

**The Voice of Women**  
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**Editorial: Palestinian women reject Israeli terror**

We, women of Palestine, have witnessed for more than a year now the brutal, unjustified Israeli aggression against the Palestinian nation and land. We denounce the Israeli attacks, political assassinations, massacres, home demolitions, land confiscation, arrests of Palestinians and the destruction of Palestinian infrastructure.

Therefore we demand the following from the international community:

- Provide immediate international protection to the Palestinian nation, and pressure the Israeli government to put an end to the systematic and planned violence and atrocities committed against the Palestinian people.
- Obligate Israel to fulfil UN Resolutions 242 and 338, which state that Israeli forces must withdraw from all land occupied in 1967.
- Classify Israeli terror as 'state terror,' and prosecute Sharon, Israeli Prime Minister, as a war criminal.

**The full story of the massacre committed by Israel in Beit Reema**  
**'Abdulsalam Al-Reemawi, Ramallah**

Beit Reema, a village of 4000 Palestinians situated 25 km northwest of Ramallah, has witnessed a horror that will never be forgotten; a tragedy that future generations will commemorate.

At 2 a.m. on the 24<sup>th</sup> of October 2001, the villagers of Beit Reema woke up to the loud and terrifying sound of shelling, shooting, tanks moving through their streets, and helicopters in the air. Children started crying and parents did not know what was happening or what to do. Israeli military forces had entered the village, shelling the municipality and the Palestinian National Security Office, destroying the buildings and the surrounding homes. Families hid in the most sheltered rooms of their homes. Peeking carefully from their windows they saw Israeli soldiers,

their faces darkened with coal, knocking on house doors, arresting youth, destroying, burning or occupying homes. As it continued the villagers heard that dozens of people have been killed and many injured, most of them members of the Palestinian security forces, shot at by Israeli helicopters from the air. The injured security officers were left to bleed to death in the fields as they tried to flee the Israeli attacks on their office. According to Israeli forces, their invasion of the area came as a result of the killing of a member of the Israeli Knesset. They justified their massacres by saying that the Palestinians responsible for the assassination were from Beit Reema, those who were killed in the invasion had nothing to do with this incident. Two of the Palestinians killed were policemen, Qasem 'Ata Al-Mughrabi and Rafiq Muhammad Saqer. Three Palestinian National Security Members were killed too, Kamel Husein Al-Barghuthi, Harees Hijeh and Abdulmu'ti Al-Zawawi.

The shelling continued till 5:30 a.m., and the Israeli forces finally withdrew at noon on the 25<sup>th</sup> of October 2001. During that period, neither media nor medical staff was allowed into the village. The injured were left to bleed or taken by Israeli forces to undisclosed locations. Three homes were demolished with dynamite; others were converted into military bases. Around fifty men were arrested. The long hours of Israeli terror experienced by Beit Reema's inhabitants cannot be justified, and will remain deeply engraved in the memories of all of the survivors of Beit Reema and of the Palestinian nation.

**A study of the portrayal of women in Palestinian newspapers:  
Perceptions of women as objects still dominate the Palestinian media  
Sabreen Al-Qreinawi**

A group of media students at Birzeit University have conducted a study on three Palestinian newspapers, Al-Quds, Al-Ayyam and Al-Haya Al-Jadeedah, with the conclusion that they still portray women primarily as physical objects. Sama Aweida, Director of the Women's Studies Center, states that portraying women as mere bodies manifests the stereotype of women as tempting and sexual objects.

In his book "Violence Against Women," Ibrahim Al-Masri illustrates that the local media portrays women in a negative way, expecting women to be beautiful, tempting, ready to fulfil men's sexual needs and to give birth to children. Women are also described as naïve, stupid, belonging to and dependent on men, and in addition, consumers rather than producers.

Ms. Aweida considers it the responsibility of society to shift cultural understanding and perceptions of women. This can be done by raising public awareness of the important roles women play politically, socially and economically, rather than perpetuating negative images of women. Women must be acknowledged as equal human beings who have the same rights to decide their futures and express themselves as male member of society.

**How do you expect our children to learn?  
Sama Aweida: Women's Studies Center**

## **Jerusalem & Arab Women Forum, Aisha**

The road from Al-Ram, through Dahiet Al-Bareed, to the Old City of Jerusalem takes barely fifteen minutes by car. But now there are at least four Israeli checkpoints on this route, where every car is stopped for inspection and its passengers interrogated. The soldiers may let the car pass, forbid some of its passengers from passing, or force the car to return. At all these checkpoints, long lines of cars and busses wait, filled with people hoping to reach their work on time and children trying to get to school. I have noticed some children playing together in the cars to try to pass the time, others crying or moving restlessly from one window to the other or climbing over the seats. Some students choose to get out of the cars or school busses and walk along the checkpoint hoping to find a taxi on the other side that can take them to school. But how long will that take? Hours? Once they arrive, will they be able to learn anything after all the stress and frustration they have experienced?

Our children are forgotten. They are not even mentioned on Palestinian news channels, which prefer to broadcast cheap songs all day long. What can we do to protect our children's right to education?

### **Women bear extra burdens: The olive season means an agonizing journey between Israeli settlements Amin Abu-Wardeh, An-Najah Lis-Sahafeh, Nablus**

The olive season in Palestine has always been one of our women's specialties, because women are responsible for preparing for the season, participating in it, pressing the olive oil and marketing it later on. This comes in addition to women's domestic roles and responsibilities for their children.

This year, the olive season came at a time of tight Israeli closure, making the movement of Palestinians almost impossible, and if possible, very dangerous. Israeli settlements are built all around Palestinian villages on Palestinian land, which means that for Palestinian villagers to get to their olive groves they are forced to pass by Israeli settlements, risking being attacked by settlers or even killed. The fact that Israeli forces have confiscated vast areas of Palestinian land is another obstacle to people harvesting their olives, which has resulting in their production and sale of oil becoming more limited and their economic situation deteriorating. This situation is most keenly felt in the northern part of the West Bank -- the Qalqilia area which lies along the Green Line marking the border between the West Bank and Israel proper.

According to figures released by the Ministry of Agriculture, it has been found that:

1. The overall losses in the agricultural sector in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip are estimated at US \$344,968,503.
2. The number of trees uprooted by the Israeli forces in the first year of the Intifada is 39,642, including olive, citrus, forest, palm, banana, grapes, almonds, peach, and others.

## **72 Years since the first Palestinian Women's Conference in Jerusalem Ahmad Saleem, Ramallah**

The role of women through the long years of struggle against occupation and towards independence has been marginalized and overlooked. Because it is usually men who are documenting our history, rebellions and struggles, women's roles tend to be marginalized, because men writing from a male patriarchal perspective tend to be indifferent towards women's roles or regard them as part of a whole.

In her book "The Palestinian Woman and Historical Memory," Dr. Faiha Abdulhadi explains this, arguing that women have been confined to domestic rather than public roles, and the marginalization of women is a result of the patriarchal perspective which overlooks the important roles women have played when documenting history.

In his book "The Women's Movement in Palestine: 1903-1990," 'Izzat Daraghmeh points out that women have always been part of the struggle against the British Mandate and the different occupation regimes in Palestine. In 1920, women participated in demonstrations against the British Mandate, defying all traditions. In 1929, women participated in the first Intifada and several were killed, such as Jameeleh Al-Ashqar, 'Aisheh Abu-Hasan, 'Izziyyeh Muhammad Salameh, and others. Several women societies have been established too. In 1903, the first women's society was established in Acre. In 1910, another women's society was established in Jaffa. In 1924, An-Nahda Women's Society was established in Ramallah by a group of Palestinian nurses. They gathered donations to buy weapons for Palestinian fighters and to help needy families.

In his book "The Palestinian Woman and Rebellion," Ghazi Al-Khalili illustrates that Palestinian women have fought and participated through their committees and societies, not through coordination with political parties. In 1921, the first union of Palestinian women was established, which held several demonstrations denouncing the British Mandate in Palestine. Women have been active in all Palestinian rebellions and sometimes killed, as was Fatima Ghazal who accompanied men to the battlefields, supporting them and supplying them with weapons. Women's military participation hasn't been a planned strategy so much as a voluntary initiative on the part of women. Al-Khalili adds that women's committees and societies have never demanded any rights for women, since the political and the national cause have always overshadowed any other demands. Yet, he states that Palestinian women are considered much more educated than their Arab counterparts, a fact that has manifested itself in several women conferences. On 26/10/1929, the first Palestinian Woman's Conference was convened in Jerusalem, attended by 300 Palestinian women from all over Palestine. The aim behind this conference was to implement measures to increase women's political participation in the struggle for independence against the British Mandate and Jewish settlement.

**Prison guards take a week's vacation  
while women political prisoners wait for their court date**

## **'Itaf Yousef**

In a press conference on 26/10/2001, organized with coordination between the Women's Affairs Technical Committee and Miftah, some Palestinian women who have spent time in Israeli jails, as well as specialized attorneys, spoke about their experiences.

'Abeer Abu-Khdeir, previously imprisoned by Israel, talked about her terrifying experience. She recalled how brutal Israeli military forces snatched her while she had her baby in her arms. They stormed her home, terrorizing her four children. She was put in jail, psychologically and physically tortured and interrogated in order to force her to make a confession, but without success. She was isolated in a small, decaying cell that was completely inadequate for human beings.

Ms. Sameera Muna, the mother of prisoner Amneh Muna, described her daughter's situation. She talked about her daughter's deteriorating physical condition, but said that psychologically she has become stronger and more determined with every passing day. Whenever they have been allowed to visit her, Amneh is brought to the visiting room in handcuffs and leg cuffs, in an attempt to humiliate her and her family.

Attorney Butheina Duqmaq described the demeaning Israeli policies and means of torturing the Palestinian women prisoners. Not only are prisoners refused visits from their families, but their attorneys are also forbidden from visiting them, giving trivial and unreasonable justifications for their denial. By doing this, Israeli authorities violate the Fourth Geneva Convention, which also states that no prisoner shall be held outside of his/her area of living. All Palestinian prisoners are held within Israel, far from their homes, making it very difficult, if not impossible, for their families to visit them.

Attorney Naela 'Attiyyeh explained how Israeli courts dehumanize and disregard Palestinian women prisoners. On one occasion, attorneys were informed that all court sessions were cancelled for one week because the military unit responsible for transferring prisoners from their cells to the courtroom had taken a week of leave due to 'stress.' Women prisoners are left to suffer in their cells, until the unit whose responsibility is merely to transfer them from one place to the other feels psychologically fit to return to work. Such cancellations affect the families of prisoners, who after being deprived of visiting their loved ones in prison, depend on the court day as the only opportunity to see their sons or daughters. Canceling the court sessions or depriving family members from entering the courtroom on the pretext of having no space for attendance violates International Law and the Fourth Geneva Convention.

### **Muhammad carries a tea thermos instead of a school bag: Gaza's children look for ways to survive Ahlam Hammad, Voice of Women, Gaza**

The difficult political situation throughout the past year has severely impacted the economic sector. Unemployment rates range between 60-65% in Palestinian society. The rate of poverty is

also estimated at 55% in Palestine. 125,000 Palestinian workers have lost their jobs within Israel. Of the 190,000 who work in Palestinian areas, 95,000 have lost their jobs.

This reality has put pressure on children to find creative ways to contribute economically to their families' lives and to be able to have bread each day. The phenomenon of seeing children under fifteen years of age selling items along the roads in order to survive is increasing. It is not uncommon to see a child carrying a tea or coffee thermos with a few plastic cups, selling their drinks to people in crowded places after their fathers have become unemployed and still have perhaps a dozen mouths at home to feed. Muhammah Abu-Ayadah (11) and Tamer Abu-Wardeh (10) are two of the hundreds of Palestinian children who have been forced to work on the streets selling tea to help their families. But this sad reality comes at the expense of the children's education. Even if they continue to go to school, their financial concerns occupy their minds all day, especially in the afternoon while they are working. Many of them are determined to stay in school even though they are working. But how will these children, and young adults, survive in the days ahead, and what kind of future will they have?