

My Prison Life - Al Wathba, Abu Dhabi

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Underground lockup

The first 21 days of my prison life was in an underground lockup at the 'Asma' police station. It was an overcrowded cell with a sort of "sardine treatment". Even elementary facilities to lie down or even a sheet was not provided to sleep on. Thereafter the police took me to " Al Wathba Central Prison", Abu Dhabi. At the entrance, there were small cabins. I spent the very first day in one of those cells. They completely shaved off my head with a primitive type of instrument, a torture indeed.

Whenever inmates of the prison go out of the cell they also get shaved off their head. When inside, photographs are taken for identification. After seizing all my belongings including my cloths, they provided two shirts and two pants not of suitable size, indeed blue coloured rags, 2 blankets, a plastic cup and a plate intended to collect food. Both were broken and unhygienic. When I asked for a change, a policeman showed to me another shelf with worse material, playing a cruel joke on a helpless prisoner. After spending one day for complying with prison formalities, I was despatched to block No.9.



Release & Re-Arrest

I was lodged there for a week and simply released the next day. When I enquired about my brother who was taken into custody along with me, I was informed that my brother would be released in a few days.

I was enquiring about my brother and I visited the police headquarters alongwith my sponsor. We met the section incharge and enquired about my brother. After reading the file, the police incharge was surprised as to how I was released! Then I was re-arrested and sent back to the Al Wathba central prison block No. 10.



Central Prison

The block 10 at central prison on the ground floor of a three storied structure. A round shape hall consisting of 21 Nos. of smaller rooms for more than two hundred prisoners. There were six latrine and three bathrooms but most of them were not in useable condition, thus leaving only one latrine and a bathroom for over two hundred prisoners.

The Wathba Central prison is overcrowded with over three thousand prisoners. In scorching heat of the desert, within concrete cages, prisoners are made to live in inhuman conditions without the basic necessities of life. The food was most unpalatable and unhygienic. Prisoners sustain their life with fermented camel meat and wormy foodgrains and clamoured there for a glass of cold water in the hot summer days. Not even a fan provided in those concrete cages. Many prisoners were dumped in the corridors and pinning for a little cool breeze. Even a breath of fresh air was a precious boon! The heartening fact is that many innocents are made to languish here under the banner of criminals which cast a stigma on them for life.



Food Schedule

The prison authorities strictly prohibited outside food. The prisoners were cut off completely from outside. Prisoners had no access to daily news not to say about electronic media. They were victims of perpetual torture, mentally and physically. For elementary rituals in cleanliness, the prisoners were provided with a 100 gm. bathsoap along with 200 gm. of detergent, for a period of 50 - 60 days.

The food schedule was as follows:-

In the morning: A glass of tea, a piece of bread with a trickle of jam or film of cheese.

Lunch at noon: An oily rice preparation with a piece of camel meat or the like. Occasionally, an orange or an apple.

In the evening: A piece of bread, Lentil curry and a glass of tea without milk.

No other item is provided by the authorities. For many weeks, we couldn't get a tooth brush. Local inmates usually get toothpaste, brush, writing papers and pens through their special visitors. The plea to get a special visit, always used to be rejected by the public prosecutor.



Visiting Schedule

At the central jail there was a normal visiting schedule, every Thursday, from 4 to 6 P.M (2 hours) and on every Friday between 8 and 11 AM. (3 hours) males can visit the inmates. In order to get a place in the long queue, the visitors would have to start their journey at midnight.

The visiting room is constructed with an area of 3 x 4 meters, with two line steel fencing. It is the only visiting area for the entire male prisoners of the central jail. At every nook and corner police were posted. In the dense crowd, it is very difficult to get in and to see the visitor. A visitor can bring cigarettes for their prisoners. Only permitted item is cigarette for the normal visitor.



Prison Clinic

There is a clinic in the jail compound. But meant only for the locals and other Arabic citizens. No action would be taken by authorities if prisoners fall sick.

Lighting System

The entire electrical system in the cells are controlled from outside by guarding police, who never bother to use it in a proper way, for weeks the light may be on and for weeks, it may be in total darkness.

Flogging

The prisoners were regularly flogged alleging that they violated some rule or other. A person resorting to hunger strike gets 10 Nos. of "major flogging". It can entail delay in his release from the Jail.

Cleaning Duties

Only Indian, Pakistani and Bangladesh prisoners were called for cleaning duties.

The Agony and Pain

During the entire period of detention, we were subjected to all forms of humiliation, mental agony and unimaginable pain. Though the prison with appealing exterior has been constructed, that remained only a show-piece for the police administration to parade before visiting personalities from the outside world. We, along with three thousand other prisoners in the central prison had been subjected to the most cruel torture and deprivation of basic amenities.

The X-rays and other medical documents would demonstrate the pitiable conditions of us. The physical injuries inflicted on us, had endangered the health and the life of ours. This had the effect of reducing us to nervous wrecks.



Financial Losses

I suffered huge losses for non-communication and by not allowing me to have meeting with any person or to sign any paper with the outside world. This resulted in the cancellation of contracts and liability to pay damages to various departments,

contractors, dealers and many and varied financial obligations. Since, I was the prime operator of my Trading and Contracting establishments, my absence would have its natural consequence of throwing the different works of the establishment out of gear.

A Long Journey To Court

The prisoners look for the day when they are presented in Court as that is the only occasion when they could breathe fresh air and see the outside world and fellow human beings. The very process of journey to Court is an ordeal. The prisoners are informed about their production in Court only the previous day. Such prisoners who are to be produced before the Court are picked up from different prison cells. The process starts soon after midnight.

The 120 km. trip to the Court and the return there from through desert in harsh hot weather, thus often become ordeals and created agonising situations. Most of the prisoners fall sick for a long duration of about two weeks after every such Court trip.

Whenever a prisoner is taken out of the jail, they will be dragged with shackles, manacled and cuffed on both hands and legs. Such inhuman treatment is inflicted even on women contrary to all injunctions of Islamic faith. We had been handcuffed and legs placed in the painful grip of fetters on all twenty seven occasions when we were taken from prison to Court to face the trial, in an armoured covered truck. Even when its capacity was 15 persons, about 50 persons were packed like salted fish making each one gasp for breath during the journey.

On reaching Court premises, the prisoners are all again packed in a small and narrow room without any ventilation whatsoever. The local prisoners are permitted to smoke there by the support of policemen. We, non-smokers were choked by the dense tobacco smoke gathering inside the tiny hole without any air -outlet. The Court finds time only to deal with a very few cases and most of the cases get adjourned. After returning from the Court, every prisoner was usually subjected to an examination by Alsatian dogs.



Framing A Criminal Case

I was informed by the jail authorities that we had been charged with "using force against Government employee and assault".

The Trial Court

My case was actually taken up for trial only after five months. The Court listened to the evidences of eye-witnesses saying as to a policeman was holding an iron bar of one meter length in his hand, threatening anyone who came near the office premises of the accused and was shouting "Indian, Pakistani and Bangalis all are thieves and procurers " The judges were much moved by the massive evidences before them which established beyond doubt the orchestration of the police and the dishonest deals of the local man. An early trial was therefore ordered. It was after such a trial

that a verdict totally condemning the conduct of Hassan Saeed, the police and the prosecution agency was rendered.

The Acquittal

The Court acquitted me and my brother of the said charge and ordered an investigation into the crime committed by the local man and the police. But the agony and pain of us did not come to an end and the office of the Public Prosecutor, Abu Dhabi, filed an appeal in the Court of appeal of Abu Dhabi against the decree / order of the legal Court of the first instance.



The Appeal Court

On 19-5-1996, the appeal was set for hearing. We were granted bail on the same day of the appeal. However, despite the acquittal and bail and sureties we were not released from prison.

Acquittal By The Appeal Court (Final Judgment)

The Court of appeal after deliberations came to the conclusion that the complaint against us were false. Evidence deducted by the appellate court found that, they had not committed any offence and they were free from all acquisitions. The operative part of the Judgment which clearly revealed the malafides and the arbitrary way in which the police department and Hassan Saeed acted. It further reiterated the condemnation of the prosecutor. An excerpt from the appellate judgment is as follows:-

"Verily the Islamic law and the entire positive laws have honoured man and protected his freedom, his honour, his property and his soul. Hence, if man was killed while protecting these, he is considered to be a martyr. And limitation of his freedom without any right is an unforgiving crime and the same is mentioned in the provisions of article 2 and 3 of the penal procedure code. And it is proved in this case that the policemen alongwith the local went to arrest the accused, without any right and curtailed his freedom "

A copy of the order of the Court of appeal is enclosed herewith. A good number of witnesses from different nationalities who did not care the threat of local police and public prosecution, dared to explain the facts. This was an unusual occurrence in their country and this indeed helped the Court. But since the opportunity to protest is not permitted in their judicial system, all these efforts remained in vain. We continued languishing in jail and all our right to liberty as envisaged and enshrined in the laws governing UAE and the International Laws were abraded without any reason.

[Judgment Full Version](#)

[English](#)

[Arabic](#)



Deportation

On 28-9-1996, an order was passed by Captain Hamad Ahmed, the Head of the Security Affairs Department, Ministry of Interior, UAE that by virtue of an administrative decision, me and my brother be deported back. The reasons of deportation was the same as was the charge levelled against us.

Despite the acquittal, by the Court of first instance and the Court of appeal, the deportation order was passed without assigning any reason or hearing. The copy of the deportation letter is also enclosed herewith. This executive order of the police official was immediately implemented and me along with my brother were deported back to India.

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