

**Voice of Women
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Editorial: Never should peace be forced upon the peoples of the earth!

Voice of Women sends its support to all the world's victims, and to Afghani women who have been deprived of their basic human rights and their rights to education, work and free choice. *Voice of Women* stands with the Afghani nation as a whole.

We believe that force, oppression, shelling, military operations are not the answer, for peace can never be forced upon nations. We reject repression, too, as a deprivation of human rights, but we also believe that violence breeds violence, terror breeds terror, oppression breeds oppression and darkness only brings along more darkness.

We fully support the Afghani women, and all the women of the world, in their struggle for obtaining their rights. We are aware that the path to emancipation is a long road full of struggle, yet insist that justice, law and the right to freedom of expression our only weapons, rather than bullets and tanks. We hope to become an example which others can follow.

**Women political prisoners on hunger strike:
attacked three times in three months
Widad Al-Barghuthi, Ramallah & I'tidal Qneita, Gaza**

Palestinian women political prisoners in Israeli jails have begun a hunger strike in protest of the deteriorating conditions and their inhumane treatment by the jail's administration. Their demands for basic rights as prisoners are always answered with swift brutality, teargas and beatings.

Amneh Muna of Beir Nabala, 25 years, is being held at Abu Kbeer prison. This prison houses Israeli women criminal prisoners, placing the Palestinian political prisoners housed with them in danger. Amneh, known for being courageous, determined and patient, was chosen to represent the Palestinian women prisoners. As a result of this role, however, she was targeted with brutal treatment. She has been beaten, kicked and tortured, including having her fingernails nearly pulled out. But the more she suffers, the stronger she gets, insisting on continuing to fight for the rights of Palestinian women prisoners. Her mother said that Amneh was a calm person, no one could imagine her involved in the killing of an Israeli.

Sawsan Dahoud Abu Turkey, 14 years old, from Hebron City, is one of the four minor Palestinian prisoners suffering the brutality of Israeli prison guards. She is convicted of trying to stab an Israeli soldier. Why would a 14-year-old school girl think of stabbing anyone?

Sawsan lives in Hebron, a city in which great tension exists between the indigenous Palestinian inhabitants and a few hundred fundamentalist Israeli settlers. Palestinians are daily harassed and attacked by the settlers with the help of Israeli soldiers. While returning from school one day, Sawsan was forced to stop at an Israeli blockade in the middle of the city. There were three Israeli soldiers. She stood there for more than half an hour before two of the soldiers told her she could pass through the blockade. But the third soldier continued to prevent her from going home. Not knowing what to do, she followed the orders of the other two soldiers and tried to pass the blockade, but the third soldier began to beat her violently on the head with his heavy machine gun. He couldn't accept defiance from a 14-year-old. He continued to attack her brutally until she collapsed on the ground. She spent five days in a coma, after which she suffered from physical, psychological, and neurological disorders. She began to lose her sight. After such a horrifying experience, could anyone question why this girl would decide stab an Israeli soldier? Her father believes that the attack she suffered was the main factor leading to her act. She is now held in Abu Kbeer prison, amid criminal Israeli women prisoners, and is a victim of their harassment and constant beating.

Su'ad Hilmi Ghazal, 18 years old, is also convicted of trying to stab an Israeli woman settler on the 13th of December 1998. She was only 15 years at the time. Why would she do something like this? Her family told us that she was a quiet and diligent girl. She dreamt about the future, she enjoyed school, but she also suffered from attacks by settlers. Just a short time before the incident, Israeli settlers confiscated the family's land, next to their house, and forbid them from entering it or using it.

Following are the names of the other women prisoners held in Al-Ramleh prison. Some of them are already sentenced; others have been waiting for months for sentencing:

1. Suna Al-Ra'i from Qalqilia, sentenced to 12 years in prison, starting 13/4/1997.
2. Nisreen Taha from Bidya, sentenced to 4 years and 4 months starting 24/3/1998.
3. Su'ad Ghazal from Sabastia, sentenced to 6 and a half years starting 13/12/1998.
4. Sana' 'Amr, 15 years old from Dora Al-Khaleel, sentenced for one year starting 22/2/2001.

5. Maha Al-'Ik from Bethlehem, detained for 15 months without trial.
6. 'Abeer 'Amr, Sana's sister, detained without trial.
7. Sumaya Zayed from Kharbatha Al-Misbah, Ramallah detained since 28/3/2001 without trial.
8. Rabi'a Hamayel from Beita, Nablus, 15 years old and detained since 28/5/2001 without trial.
9. Wijdan Bujjiyyeh from Hebron, detained since 25/2/2001 without trial.
10. Iman Ghazzawi, from Nablus, detained since 3/8/2001 without trial.
11. Ahlam Al-Tamimi held in Al-Maskubiyyeh prison since 4/9/2001 without trial.

Hisham Abdul Razeq, Minister of Detainees Affairs, states that Palestinian women political prisoners are living under terrible conditions. The fact that they are held among Israeli women criminals presents a great threat to the lives of Palestinian political prisoners, especially the minors. They are denied their basic rights, and if demanded, they are brutally attacked, put into solitary confinement and tortured.

**Support organizations have forgotten us:
Families gather at graves to commemorate their martyrs
*Voice of Women, Gaza***

The mother of the martyr Ayman Al-Loh, the mother of the martyr Muhammad Al-Saqqa, and the wife of martyr Bassam Al-Balbeesy are commemorating the first anniversary of their loved ones' deaths. Although they are gone, the martyrs continue to occupy an important place in their families' lives, homes, and customs. In an interview with these relatives of martyrs, the women expressed deep grief and longing for their loved ones, who will never be forgotten.

All complained with bitterness about the lack of concern they are shown by local human rights and support organizations. They said that some organizations showed up during the first days of mourning, expressing condolences, but have never returned since to check on the family. The families of martyrs are in great need of social, psychological and financial support, and if our own local organizations do not respond, who will? Our minimal obligation is to assist the families, even if only on an emotional and mental level. They need visits of support during feasts, when the absence of their loved ones is most deeply felt.

**Dr. Iyad Al-Sarraj, Director of the Gaza Program for Psychological Health:
The loss of a child's mother impacts the next generation
Ahlam Hammad, *Voice of Women, Gaza***

In an interview with Dr. Iyad Al-Sarraj, Director of the Gaza Program for Psychological Health, he stated that the loss of a mother has a devastating impact on children, to the extent that it affects the lives of their own in the future. When a mother, representing warmth, tenderness and closeness, suddenly disappears from a child's life, a great

emptiness is left. The second greatest loss affecting children is the loss of their house, which represents belonging, security and safety. The third greatest loss for a child is that of the father, who symbolizes values and identity. During the past year, many children have lost their mothers, homes and fathers as a result of the Israeli aggression against our nation. Thus hundreds of children have become victims of insecurity, fear and instability. The following symptoms are commonly experienced by Palestinian children:

- Involuntary urination (children under 15 years old)
- Aggressive behavior with other children
- Inability to concentrate at schools
- Constant complaints of physical and psychological problems
- Depression and anxiety

In light of the continual attacks committed by the Israeli government over more than fifty years, it is difficult to imagine how anyone, least of all, can cope with life. The Nakba and the Naksa have left the nation with a deep sense of homelessness, insecurity and mistrust in the international community. These feelings are carried by each Palestinian, a fear of becoming homeless. Because of this, Dr. Sarraj says he can understand how a young can choose to engage in an attack against the Israeli enemies which costs him his own life, when he has lived with the burden of 50 years of the insecurity and humiliation of his people.

**The Women's Affairs Technical Committee
Commemorates the first anniversary of the Intifada
'Itaf Yousef, Ramallah**

In commemoration of first anniversary of the Intifada, the National and Islamic Forces have called for public activities to be held throughout the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, demanding the end of occupation, the lifting of closure and the release of Palestinian political prisoners. The Women's Affairs Technical Committee (WATC) has participated in and also initiated some of the activities.

WATC participated in a demonstration organized by the General Union of Palestinian Women, which ended at the Martyrs' Graveyard in Al-Bireh, carrying Palestinian flags, wreathes and flowers. Wreathes and flowers were placed on the graves of dozens of martyrs killed by the Israeli soldiers. Amid tears and painful memories, the women walked silently, remembering the dead.

WATC also participated in a demonstration against Surda blockade, in protest of its existence and the blocking of the road. Despite its peacefulness, the Israeli soldiers started shooting tear gas and rubber-coated metal bullets, which resulting in dozens of people being injured and choking from the gas.

WATC attended a musical evening, in which many local and regional musicians participated. Arab musicians from Lebanon and Egypt participated by telephone and

dedicated their songs to the Palestinian people and the Intifada. These Arab artists were Sameeh Shqeir, Egyptian Abdul Rahman Abanudi and Lebanese Marcel Khaleefeh.

The Young Women Leaders Project at WATC, in cooperation with the Popular Art Center, screened a film entitled *Ahlam Fi Al-Manfa* (Dreams in Exile). It presents two young women refugees, one from Al-Dheishe Refugee Camp and the other from Shatilla Refugee Camp in Lebanon, who both dreamed of their Palestinian homeland and longed to return to it. The film was followed by a discussion.

WATC organized a candlelight march through Ramallah and Gaza City in protest of the killing of young children and the destruction caused to the Palestinian nation as a result of Israeli aggression. Leaflets were distributed in both Arabic and English with slogans such as "A Candle for Our Martyrs, Injured and Prisoners." Many people participated, and it was impressive to see entire families joining the demonstration with their young children. In Gaza, workshops were conducted for women in the different areas in order to strengthen their involvement in Intifada activities. Further, a book exhibition was held. Also, WATC wrote a letter to Ms. Mary Robinson, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, asking for her support to avoid more losses, and stressing the importance of putting an end to Israel's discriminating and racist policies.

**Palestinian Women Journalists Office in Nablus:
Embarking on an adventure instead of staying unemployed
Shahnaz Abdul Razeq, Nablus**

Four Palestinian women who have recently graduated from An-Najah University with degrees in Journalism, finished their studies with high hopes for finding a job once they were done. But their hopes began to fade when they realized how scarce jobs are under the current social and political circumstances. Maisa' Abu Dawwas, Lubna Al-Ashqar, Mirvat Al-Sadeq and 'Azezeh Nofal were close friends at the university, and together came up with the idea of starting a journalism office themselves so that they wouldn't remain unemployed.

However, finding the funding for opening such an office wasn't far from easy at all, since loaning institutions avoid potentially unsuccessful endeavors. Finally, the four colleagues were forced to start the office on their own expenses, with the financial and emotional support of their families.

They chose the path of independence and took the challenge. Now they work for various local newspapers and periodicals, and look forward to opening new paths with other local and international media links. Their profits will be used first to cover overhead expenses and the rest will be equally divided between the four women.

What stands as a major barrier for them is the Israeli closure around Palestinian towns and cities, which hinders their movement and their ability to enter Nablus, since most of them live outside of Nablus. The closure resulted in a long daily journey both entering

and exiting Nablus. Eventually they decided to move to Nablus, for which they faced some criticism from the community, although their families were supportive. Journalism is still considered by many to be a 'man's job.'

Women students are losing hope of graduating ***Voice of Women, Gaza***

Amid the ongoing political crisis, the economic situation has deteriorated severely for most Palestinian families, the loss of employment constituting yet another form of war being waged against the nation. One of the sectors most seriously affected by the difficult economic situation is the academic sector, because hundreds of students are now at risk of losing their education because their families are unable to continue paying university fees. Many students, including women, have been forced to withdraw from their programs of study.

Niveen Mubarak, from Khan Younis, who is in her fourth year in English Language, Fatima Sa'eed, in her fourth year in Accounting, Du'a 'Umar from Gaza, majoring in Engineering and others who preferred to remain anonymous, have been forced to withdraw from their courses and cancel their registration for the next semester, due to their families' critical economic situations. Each of them comes from a family with at least seven members, with heavy financial obligations to meet. Yet the family's income is has fallen severely after the primary breadwinner has lost his/her job during the Intifada. Logically, a family member at university should drop out for the sake of saving more money so that the family can survive. However, this also means sacrificing all of one's academic goals and ambitions.

The General Union of Palestinian Women has helped some women to pay their university fees by finding resources for them. Also, in cooperation with the Student Unions, the Union managed to prioritize the most needy students and assist them. But hundreds of other students are facing this problem, and one wonders why there is no emergency plan to fill the gap in such circumstances, and whether the Needy Student Fund is actually helping in any way. An emergency plan is crucial to guaranteeing the right to education of students, whose ambitions are unlimited, but whose resources are limited.

The Family of Um-Sabti: Nightly journey from home to the storage room **Ahmad Saleem, Ramallah**

The family of Um-Sabti, consisting of four sons and three daughters and Um-Sabti herself, lives in Um Safa Village, 30 kilometers to the north of Ramallah. This village is surrounded by the Israeli settlements of Halmeesh from the west and 'Ateret from the east. Um-Sabti and her family had managed after long years of hard work to build a house for themselves on fifty dunums of land, which happened to be near Halmeesh settlement. This resulted in many problems with the Israeli settlers who are trying to

confiscate all of the land surrounding their settlement, without consideration for the legal owners of the land.

Since the day that they moved into their new house, Israeli settlers have not stopped attacking them with stones, swearing at them, beating the sons, and using every possible means to humiliate them and force them to leave. Eventually, a few months ago, they did move out for the sake of their lives. They were given a small storage room in which to live in the middle of the village, which lacked a kitchen and a toilet. Each day Um-Sabti and her daughter would silently and fearfully walk through the fields to their house, cook some food and then return to the small storage room to feed the rest of the family.

Statistics released by the Central Bureau of Statistics in July, show that 56,000 Palestinians have changed their place of living as a result of Israeli aggression, 60% of which (33,500) have moved due to living near confrontation lines and Israeli settlements.