

Captive's

Story of

Syrian Jail

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Jonathan Bates, a 32-year-old American freed after two years in a Syrian jail, said last night he was treated "brutally and mercilessly" but had "no grudge at all against the Syrians or the Arabs."

Bates, arrested in Syria on Feb. 9, 1972, on charges of espionage, was released after U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger's visit to Damascus.

During a stopover at London's Heathrow airport, he said he was never told why he was kept for months in solitary confinement, was never given a trial and was continually tortured before signing "a false confession."

He said: "The past two years have been hell. It has been a boring and empty period in my life and I am extremely grateful that it is now all over and I am going back home."

"I spent the entire time sharing a cell in crowded conditions with 35 other prisoners, apart from a seven-month period when I was in solitary confinement. Letters and visitors were only allowed after I had signed a false confession."

Reuters