

VOX

A Christian Voice - a Human Concern

" Known, yet regarded as unknown; dying, and yet we live on; beaten, and yet not killed." (2 Corinthians 6:9)

Merciless Racism

By: Majdi Hussein



It was almost midnight, on a Saturday night, and I had just finished having dinner with my cousin in a small restaurant in West Jerusalem – the Israeli side of town.

We were walking in a street crowded with people late at night to get some dessert from an ice cream place when someone tapped me on the shoulder and asked in Hebrew, "What time is it?" I turned around to find a group of young men who looked agitated. I answered that I didn't carry a watch, but my cousin, anticipating trouble and feeling that they looked hostile, answered "12:10" and pulled me away from them.

Suddenly, someone hit me in the back. I turned around, trying to avoid getting involved into a fight, but more people joined the first guy in hitting me. I don't know how many people were there. I would guess about twenty. I tried to escape, to run from the scene, but at that point, someone sprayed my face with "pepper spray", and my glasses fell from my face and I couldn't see clearly.

I was pulled into an ally, and while again trying to escape, I heard them shouting "Aravi! Aravi!" (meaning "Arab! Arab!") and many more of the bystanders joined in the beating. Some customers in a pub spilled their beer on me. At one point, someone approached me, I felt he might have come to help me.

But instead, he held me and pushed me around some more, and then four men sprayed some other kind of gas in my face that made me almost faint. It made my face burn so much, that my head felt like it was about to explode! I could no longer see. I felt like I was disappearing under the attackers' feet and I was being beaten with sticks all over my body.

At that point, my cousin, who had been beaten up too, but not as badly as me, managed to escape and run to the closest police station. Barely catching his breath, he told them I was under attack in a nearby ally. But they didn't move!

I managed to get away after a few minutes. But, because I wasn't able to see clearly, I was bumping into things. I finally saw two police officers and fell on my knees in front of them, almost unconscious. The police officer asked me "What are you doing here? Go home!" in Hebrew. I wasn't able to answer due to the excruciating pain. People started gathering around me. I threw up. One bystander, an Israeli, called an ambulance and put on gloves and started to perform first aid on me. Suddenly, a policeman pushed him away and dragged me violently to the other side of the road in order to get me away from the crowd. I heard the policeman saying "No need for an ambulance" even though I was unable to move at all.

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*YWCA
employee
brutally
attacked by
Israelis in
West
Jerusalem.
The Police,
paramedics
and hospital
staff
showed no
humanity or
mercy.*

After 15 minutes, the ambulance came. I felt the first relief that night. The paramedic stepped out of the ambulance. He came towards me in an aggressive and angry manner, yelling "Where is he? What is going on?" He started asking my cousin about my ID and health insurance and then he pressed very hard on my shoulder causing me extreme pain – maybe trying to check if I was conscious. I screamed. My cousin asked him what he was doing to cause me such pain. He answered that he knew what he was doing and that my cousin should not interfere. He was examining me in a rough way that was very painful and it seemed more like physical abuse to me. They decided to take me to the hospital. I was put on the stretcher, face down, and shoved violently into the ambulance. My cousin asked to come along and was told to sit next to the driver. As the ambulance drove away, the paramedic started 'interrogating' my cousin. "Why are you here? What were you doing?" My cousin responded that instead of interrogating him that maybe he should attend to me. The paramedic told my cousin that he was bothering him and asked him to step out of the vehicle. When my cousin asked him according to what 'law' was he throwing him out of the ambulance, the paramedic answered "Our Law". He ordered the driver to stop the vehicle and called the police and forced my cousin out. My cousin asked the policeman to accompany me in the ambulance in his place. He was concerned for me due to the actions of the paramedic, but the policeman refused, saying he could not leave his duty station.

On the way to the hospital I was still laying on my stomach. The paramedic pulled my hands back and strapped me tightly to the stretcher. I felt like I was handcuffed. He started touching me violently all over my body and they all (driver and assistants) were mocking me in Hebrew and making fun of my ethnicity. They thought I didn't understand Hebrew. But I understand it very well!

At the hospital I was admitted to the emergency room. No one really attended to me. Claiming that there was no empty room available, I was parked in a hallway. My cousins arrived at the hospital. The police were there also and they told them not to tell anyone from my family, as they didn't want me to have any more visitors, especially journalists. My cousins came to my side and I was throwing up again. The nurse called the cleaners to clean up my vomit, but no doctor or nurse checked on me. After an hour, the nurse came and asked me where it hurt. I could barely talk, and my cousin was trying to help by asking me in Arabic where I had pain. The pain was all over and I couldn't give a straight answer, so she said angrily "When you decide where it hurts, call me!" Another hour passed before I was taken to an examination room. A doctor examined me for about five minutes, and requested some blood tests, an X-ray and CT scan. I wasn't given any pain killers, any IV, medications or anything.

In the morning, another doctor came and told me I could go home. Later, the hospital report said that I had bruises all over my body and a slight malformation of my face. The report also stated that my cousin attacked the paramedic and that a police officer accompanied me in the ambulance, which of course, never happened.

VOX is an electronic newsletter representing a unified Christian voice of Church related organizations (CROs) who consent to this initiative. Vox's rationale is to monitor and report on the humanitarian situation on the ground in the Palestinian Occupied Territories. Vox was initiated in March 2003 at the start of the Iraqi war in order to continue providing news about the ongoing deterioration of Palestine's living conditions. VOX embraces The East Jerusalem YMCA, YWCA of Palestine, the Near East Council of Churches Gaza, Sabeel Liberation Theology Center, Justice and Peace Commission Jerusalem, Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate in Jerusalem, Caritas Jerusalem and the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI).

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VOX Newsletter