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**Editorial: Beyond Events**

When attempting to analyze the situation in Palestine eleven months after the outbreak of the Intifada, the degree of destruction caused to the infrastructure and the institutional sphere is obvious. In addition, thousands of people have been injured or disabled, and hundreds killed.

However, these results must not blind us to some of the less obvious negative outcomes which have impacted women. Eleven months of political instability and deterioration have managed to wipe out long years of struggle by women, on the one hand, and on the other weaken the positions different political factions have stood by for so long. Firstly, it has become clear that violence against women has increased significantly with the escalation of the political, social and economic crisis. Is this how women are rewarded for their long years of social and political struggle and devotion? Secondly, many families are forbidding or discouraging their daughters, who are enrolled in universities, schools or colleges, from pursuing their studies on the pretext of security and financial concern, while at the same time they encourage their sons to continue their education. These factors indicate that women have to cope with not only the damaging affects of the Israeli occupation, but also with the patriarchal injustices and discrimination still existing in our social structure.

It is imperative that any struggle for self-determination be accompanied by respect for all sectors of the nation, by providing the best living conditions for them regardless of their sex.

**A New school year: Heavier burdens for parents and children  
Lubna Al-Ashkar, Palestinian Women Journalists Office, Nablus  
Voice of Women, Gaza**

For many Palestinian families, purchasing the basic for the new school year -- pencils, copybooks, school uniforms, new shoes, bookbags -- is becoming an impossibility. Children whose happiness used to fill the air every year when it came time to buy these essentials for the start of a fresh new school year, are now forlorn and despondent, armed perhaps with only one pencil and one notebook on the first day of school.

The new academic year has arrived at a time when political and economic circumstances deprive families from being able to supply the basic needs for their children's education. Many breadwinners have lost their jobs as a result of the current situation, leaving them unable to meet their children's needs. Sales have decreased to 80% of what they were last year. Buyers are prioritizing quantity over quality, seeking the cheapest markets to supply their children with at least some of the supplies they need. However, Israeli closure of Palestinian cities, towns and refugee camps creates another major problem in the transportation of goods from one place to the other. School supplies cannot be delivered to many remote villages and towns, leaving children and parents in a very difficult position. While interviewing some shoppers at AL-Shaja'iyeh Market in Gaza, a man explained with tears in his eyes: "Death is easier than having to face my children empty-handed. When will our suffering end? Why do Palestinians have to suffer and be victims without end?"

### **A night among hundreds for Um Ja'far: The Shelling of Al-Tireh Widad Al-Barghuthi**

In retaliation to the attack in West Jerusalem on the 12<sup>th</sup> of April 2001, Israeli planes shelled and completely destroyed a Palestinian police station in Al-Tireh later that night. The nearby homes were badly damaged, traumatizing their sleeping residents. Um Ja'far, Nawal Abdul-Rahim, who is a returnee, had moved with her family into a new apartment near the police station just five months before. She had spent her life in exile, witnessing the 1982 war in Lebanon and living under shelling and bombardment. She had been a refugee forbidden to return to Palestine, and thus had spent her life travelling from one place to the other, finally settling in Tunisia. As a result of the Palestinian-Israeli "peace process" she was allowed entrance into Palestine with the other returnees. She and her family were thrilled; their lifelong dream had finally come true. The night of the shelling of the police station, she was reminded of the terrifying days experiences in Lebanon and the suffering and agony people had undergone as a result of that war. Her new apartment was damaged, the windows smashed, and the aluminum posts battered. She felt the same fear again; having thought that her return to her homeland would mean the end of her suffering, the opposite turned out to be true.

Um Ja'far is a member of the General Union of Palestinian Women. She worked as an activist in the Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon, establishing first aid centers, providing water and shelters for people, treating the injured and cooking hot meals for combatants.

**Summer activities come to an end at Ramallah Center for Children  
Buthaina Al-Sarraheen, Ramallah**

Ramallah Center for Children has concluded its 2001 summer activities for Palestinian children, who are in desperate need for fun and entertainment in these difficult and traumatizing political circumstances.

Ms. Nahla Qura, Head of the Cultural Department at Ramallah Municipality, explained that children ranging between the ages of seven to fourteen were invited to participate over a two-month period, starting 7 June and ending 12 August 2001. Many children attended, some of whom were older or younger than the age specified because the center used some flexibility.

The program consisted of both indoor and outdoor activities. The indoor activities included reading and writing stories and poems as well as watching educational films. The children particularly enjoyed developing their creativity through arts and crafts, using thread, recycled paper, and other materials to create beautiful traditional dolls. The children also experimented with drawing and modeling with clay. Outdoor activities included field visits to Ramallah Municipality and to the park. There, children were educated about the importance of boycotting Israeli products and supporting Palestinian products instead. They also visited the British Council which invited 25 children to participate in a free internet training course.

Some of the activities' outcomes and recommendations are listed below:

- A great number of children signed up for membership at the Ramallah Public Library
- Both children and their parents enjoyed the activities
- An exhibition of children's artwork was organized, the first of its kind
- Ms. Qura recommended that the dolls the children made, which were dressed in the traditional Palestinian costume, could be marketed as souvenirs, both locally and internationally.

**Palestinian women overcome social contradictions:  
Facing poverty and a husband's betrayal  
Issa Smeirat, Ramallah**

The Palestinian woman has always taken part in the nation's social and political activities, although the extent of this may not be easily apparent. With the current political situation resulting in the increase of unemployment and the death or injury of thousands of husbands, the primary breadwinners for their families, women have been faced with the realities of poverty, and the responsibility for coping with the financial hardship has increasingly fallen on their shoulders. Unfortunately, many women have never worked before, and being forced to enter the public arena to look for work and earn money in order to keep their children and husbands alive is a frightening experience for many of them. One woman, a mother of three children whose husband is unemployed, said that she has now realized the importance of having an academic degree or certificate, which

could have been of great benefit to her under these circumstances. However, the social expectations and perceptions that she as a woman 'belongs' at home not in public life has caused a dilemma for her from which she cannot hide. She is willing to work in any field in order to rescue her family financially and provide her children with the things they need for school. Another woman, whose son was shot dead by Israelis in the first Intifada, suffers from her husband's denial and abandonment. After their son's death, her husband changed dramatically, becoming increasingly withdrawn. Eventually he decided to remarry, and left his first wife to raise their other children alone, leaving behind him huge responsibilities and unhealed wounds.

The reality and suffering which such women face transcend the contradictions of our culture; their needs must be taken seriously.

### **The Forgotten Neighborhood: Israeli soldiers almost turn a wedding into a tragedy Widad Al-Barghuthi**

Al-Silmiyeh, a Palestinian neighborhood lying between Al-Bireh and Al-Jalazon Refugee Camp, has become an isolated area since the Israeli military authorities imposed a tight closure around Palestinian cities, towns and villages. Al-Silmiyeh neighborhood is very close to Bet-El Israeli Settlement, which means that its residents face a constant threat from the presence of Israeli soldiers near their homes. Ever since the beginning of the Intifada, Israeli soldiers have turned the lives of the Palestinian inhabitants of that area into a daily misery. This started on the pretext that they heard shots coming from the direction of the Palestinian homes. However, the real goal of these measures is to pressure Palestinians to leave, so that Israeli settlers can take over their homes.

Accordingly, Israeli soldiers raid the Palestinian homes from time to time, destroying furniture, windows, doors and pictures; interrogating young children, beating their parents in front of them, dumping food out of its containers and smashing glass, and leaving the homes in a state of chaos, their inhabitants terrified and humiliated.

The homes of Ghazi Ali Hammad and his relatives have been the most brutally targeted in these raids. Jameel Hammad, a nine-year-old boy, carries a colorful bird, dead, sadly in his hands, telling me, "This bird is a martyr -- they shot him dead." He shows where the bullet entered and where it exited. Children are the most deeply affected by these barbaric attacks. Ali and Rahmeh, 3-year-old twins, were trapped alone in a room for three hours by the soldiers, who would not allow their mother to see them or feed them. They cried continuously, to no avail. And for three days after, Ali could not stop crying.

Haleemeh Khaled points to the water cisterns on top of her home. Israeli soldiers left these cisterns damaged by their bullets, the precious water spraying out in all directions. Amal Hammad describes the situation as follows, "For the first time ever, I felt this kind of fear and terror; they were behaving like brutish monsters in a forest. They shot at a home where dozens of children live, terrorizing us and leaving deep scars in our children's hearts." Salah Salah, 9 years old, ran after me to tell me that the Israelis also

hurt his goat, shooting at it and breaking its leg. Israeli soldiers also beat Ashraf Hammad, 15 years old, on his broken leg, and arrested him with no sign of remorse.

One Friday, a wedding for Muhannad Hammad was taking place. Guests were gathered excitedly at his home -- children, men, and women all there to celebrate the occasion. When the wedding party left to fetch the bride from a nearby village, they saw Israeli jeeps and tanks approaching them, and immediately heard shooting. The Israelis entered the home, shooting everywhere and leaving holes in the water cisterns and windows. The guests, including nearly one hundred children, were terrified, they watched crying and shaking with fear. When the soldiers realized that they had walked in on a wedding, they made an absurd effort to apologize and allowed a few men to leave to get the bride. As a result of the Israeli closure, the bride was forced to cross through the mountains on foot to reach her new home. By the time she arrived she was exhausted, her wedding dress no longer white but brown from the dust and dirt. What a wedding!

### **A Terrifying Night** **Itaf Yousef**

Al-Janyeh, to the west of Ramallah, is a small, quiet village. One night, the villagers were sitting peacefully on their verandas enjoying the summer breeze and visiting with their relatives. There was no school the following day and many of the villagers were unemployed, so no one was in a hurry to go to bed early. This idyllic scene suddenly erupted into a terrifying nightmare. Two Israeli jeeps entered the village, as if they were jealous of the quietness and the satisfaction the villagers enjoyed. They started shooting in the air with no clear purpose, screaming that they were protecting the Israeli settlers from any Palestinian attack, since, they claimed, a Palestinian youth had attacked a settler on a nearby 'bypass' road. One by one the lights of the village went out, leaving it in complete darkness. The soldiers left without having faced any reaction from the villagers, who had no heavy machine guns to protect themselves. People thought that the crisis was over for that night; what could one village face in a single night? But they were wrong. At 3:00 a.m., Israeli jeeps and soldiers entered once again, driving through each of the streets and shooting outside every home to make sure that its inhabitants woke up and would not be able to sleep again. Who knows on what pretext they justified their second invasion of the village!