

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, Wajdi Yousef Ahmad Salatna, of Palestinian nationality, holder of ID No. 946642071, born on 19 September 1984, a worker, and a resident of Jaba' town, Jenin governorate, would like to declare the following:

At around 7:00 pm on 9 January 2010, I travelled to the city of Bethlehem. In order to access my workplace inside Israel, I intended to move through the village of Housan to areas inside the Green Line. I live in the town of Jaba' in the governorate of Jenin. At that time, I boarded a GMC Savana van with yellow registration number plates, which also transported about 25 workers from various areas in the governorate of Jenin.

None of the workers held permits to access and work inside the Green Line because the Israeli occupying authorities refuse to grant such permits for unknown reasons. Therefore, I am forced to access areas inside the Green Line by travelling along roads that are far away from Israeli military checkpoints. So far, the Wall section has not yet been constructed in the area surrounding the village of Housan in the governorate of Bethlehem. This means that the way from Housan to the territory occupied in 1948 was not impeded.

At 7:30 pm we arrived at a forested area, where the driver asked us to step out and walk on foot for a period of five minutes through the forest until we would reach areas inside the Green Line and then go to our workplaces. I did not know the road well because I was travelling along it for the first time in my life.

When we arrived at an area opposite the forest, the workers stepped out and started to walk. Approximately 16 workers had already disembarked from the car and began walking and running away from the area. At that time a white Toyota pick-up with yellow registration number plates arrived to the area in the company of an Israeli military Hummer Jeep. Approaching from the opposite direction, this force stopped right in front of the car. Immediately, four persons stepped out of the Toyota. They wore civilian clothes, including jean trousers and shirts of various colours. This meant that their clothes did not indicate the group to which they belonged. Additionally, they were not armed.

Nine of the workers and myself were still inside the car preparing to get out. After confronting us, these four persons started to talk in Arabic and Hebrew. One of them forced the Savana van driver to step out, took him about ten metres away and started to beat him. We were forced to get out and were searched. We were ordered to lift our arms up and turn our faces against the Savana van. The men frisked us all over our bodies to search us. They inquired about why we had been present in the area and whether we had weapons. They also beat us with their fists on various parts of our bodies. I was beaten on my stomach and waist.

One of the workers said that we were going to our workplaces. Until then, none of the Israeli soldiers had left the jeep. About 15 minutes later, the men collected our ID cards. The Savana driver was brought over to us and we could see that he had been severely beaten. At this time, a military car belonging to the Border Guard arrived. We knew this because the word 'POLICE' was written on the car in both Arabic and English and it was of the distinguishable green colour. Three soldiers wearing military uniforms and carrying

weapons, stepped out. Some other soldiers also disembarked from the Hummer jeep. We could not accurately see everything because the soldiers had forced us to turn our faces against the Savana van. I estimated that they were members of a team in the Israeli army, I could not determine the body to which the persons in the civilian clothes belonged.

About an hour after we were detained, a person wearing a uniform collected our mobile telephones. Members of that force talked in Hebrew, which I did not understand. Each time they beat one of us, they laughed. Thereafter, soldiers took each one of us separately to be interrogated about 15 metres away. I was grabbed by my clothes and led to the interrogator. I was the third person to see him. He was tall, overweight, with white complexion and blue eyes, wore civilian clothes, and looked to be not more than 27 years old. He could hardly speak Arabic and wore pyjama trousers, a T-shirt and light shoes. He inquired about my place of residence, how I had arrived at that area, and the name of the driver who transported us. When I said that I did not know the driver's name, he punched me in the stomach.

"You are a liar. How come you don't know his name?" he said.

Then he asked about the car that would transport us after we had passed that area. When I said I did not know, he hit me once more in the stomach. The punch was strong and painful. I really did not know about the car because this was the first time I had come to that location. Then he held me from behind, dragged me forcefully to the Savana van and inquired about the weapons in our possession.

"We are workers. We do not have weapons." I said.

He took me back to the area where I had been detained along with the other young people. Later, the people in civilian clothes forced us to lie on our stomachs on the ground near the Savana van and lift our hands above our heads. They then thoroughly searched the van that had transported us. At this time, the Border Guard officers intervened. They reached us and asked each one his name. We continued to lie on the ground for almost an hour and a half. During this time the Border Guard officers cursed, beat and mocked us while they laughed.

At around 11:00 pm (I estimated the time because I did not have a wristwatch and my mobile telephone was confiscated from me), the Border Guard officers demanded in Arabic that we stand up and move to the Savana van. As I was heading towards the van, a Border Guard officer, who wore brown shoes, kicked me forcefully on my left foot without any justification or reason whatsoever. This caused me intense pain and my foot began to swell. I felt a severe pain but did not dare to talk in fear that I might be subjected to more beatings. We boarded the Savana van which then left. The Toyota pick-up travelled in front of us, and the Hummer jeep and the Border Guard jeep behind us.

After driving for about 15 minutes, we reached an unknown area. The same driver drove the Savana van. We were forced to stop on an asphalt street and to step down from the van. I noticed that all cars passing by had yellow registration number plates, which meant that we were in an area inside the city of Jerusalem. The Toyota car, Hummer jeep and Border Guard patrol left the area and three Border Guard soldiers remained with us. Meanwhile, another Border Guard car, which was white and of a larger size, arrived. It seemed as if it was designated for transporting detainees. The Border Guard officers forced us to kneel on the ground, bow our heads down and put our hands on our heads. I felt an intense pain because I had been beaten and because we continued to sit

in this position for a whole hour. During this time the Border Guard officers beat us with their feet and fists and cursed and insulted us. They also laughed and were extremely entertained by these practices.

At around 1:00 am on 10 January 2010, a large tow truck arrived and moved the Savana car. The Border Guard officers demanded that we stand up. Everybody stood, except for me. When I tried to stand, I fell on the ground and started to scream because of the pain in my feet. My left foot was swollen, preventing me from standing. A young man helped me climb into the large car which was designated for transporting detainees. We were taken to a Police station, called 'Atarot station, inside the city of Jerusalem. In the station, we were detained in a yard for almost two hours. At around 4:00 am, we were transported to another Police station, the name of which I did not know. There we were also detained in a yard and then each presented to an interrogator, one after the other. However, I was not presented to that interrogator. It seemed that the three soldiers were afraid because they had beaten me. The injury was clear to see on my feet, on which I could not even stand. When I told a soldier that I wanted to be presented to the interrogator so that he could see what had happened to me, he hit me with his mobile telephone on the head, demanding that I make no sound and stay completely silent.

Thereafter, we were transported to the Qalandiya checkpoint, which separates the cities of Ramallah and Jerusalem. Soldiers returned our ID cards and cellular telephones and demanded that we leave.

I hired a taxi to travel to the city of Jenin and immediately went to the Jenin Governmental Hospital. After taking some x-rays, it appeared that I had sustained torn ligaments as well as a sprain. This caused my feet, especially the left one, to swell. After he bandaged my feet, the doctor told me to stay in bed for two weeks. Ever since, I have stayed home and walked using crutches, without which I cannot move.

Finally, I should note that the Border Guard officer, who forcefully hit me on my left foot, was overweight, tall, of white complexion, with light black hair, and about 28 years old. He spoke Hebrew fluently but his Arabic was not very good.

This was what happened to me while I was trying to reach my workplace inside the Green Line. I work in painting. I intend to build my house and get married. There are few work opportunities in the Palestinian territory occupied in 1967. Even if work opportunities are available, income is insubstantial. This is because of the measures and collective punishment the Israeli occupying authorities have imposed on us. Checkpoints and the Wall have caused the economic situation to deteriorate to a great extent. This is the reason that drives myself, as well as thousands of other Palestinian workers, to risk our lives and access areas inside the Green Line to work there.

This is my declaration and hereby I sign, 13 January 2010

Signature: Wajdi Salatna

Name not withheld

Field researcher: Tareq al-Haj Mahmoud