

**Voice of Women**

**Issue no. 193**

**June 17, 2004**

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**Editorial: Time is short and responsibilities are great**

As the president has decreed that the municipal elections will be held in mid-September, women movements are challenged to focus their efforts to protect women's interests and to increase their chances to be represented in the councils.

The Women's Affairs Technical Committee (WATC) prepared for such elections ten years ago, but those elections never took place, making these the first since the establishment of the Palestinian Authority.

Ten years ago WATC approached the Legislative Council with several demands. (1) to maintain a cumulative quota according to the number of women candidates in each community, (2) to abolish the requirement of 500 JD to be paid by each candidate, (3) to adjust the minimum age of candidates from 25 to 21. The WATC refused the appointments which were made at that time.

We need to coordinate our advocacy efforts to guarantee a quota for women. We need to educate women about their rights for both running in and voting in the elections. Our women's movements should learn from past experience since our goal is not just higher numbers of women but aware and empowered women who are able to express their needs.

**Despite her efforts, she could not save her land**  
***Lubna Al Ashqar, Salfit***

Um Sadek, an elderly woman in her seventies, asked me: Do you remember my land from when you came for a visit with your friends? Do you remember the olive trees and

the figs? I nodded my head trying to keep from crying. It is all gone, she said, the Israelis uprooted all those beautiful trees and they confiscated my land to build the Separation Wall.

I bear responsibility, Um Sadek said with tears in her eyes. Had I slept in my land, I would have stopped them. I came in the early morning and found six Israeli bulldozers already here. They cruelly uprooted my trees. All the men and women in the village ran out to protect their land as the Israeli army confiscated 95% of the village's land. On that day more than 400 of us were injured by the Israelis.

The Separation wall will deprive the villagers from their land and they will not have access to the remaining part to be able to cultivate it. They won't be able to collect their olives during the harvest time.

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### **Children waiting for their mothers** *Ibrahim Muhammad, Ramallah*

Four children are still waiting for their detained mother. Sima Anbees, 34, from Tulkarm was arrested in the middle of the night on February 2, 2004. Sima is detained at Telmond prison without charges. Her children don't have any source of income as they lost their father earlier in the year when he was killed by Israel; their uncle died the same way.

The children are living with their grandmother for the time being. She doesn't know what to say when they ask about their mother. The oldest daughter, who is five years old, wakes herself up at five in the morning and tries to get ready for school without waking her grandmother.

This is only one of hundreds of stories that need to be told.

### **Being a mother, there is no way out** *Etaf Elian*

Being a mother means that you fall into bed exhausted at the end of the day. If you are a working mother, your trouble is doubled: your house is in front of you and your work is behind you: you have no way out!

While you are pregnant you wish you could sleep longer in the morning, but the alarm reminds you that you have to get up and go to work. You reach your office to find a pile of work waiting for you. You can't concentrate; you drink a large cup of coffee hoping it

will help you to do your job well. You remember that your doctor advised you not to drink coffee as it could harm you and your baby, but you have no other option. You count the minutes until it is time to go home. You arrive home to find a lot to be done there. You finish the housework and want to relax for awhile watching TV, but soon you fall asleep sitting in your chair. Your husband wakes you up to go to your bed, where you fall to sleep again.

You wake up in the morning in terrible pain, and realize you are in labor. You run to the hospital; your pain is unbearable. The doctor tries to talk to you, but you can't hear a word that he's saying. The pain drowns everything else out. You discover that he is telling you that you still have hours ahead of you to suffer with this pain, there is no way out.

Finally the baby arrives. You are thrilled, and content. You come back home with your darling new baby. You think that now that the hardest part is past you will be able to sleep. Your eyes are very heavy, and you are ready to fall into a deep sleep, when your baby starts screaming.

Tiredness and exhaustion are now part of your reality, getting bigger as your baby gets older. Your baby will continue having new demands and needs everyday.

Your child is getting older; sometimes you talk to her as a friend and sometimes as a baby. You begin to have less control over her as she reaches adolescence. Some of your responsibilities get lighter as your child gets older, but there are new ones too. You don't need to dress her now, but you have to teach her limits on her demands.

Now your child is in her last year of school. You are happy but anxious. You buy books to help your daughter prepare for the Tawjeehi exams. You tell her to take a look at the school material, but she answers that it's still vacation time. You will agree but suggest that she join a study group to prepare for the coming year. It is costly but you have no choice.

The academic year starts and you start to feel that she is wasting time. The answer will come soon "Don't worry mom, I know what I am doing." Again you have to accept the answer. You have no choice. Long months pass and the exams arrive. You declare a state of emergency. No radio, no TV at home. Everybody should be silent. No loud voices, no laughing and no visitors. You wish the neighbors would move so that she could have a quiet environment for studying. Soon, it's time to write the exams. You wait with concern for the results. Once the results are announced you continue to worry about which university will accept your child.

In brief, the life of a mother from beginning to end is full of tension, anxiety and exhaustion. Being a mother, there is no way out!