

## Journal Jottings

### Hospital and Handcuffs

How two wounded Palestinian youths were handcuffed to their beds in Hadassah Hospital.

by [Guy Hessel](#)

On Wednesday, October 9, 1996, 14-year-old Mu'taz Jaradat and 17-year-old Ghaleb al-Farukh, from the village of Sa'ir near Hebron, were both shot in the stomach during the disturbances following Binyarnin Netanyahu's decision to open the Western Wall tunnel in Jerusalem.

Both boys were taken to Jerusalem's Hadassah Hospital in Ein Karem, where they were operated on by Professor Avi Rivkind and transferred to the surgical ward. Nobody bothered to inform the families of the whereabouts of their missing sons. The Jaradat family was convinced that their son had been killed and even began to make arrangements for the funeral. Only in the evening did a Palestinian cleaning worker at the hospital, who lives in a neighboring village, call the parents to inform them that he had seen their son. The families asked the Israeli Civil Administration for permission to visit their sons. This was denied.

What had happened to the boys? Mu'taz began ninth grade a month ago. He was a small child during the Intifada and knew about it mainly from the stories of others. One of his cousins was killed by soldiers, another spent 12 years in Israeli prisons. His grandfather and his mother had been imprisoned. During these riots, he went out to see things at first hand, but he managed only to get to the outskirts of the village when he was shot.

The soldiers took him and put him in an ambulance to Hadassah, where he was immediately taken into the operating theater. When he came out, he said he was chained to the bed by hand and foot for the next four days. One or more IDF soldiers were stationed at the door to make sure he would not escape with his infusion and catheter. Mu'taz cried all the time, not from pain but from loneliness. The soldiers guarding him did not answer when he addressed them. One of them acted decently, getting hold of a television for him, flicking through the channels and telling him to let him know when to stop.

Ghaleb Al-Farukh is in the eleventh grade. He remembers the Intifada well. His family's home is on the outskirts of the village - people throwing stones from one side of the house were met by bullets from the other side. Ghaleb used to hide in a room at the back of the house until things quieted down. Two of his uncles on his mother's

side were shot by soldiers; one was imprisoned in Israel.

During the disturbances, Al-Farukh says he was on the way home from his family's summer house when he heard a commotion. When he went closer, he was shot. The family took him in a private car to the IDF roadblock where the soldiers called for a helicopter. Al-Farukh doesn't remember anything as he was unconscious.

"I woke up in hospital, chained to the bed. I tried to ask the soldier who was guarding me what had happened, but he told me not to look at him and to face the wall." For three days he was told to face the wall. He was also interrogated. "When I told the soldiers what had happened, they said I was lying and promised that after the medical treatment was over, they would arrest me."

In the village, where rumor had it that Mu'taz was dead, his mother, Miyassar, learned in the evening that he was alive. She couldn't believe it was true. She wanted above all to see her son, but she said that the Civil Administration told her this was impossible. The Administration claimed it granted the permit a day after the request was submitted.

The next day, Ramallah human-rights activist Amal Nashashibi came with a friend to Hadassah, but they were forbidden to see or speak to the children. They were helped by Palestinian hospital workers to get to the room where they encountered three soldiers. "The soldiers refused to let us enter. I broke through and saw the older boy chained to the bed. He beckoned to me, but one of the soldiers pushed me into the corridor and threw us out."

On Sunday, Amal Nashashibi's sister, Rana, who was a candidate in the elections to the Palestinian Legislative Council, came to the hospital along with Daphna Golan, the director of the Israeli women organization Bat Shalom. Golan argued with the soldiers outside the room while Nashashibi went in to speak to the youngsters. "The boys, who were handcuffed to their beds, had no contact with the outside world for four days and they were terribly lonely. That had an effect on their medical progress."

Golan and other human-rights organizations began to take action. Dr. Philip Veerman, director of Defense for Children International - Israel, came to visit and sent letters to the office of the Military Judge-Advocate, to the director of the Hadassah Medical Organization and to the Israel Medical Association. On the same day that the letters were received by fax, the chains were removed and the guards vanished. However, the families still did not have permission to visit their sons.

On Wednesday, a week after the shooting, Miyassar decided that, come what may, she was going to see her son. The mothers of

Jaradat and Ghaleb, the latter nine months' pregnant, set out in the morning from Sa'ir in a car belonging to a Jerusalem resident. On reaching the roadblock they tried to drive round it but were stopped by the soldiers. Miyassar supported the pregnant woman and said she was having contractions and they must let her through. The trick worked and they got to Hadassah.

Even in the hospital, they were afraid of getting caught. "I felt like a thief in my own country," said Miyassar. She stood in a corridor and tried to think of a way of seeing her son. Suddenly she saw him in front of her on a stretcher, on the way to be X-rayed. "I wanted to jump on him and kiss him, but though it was hard, I sat quietly and waited." A Palestinian cleaning worker took her to her son. She fell on him and embraced him with tears of joy. Mu'taz and Ghaleb had been crying for days, but on this Wednesday they were at last comforted. It was exactly a week after the shooting.

Both Hadassah and the Israel Medical Association wrote to Defense for Children International that they opposed the handcuffing of patients and had repeatedly informed the security authorities of this. A Hadassah spokesperson said that its medical and nursing staff had done their best to enable the boys to make a speedy recovery, but the manner in which they had been brought to the hospital and guarded - these are the responsibility of the security forces and not of Hadassah.