



**DCI/PS**

P.O. Box 55201, Jerusalem

Main Office: Ramallah, Palestine

Tel: +(972 2) 240 7530

Fax: +(972 2) 240 7018

Email: [dcipal@palnet.com](mailto:dcipal@palnet.com)

Website: [www.dci-pal.org](http://www.dci-pal.org)

# Structures & Strategies



Palestinian children detainees incarcerated by Israelis routinely pass through procedures of interrogation which have a standard pattern. The outline provided below follows a progression typical of prisoners' testimonies recorded by DCI/PS. These testimonies indicate state-sanctioned ill-treatment of Palestinian prisoners. The process moves from the moment of arrest, to confinement, interrogation and imprisonment.

**1. Arrest/Removal from Home:** The process begins with the manner in which the children are taken from their homes. Generally, large numbers of Israeli military surround the child's home in the middle of the night, forcibly enter the home without a warrant for arrest, conduct a 'search' during which contents of the home are upset and family members are threatened and verbally abused. Often the soldiers will break closets, windows, doors, and damage furniture and food. Affidavits given to DCI/PS by Palestinians whose houses have been invaded usually include statements that the children in the house became terrified by the soldiers. Many understand these activities to be an Israeli effort to demonstrate their power to terrify, intimidate, and weaken Palestinians.

**2. Transfer:** Once apprehended, the "suspect" often has his or her identity card taken. He or she is blindfolded, handcuffed, and placed into a military van, usually made to sit on the floor, and transported to an interrogation center. The individual is sometimes beaten in this vehicle and verbally insulted. Families are most often not told where their child has been imprisoned. During extended prison sentences prisoners are often relocated to new prisons and their families are not notified. This phase continues the process of isolation and disorientation of the prisoner which had begun in the home, intensified now by the child's knowledge that his or her family might not be able to track them down for some time.

**3. Confinement:** The prisoner is often placed in a dirty, foul-smelling solitary confinement cell (200 cm by 150 cm) known as "zinzaneh," the floor of which may be wet or covered in human excrement. The cell may either be almost completely devoid of light, or have the light on at all times. If the prisoner tries to sleep, a guard





## ARREST



will come and wake him or her. Prisoners are kept from sleeping for several days, deprived of food, not given access to a toilet, nor a change of clothes.

**4. Interrogation:** There are three bodies that may carry out interrogation, the Israeli Police, Military Intelligence or General Security Service (GSS or Shabak) agents. The aim of the interrogation process is to extract a confession from the child and torture is used by all three of these bodies. A child can be detained for four days after which they are either sent to court or given another four days interrogation by order of the officer in charge of the interrogation. Lawyers are unable to visit during this period and it is very difficult to know where the child is as the information is not provided by the Israeli military authorities. After eight days, the child must be sent to trial. The interrogation process may occur before or after incarceration in solitary confinement. The victim is often

blindfolded, tied up, and beaten. Israeli interrogators psychologically pressure the child in order to obtain a confession as quickly as possible. When psychological pressure alone fails to produce any results, they gradually shift to more violent forms in order obtain the confession by force.

In 1981 a new Military Order empowered the Military Courts to sentence a detainee solely on the confession made about him or her by another person. Thus a child may be sentenced without any evidence linking them to the alleged crime except for the confession of someone else, a confession that has most often been obtained through torture.

The end results are often completely nonsensical confessions signed by Palestinian children, wherein they confess to throwing stones exactly 100 times or 150 times and recall the names of 30 or so of their peers who threw stones with them. A rational and logical evaluation of such a confession makes evident the utter impossibility of the child remembering the exact number of times stones were thrown. The absurdity of the confession, including such minute details and the fact that its written contents are unknown to the child as it is in Hebrew, casts serious doubt on the veracity of such a confession.

The process of arrest and interrogation results not only in physical injury, but in psychological terror. The child is repeatedly placed in frightening situations, designed to increase feelings of loneliness and isolation from the outside world, and led to believe that no one can help the child unless he/she confesses. Moreover, it becomes clear that the interrogation period, and consequently the abuse, will not end until the child confesses. When discussing such an approach, it is important to remember that some of the children tortured are as young as 14 years old. Similar methods applied to a 30-year-old adult may not have the same consequences as they would on a child. In employing such an approach, Israeli interrogators are exploiting children's vulnerability, creating a situation wherein children are frightened for their lives and believe no one else can intervene to end their misery.

