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THE "MAASIAHU" PRISONERS CAMP IN ISRAEL

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I. General information

The "Maasiahu" Prisoners Camp, the only one of its kind in Israel, is more the medium security than the open type of institution, although it incorporates a number of features of the open institution.

The camp, which has an inmate capacity of 144, was opened on 6 November 1952, in the open country, two kilometers from the towns of Ramleh and Lud (Lydda). It is situated in the country amid olive-tree groves, and consists of separate ground-floor, cottage-type buildings spread over an area of about 100 dunams (25 acres), with flower-beds between the buildings. Inmates are accommodated in 6 dormitories, each with its own sanitary installations, and a large table and benches. A big and airy common dining-hall also serves for film-shows, concerts, festivities, indoor games, etc. There is a large yard for outdoor games and sports. Inmates go in and out of their dormitories as they wish in the daytime, and the only security measure is a double barbed-wire fence surrounding the camp.

Inmates lead a relatively unrestricted life, any rule of discipline or standard of behaviour being voluntarily laid down and adhered to by the inmates. Work and vocational training are provided for all, and leisure-time activities are available. The inmates have a say, and actively cooperate with the camp authorities in all but security and some administrative matters. This develops in them a high sense of responsibility, as indicated by their smart appearance, orderly and civil behaviour, team-work, and regard for the next fellow, and the fact that only two inmates have so far escaped from the camp, despite the ease with which it could be accomplished. Inmates frequently walk to and from work outside the camp without

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In accordance with the tradition of past Congresses, it has been possible to secure the co-operation of certain national prison administrations for the printing of documentation for the First United Nations Congress on the prevention of crime and the treatment of offenders, which is from an historical point of view the Thirteenth International Penal and Penitentiary Congress. Thus the present report has been generously printed by the Federal Bureau of Prisons of the United States of America, in the prison printing plant at Leavenworth, Kansas.

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escort, or if they are escorted, the guard carries no arms. It is relatively easy to effect a break-out through the barbed-wire.

All this tends to minimise, and in many instances to overcome, their anti-social outlook. In this they are helped along by the camp personnel, who, although not all selected or trained for work in this institution, have an understanding and helpful attitude. The Director of the camp takes a personal interest in each inmate and often participates in the inmates' activities, greatly contributing to their rehabilitation.

II. Methods and criteria for the selection of inmates

In the Central Prison, where all new prisoners are first admitted, a social worker takes the prisoners' case-history, and if the information gathered is considered insufficient, the prisoner is given a psychological test by a psychologist. The case then comes up before the Classification Board. This Board consists of the director of the institution, the doctor, the psychiatric social worker, the psychologist, and the social worker who have observed the prisoner for the prescribed period of time. The main consideration for selecting a prisoner for treatment in the medium security institution is, of course, the likelihood of his benefiting from such treatment.

The criterion for selection is a good prognosis for reform: people who are likely to react positively to treatment, and those who—though not of a criminal character—were sent to prison for some special psychological, social or accidental reason.

Some prisoners are sent to the medium security institution at the beginning of their sentence, and some after having served a part of their sentence in a prison of the traditional type. Our experience is as yet too limited to enable us to draw any conclusions as to the advantages and disadvantages of the two systems.

III. Nature of the work performed by the inmates

The camp has a large tract of land for agricultural purposes outside, but adjacent to, the camp. An agricultural expert instructs the inmates in this field.

The prisoners are engaged in carpentry, wood-work, shoe-

making, leather-work, tailoring, and mechanics, and some of them are trained in office-work, cooking, and laundering.

IV. Regime and methods of treatment

The principle adopted in this camp is, to a greater extent than in other prisons, the re-education and rehabilitation of the inmates and their reintegration into society. To this end, many rehabilitative features have been instituted which, among other things, tend to make life in this camp differ as much as possible from life in a traditional type of prison, and to resemble, as far as is consistent with detention, life outside prison, so that upon release, the prisoners' reintegration into society will be smoother.

The prisoners govern themselves; a governing body of eleven inmates is elected by the camp population. It is divided into five committees:

1. The Reception Committee meets every new inmate and explains life in the camp to him.
2. The Work Committee interviews each inmate with regard to work and/or vocational training.
3. The Food Control Committee inspects and controls the kitchen and the quality of the food.
4. The Sports Committee organizes outdoor sports.
5. The Welfare and Culture Committee organizes leisure-time activities and weekly get-togethers, issues the camp's monthly magazine, is in charge of the library (books, newspapers, magazines, etc.), and organizes Hebrew language lessons.

Two social workers take case-histories and attend to the personal problems of each prisoner.

Leaves of absence are not as yet practised in this country.

Disciplinary offences in this institution are far less frequent than in prisons of a traditional type.

Two escapes have taken place since the opening of the institution. Escape from the medium security institution involves the same legal consequences as escape from a prison of the traditional type. In addition, the prisoner cannot again be admitted to the medium security institution.

V. Statistics

On 29 November 1954 ninety-nine inmates were serving sentences in the institution.

The proportion of the total number of these inmates as compared with the total number of inmates serving sentences privative of liberty (punishment or security measure) was 10½ per cent.

One thousand seven hundred and forty seven inmates have served sentences in the institution since its opening. This figure includes those still serving sentences on 29 November 1954.

VI. Personnel

At present the number of institutional staff in the service of the institution is 28. The ratio of staff to inmate capacity of the institution is 1 to 5, while in a prison of the traditional type it is 1 to 2.8.

The personnel does not yet receive special training; this is planned for the near future. Meanwhile it has been given lectures on the special nature of their work.

VII. Attitude of the public

The public has shown interest in the experiment being carried out in this institution, as indicated by the visits of newspapermen, judges, members of parliament, etc.

Through the newspapers, the Police weekly magazine, which is widely read by the public, the radio, and occasional interviews given to prominent citizens, propaganda is carried through to the public at large, and, of course, to the surrounding community, which has shown a certain measure of understanding.

The advisability and feasibility of introducing more liberal practices in this institution, and in general making it the more open type of institution, are being considered.

Résumé

Le camp pour détenus *Maasiahu*, le seul de ce genre en Israël, est un établissement à sécurité moyenne plutôt qu'un établissement ouvert proprement dit, bien qu'il ait un certain nombre des caractéristiques de ce dernier genre d'établissements.

Le camp, qui peut recevoir 144 détenus, a été ouvert en 1952 et est composé de bâtiments du type pavillonnaire répartis sur une surface de 25 acres. La seule mesure de sécurité consiste en une double barrière de fil de fer barbelé entourant le camp.

Les détenus renvoyés à *Maasiahu* sont choisis par un comité de classification selon le critère d'un bon pronostic de réadaptation, basé sur l'étude du cas du détenu et parfois sur des tests psychologiques. Certains détenus sont renvoyés au camp directement au début de leur peine; d'autres le sont après avoir subi une partie de celle-ci dans une prison fermée.

L'établissement fournit à tous les détenus du travail et une formation professionnelle dans diverses branches d'activité: travail agricole, charpenterie, menuiserie, cordonnerie, travail sur cuir, coupe d'habits et mécanique.

Les détenus se gouvernent eux-mêmes, sauf en ce qui concerne la sécurité et les questions administratives. Un conseil de direction élu par les détenus est divisé en cinq comités qui s'occupent respectivement de la réception des nouveaux détenus, du travail et de la formation professionnelle, du contrôle de l'alimentation, des sports et des activités éducatives et touchant au bien-être des détenus.

Deux assistants sociaux étudient le cas des détenus et s'occupent des problèmes personnels de chacun d'eux.

Il n'est pas accordé de congés aux détenus. Les violations disciplinaires sont beaucoup moins fréquentes dans cet établissement qu'elles ne le sont dans les prisons du type traditionnel.

Jusqu'ici, 1,747 détenus ont subi tout ou partie de leur peine dans cet établissement. La proportion du personnel par rapport aux détenus est de 1 pour 5 à *Maasiahu*, alors qu'elle est de 1 pour 2.8 dans les prisons ordinaires. Le personnel ne re-

This archiving project is a collaborative effort between United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and American Society of Criminology, Division of International Criminology. Any comments or questions should be directed to Cindy J. Smith at CJSmithphd@comcast.net or Emil Wandzilak at emil.wandzilak@unodc.org.