

### Israeli Ambulance Driver Assaulted By Egyptian Official At Taba Border

TEL AVIV (JTA) — An Israeli ambulance driver was assaulted by an Egyptian army officer recently at the Taba border checkpoint, as he was transferring a patient from the Taba Sonesta Hotel to a hospital in Eilat.

The Magen David Adom ambulance had been summoned to transfer a Ramat Gan resident who had injured his shoulder when he slipped into an empty decorative fishpond on the hotel grounds.

Because of his injuries, the man was propped up inside the ambulance with his legs against the rear door.

Under normal procedures agreed to by Israel and Egypt, ambulances do not have to undergo the usual vehicle and passenger checks at the border. Paperwork is completed later to allow prompt medical treatment.

But this time, eight border guards halted the ambulance and sought to carry out a check. When the driver protested, an Egyptian

army officer in plain clothes arrived and tried to force open the rear door.

The ambulance driver, fearing further injuries to the patient, tried to prevent him. Apparently regarding this as an attack on him, the officer punched the driver in the face, knocking him to the ground.

The driver cursed the

officer in fluent Arabic, and the officer placed him under arrest, declaring he and the ambulance would not be released "even if President (Hosni) Mubarak himself were to come and appeal."

He said that cursing an army officer warrants a death sentence in Egypt.

The incident ended when, on the intervention of senior Israeli and Egyptian officials, the ambulance driver agreed

to offer a written apology and the Egyptian officer rescinded his demand for the driver's arrest.

Taba, a beach resort

area outside Eilat developed by Israeli entrepreneurs in the 1970s, was handed over to Egypt on March 15, as part of a border dispute

settlement.

Under the deal, the Sonesta Hotel was sold to Egypt. But Israeli tourists still frequent the popular resort.

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