

Voice of Women
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Extraordinary concerns of an ordinary woman:

We want the road, not the Roadmap

Since the road connecting Ramallah and Ein Arik has been blocked, it has become almost impossible to cross from one side to the other. The Israeli occupation soldiers have been creative in devising new tools for humiliation, as if their presence itself did not inflict suffering enough. Crossing means climbing up a sandy hill over piles of dirt and waste. You walk hoping that you will not fall on your face. There is no other way to cross to get to work, school, the hospital, the market or anywhere else.

Once you have Don't forget your bottle of water. You will need tissues to wipe the sweat from your face and water to drink and to wash your hands, mouth and face. And you think to yourself: it's finally over. But then there are three more checkpoints at Ein Bzei', Kufri Ni'ma and Bal'in. And there is no other road for the inhabitants of 35 villages around Ramallah.

Then you turn on the radio and hear news about the Roadmap and facilities granted to Palestinians and you say to yourself, 'I just want the road; let them keep the map.'

Nine percent of Palestinian families own computers

At Jenin Technological Municipal Center, three of the four employees are women; the director, Maysoun Dawoud, the computer instructor, Eng. Hasna' Hindawi and the secretary, Rima Fahmawi.

The center was initially opened to give mothers, female employees, secretaries, school girls and other women the chance to learn about computers. It aims to help women develop their skills and stay abreast of technological developments. It now offers courses to both men and women and still enjoys high rates of women participants.

Three sisters excel in karate

Although they are young, the three sisters, Hizami, Karma and Lailak impressed the audience in their karate show at Al Najah National University. They demonstrated caliber and ability in a sport that has long remained exclusive to men in Arab society.

Hizami, the eldest, is 11 years old. She seemed confident as she told us how she started her training and advanced until she earned a black belt. She said her parents encouraged her to train at Shutu Center in Nablus because it helped her develop her character and be able to defend herself. She said the sport is not intended to be used to threaten people, but for self defense. When asked whether the local community regards her differently, she said, 'Not at all. My friends and family encourage me and my sisters to develop in this sport.' She dreams of representing Palestine in international contests, especially in Japan. She also wishes to study architecture.

Karma, the second, is 8 years old. She appreciates karate because it makes her stronger and more active in addition to building her self-defense skills. She organizes her time well and she is determined to succeed.

The third sister, Lailak, is only five years old, but she captured the attention of all photographers as she performed at Shutu Center. She also dreams of going to Japan and representing Palestine.

Their trainer, Amin Bisharat, thinks they have a promising future if they continue to have their family's support. The center's director said that more and more teenaged girls have started to take karate. He also said that girls from his center have represented Palestine in international competitions and achieved impressive results in during 1998 and 1999.

Lambs remained silent as their shepherd, Subhiah Abu Etiwi, was murdered by Israeli soldiers

Subhiah woke up that day early, as usual, did her morning prayers and packed some food. She waited till the sun rose, then left the house slowly, leaning on her walking stick. She opened the barn and led the lambs out to pasture.

They followed their usual route, looking for good grazing and not realizing that they had wandered into a zone where death awaited them. It was the border area of Juhr Aldiek, which separates Israel and the Gaza Strip to the east of Al Bureij refugee camp. She left her lambs in the valley to play and eat as watched over them with love and care. They were part of her life, and her sustenance.

Suddenly, the lambs scattered in every direction. Subhiah looked around to see if a wild dog had frightened them. But in a moment, occupation soldiers surrounded her. She told herself that they would not harm her because she was an old woman. She tried to gather her lambs, when a bullet flew through the air. With no mercy, a sniper shot her dead with three bullets that entered her aged body.

She screamed as she fell to the ground, soaking it with her blood. She was still holding the food she had not had a chance to eat.

Subhiah was the breadwinner of an 11-member family. The occupation took her from them. Her children remembered how she used to milk the goats and prepare food and tea for them.

On that day, she was not the only victim. Another sixty-year-old breadwinner was killed. Haj Abu Hadayed was trying to find some work, but the soldiers' bullets were too quick.

