheld

Field researcher: Ziyad Hmeidan