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Editorial: Ploughing the Sea

The Working Women's Society, in cooperation with the Palestinian Centre for Public Opinion, has recently conducted a public opinion poll which revealed a harsh reality. After questioning members of the public on their opinions about social concepts related to individual rights, principles of revolution and the human right of self-ownership and control, the following results emerged, which I find rather disappointing:

- 70.4% believe in prioritising and focussing on issues resulting from the deteriorating political situation, such as unemployment, and regard issues of violence against women as trivial and not a matter of priority. This response indicates an attitude that the political sphere is isolated from the social sphere. However, freedom cannot take root in one without the other: they complement each other.
- 58.8% regard family matters as private and thus oppose interference by police or legal institutions when men attack their wives. This reinforces the idea of private property in which women are regarded as men's property over which the man's authority should be exercised.
- 49.3% view social traditions and customs as barriers hindering women's development. However, they failed to recognize that these traditions and customs are socially constructed and thus liable to change.
- 50.7% approve of men beating their wives in cases of "female disobedience." Relating women with obedience indicates the notions of submission and ownership which control the public conscience.

Such results run in total opposition to the emancipation of women and the progressive ideology our revolution adopts. What kind of freedom are revolutionaries talking about?

**Victims of Cancer are Primarily Women:
Palestinians are Deprived even of Cancer Treatment**

Closure, siege and oppression have no mercy. Not even on cancer victims who are in desperate need of treatment, and for whom every minute is worth a lifetime. Yet, unfortunately, politics tends to control our lives, even those of cancer patients, most of whom are women suffering from breast cancer.

The fact that only two hospitals in the West Bank offer cancer treatment obliges most patients to seek treatment in Israeli or Jordanian hospitals. However, financial problems hinder most of them from being admitted. But if it were only a financial problem it be more manageable. If patients are able to get permission from Israeli authorities to enter Israel, which rarely happens, they encounter tremendous difficulties in crossing through the villages, towns and cities of the West Bank. The imposed closure forces them to take dangerous, long, mountainous roads, which leads to the exhaustion of patients who sometimes give up before they ever reach the hospitals.

If there were Palestinian hospitals specialized in cancer treatment things might be easier, but Israeli authorities prohibit the Palestinian Authority from importing radiation equipment necessary for cancer treatment on "security" pretexts. This is a tragedy. For the sake of Israel's "security," Palestinians are paying with their lives -- innocent lives whose only "fault" is their cancer.

**The Palestinian Family:
Workers Deprived from Reaching their Work Places
From Nablus, by Mirvat Al-Shafi'y**

The Israeli occupation has been killing, injuring, and terrorising the Palestinian nation by using internationally banned lethal weapons such as rockets, grenades, live ammunition and tear gas. It would seem that killing and traumatising the other is far from enough in Israel's eyes, because through enforcing a policy of closure, attacking Palestinians driving to work and prohibiting emergency assistance from reaching them, Israel also deprives thousands of Palestinians from earning their livings in the places they have worked for years.

Thousands of women and men, mothers and fathers, are left unemployed as a result of the Israeli-imposed siege on our people. Many who used to work in Israel have lost their jobs, and cannot find any work in the West Bank or the Gaza Strip, in which rates of unemployment have increased enormously. How will these people live, and provide for their families and children? For some it has become a challenge even to find a piece of bread to quiet their young child for a few hours. How will parents manage to pay their children's school fees, or even think of sending them to school in a time where food is barely found? How can parents play the role of effective and responsible guardians, when they themselves are suffering from physical and psychological burdens? How can adults save their children, when they themselves are beaten, injured by the stones and bullets of Israeli settlers?

It is a serious problem that is intensifying day after day. A World Bank report shows that one million Palestinian in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip are living beneath the poverty line, which has increased to more than 50% of the nation since the beginning of the Intifada. It is worth mentioning that the most affected sector is those who already suffered from poverty, living in the south of the Gaza Strip and the south of the West Bank.

**Caught between the 21st Century and the Barbarism of the Middle Ages!
Can our children bear it?
By Widad Al-Barghuti:**

Palestinian children have been exposed to tremendously traumatising and terrifying experiences throughout the current Intifada. The fear of Israeli bullets and rockets, insecurity and constant nervousness, and helplessness have become deeply engraved within each Palestinian child, not knowing when their suffering will end.

It has been realised by many parents and psychological counsellors that children, as a way of creating security for themselves, tend to cling to fantasy cartoons, such as Pokemon and Star Gate. Through these fantasies they create a sense power and strength that can vanquish their own fears and problems originating from terminate Israeli occupation. Yet, living in a world of fantasy is a way of running away from reality, from the daily bombardments, images of death and news. To what extent is such fantasizing healthy, or even possible? Despite the fact that children are in desperate need to escape from the traumatic realities in their lives, it is also important that children know the boundaries between fantasy and reality. T'idal Al-Jareery, a psychological counsellor, describes the role adults play in moderate children's fears through establishing a safe and secure environment for them. She also stresses the role of the media, through producing specific educational programs for children. A psychological balance must be established instead of living at one of the two extremes: death or power; bitter reality or satisfying fantasy.

**Huwwara Secondary School for Girls:
Fighting on a Different Level
Nablus, Amin Abu-Wardeh**

The town of Huwwara lies to the south of Nablus. It has suffered tremendously from the oppressive Israeli policies of closure and curfew, having experienced the longest curfew imposed over 45 consecutive days. Around 400 students study at the Huwwara School for Girls, which has become a daily target for Israeli soldiers and settlers to exercise their offensive, harassing and terrorising policies.

In an attempt to make up for the lost school days, the school principal, Firyal 'Abdallah, decided to lengthen school hours for an extra hour daily, and found great appreciation and acceptance on the part of students and parents. This was done despite of the great difficulty of transportation due to closure, and the risk of being harassed by soldiers and settlers. Recently an Israeli military jeep ran over four girls on their way home from school, and left them in critical condition. Two

of them were treated and returned to school, but the other two suffer bone-breaking injuries and had to be confined to their beds for a period of time. They will be given special sessions to make up the material they are missing. Another demeaning phenomenon is soldiers' harassment of students by following them, swearing at them and making inappropriate comments to them.

Both students and teachers have demonstrated how completely they are willing to fight for the sake of education and survival, as illustrated by the high test results from the first semester.

Nahla Qura: Through Resistance Our National Goals will be Achieved! Palestine Press for Media and Information, Ramallah

In an interview with Nahla Qura, a leading Palestinian women, the following points were illuminated:

- The importance of continuing the Intifada as a means to achieve our national rights and goals
- The policy of murdering Palestinian leaders by Israel is a way of furthering violence, because out of violence only violence erupts
- The role of women in this Intifada differs from that of the 1987 Intifada. This results from factors such as the form resistance has taken in both periods -- the first, characterised by vast spontaneous national participation, the second, characterised by a limited national participation, in specific periods of time and in specific places.
- Throughout the current Intifada, the role of women has been confined to providing services to the families of injured and martyrs and to offer their support. In particular, they have been involved in building up organisations which track human rights and democracy issues.
- The importance of imposing an embargo on Israeli products and committing oneself to it. \$ 650 million comprised the loss of the Israeli economy in the first Intifada, for which Palestinian women have been blamed by the Israeli government. This is due to women's great role in enlightening their relatives as to the importance of utilising national products, encouraging self-sustained economy and agriculture.
- The Union of Women's Committees for Social Work has played a crucial role in portraying the Palestinian perspective of the current uprising, in opposition to the Israeli one, through sending messages to different foreign institutions, especially Italian and French Organisations, illustrating Israel's aggression, oppression and dehumanisation of the Palestinian nation.

Journalist Laila 'Odeh: A Bright Light amid Clouds of Smoke and Bullets! Fida' Al-Barghuti, Ramallah

Laila 'Odeh, a Palestinian journalist, became a symbol of perseverance, challenge, courage, and strength through her impressive news reports for Abu-Dhabi Channel. Without hesitancy and despite the great dangers facing her, she insists on covering all events in Palestine, portraying the Palestinian perspective and reality. She was faced with death several times, attacked by Israelis

from the group called the “Temple Mount Saviours,” and when forbidden to pass through Israeli checkpoints, she challenged the soldiers and drove through.

'Odeh, a refugee originally from Al-Malha village in the Jerusalem district, has a BA in English and Russian Literature. Due to developments in her life, she decided to become a journalist, a profession she feels suits her well. She lost her brother in 1970 in a suicidal attack against the occupation, which resulted in her becoming overwhelmed by the oppressive political reality which she had always been aware of since childhood. These experiences led her to a deep commitment to the Palestinian cause.

As a Palestinian woman journalist, 'Odeh has proven her self-confidence, efficiency and competency. Despite obstacles faced a woman, she has been able to build a successful career in a profession often regarded as a "man's job." Her husband's support is of great help to her, and when she has to be away from her children due to her work, he is there for them. Despite being a woman, her success and charismatic personality have won the admiration of Arab society generally, and her name represents a radiant character in the history of Arab media.

Palestinian Women State their Opinions on Crucial Issues **Laila Abu-Khdeir, Gaza**

The Working Womens Society, in cooperation with the Palestinian Centre for Public Opinion, has conducted an opinion poll among 505 women from the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and Jerusalem, 38% of whom are working women. The results indicate that:

- 38.7% support both peaceful and military resistance as effective means to end occupation
- 24.7% support the Palestinian-Israeli peace settlement as a long-term resolution of the conflict
- 67.3% support the discussion of the collaborators' issue from a legal point of view, and sentencing them accordingly; 14.3% disagree
- 70% denounce the Palestinian Authority's status and demand the establishment of a National Unity Government; 18.6% disagree
- 67.6% see it crucial to include Palestinians in exile within the National Unity Government
- 44.3% denounce the role of the Palestinian political parties; 17.6% are satisfied of their role
- 44.6% regard the Palestinian opposition incapable of providing a strategic political alternative; 32.7% consider the opposition capable
- 70.8% support the embargo imposed on Israeli products; 13.9% call for a complete economic embargo
- 61.6% call for Legislative Council elections; 28% do not regard it important, 45% are not satisfied with the role of the Palestinian Legislative Council especially since the outbreak of the Intifada
- 64.5% support a quota for women in all political institutions; 19% disagree
- 41% are satisfied with women's participation in the current Intifada; 25% are relatively satisfied; 32% indicate dissatisfaction

These results and percentages show the importance of women's opinions being taken into consideration by the various social and political Palestinian institutions.