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Editorial: Martyrs of Living

The tragic incident that took place on Thursday, 21 October 1999 in the lighter factory in Hebron in which fourteen working women in their prime years were burnt beyond recognition has raised numerous questions. This accident was not the first to have taken place as a result of human errors and lack of follow-up and accountability. Under such circumstances, an investigation committee is usually formed but fails to follow through and the case is closed without taking any punitive measures against those responsible.

Losses were particularly heavy because the factory is located in a residential area and lacks the minimum public safety measures as evidenced by the inability of the female workers to flee the site. It employs forty school students between the ages of 6 and 13 at the rate of 1.5 shekels per hour. The factory works in violation of its original license as a vegetable store. Following the accident, vehicles from the Palestinian Civil Defense Army rushed to the site to give aid to the injured. When they arrived they discovered that the vehicles were not stocked with water and that there were no fire extinguishers in the factory. They turned to the help of Israeli rescue workers to extinguish the fire and to provide aid to the injured.

This accident will not be the last of its kind as long as punitive measures are not taken against those responsible. The employers, municipalities, ministries, labor and professional unions and the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) must be held responsible for the accident. The PNA should take punitive and prompt measures against those responsible and should not act irresponsibly toward our people who deserve to live in dignity and security.

The following recommendations can help to prevent future disasters of this kind:

1. Close unlicensed factories that do not meet safety requirements.
2. Call upon the municipalities not to issue licenses before making sure that the building meets all safety requirements and includes windows for escape
3. The Labor Unions and the General Union of Palestinian Laborers must take responsibility for searching the factories, making sure that they do not employ children, and making sure that they meet all safety measures
4. Transfer factories from residential areas into unpopulated areas
5. Call upon the Palestinian Legislative Council (PNA) to expedite the process of approving the Palestinian Labor Law to protect laborers' rights
6. Form inspection committees of technicians trained in this field to search factories and plants

The article concludes by saying, 'If efforts were united, losses would have been much less. If punitive measures are not taken, we will continue to suffer and lose more victims.'

The Hebron tragedy: Will the investigation committee give answers? Itaf Yousef & Amal Jum'a

This article is about the tragic incident that took place on Thursday, 21 October 1999 in the lighter factory in Hebron in which 14 working women in the prime of their lives were burnt beyond recognition.

Muna, a female worker, died with her colleagues when the fire broke out in the factory. Muna's sister Na'ela, who survived the fire says, 'We were sitting around the table while my employer was talking to us about our work. We heard a voice coming from downstairs. My employer and I went down to see what was going on. We were shocked by the scene. The factory was burning. We were confused and found ourselves screaming in the street for help. We tried to return to the factory to save those inside, but others prevented us from going in. They entered and took their sons out, but they did not allow us to go in.'

She adds, 'There were only three of us. We started screaming and shouting. The people in the street came when they heard us screaming. I do not know why I was running in the street. The fire was spreading throughout the building. The first fire extinguisher arrived at 9:30 am, one hour and a half late. The fire extinguisher failed to operate because the fireplugs were burning. The Israeli fire extinguishers eventually arrived at the site and the rescue workers wanted to demolish the wall to take the female workers out of the building, but the owner of the building prevented them from doing so, claiming that it would destroy the building.'

Asked about the nature of the work at the factory, Na'ela says, 'In the beginning, we were told that it was a sewing factory. When I started working I found out that the factory manufactures all kinds of things, such as detergents, wax, mirrors, pottery, lighters, and blades. The building is a small storeroom closed from all sides. The room has only one door, which the employer used to close after we entered and did not allow us to leave. The employer divided the storeroom into two compartments.

Female workers worked in the upper part of the room, while male workers stayed downstairs. The room is too small and stuffy. Some twenty students used to work in the factor after they return from school in the afternoon hours for only two shekels per hour. Had children been in the factory at the time of the accident, losses would have been even heavier.’

Who is responsible?

Many voices were raised condemning the tragic accident and accusations were made against different parties, including the Hebron municipality, the Ministry of Trade and Industry, the Ministry of Labor, and the Ministry of Local Government. What have the officials in these ministries had to say?

The Director of Studies and Awareness Department for the Inspection of Labor at the Ministry of Labor, Walid Al-Balbisi, describes the accident as tragic and says it should be a lesson not only for the Ministry of Labor, but also for other ministries. He states that the Inspection Department at the Ministry of Labor will make every possible effort to prevent such tragedies in the future.

Mr. Balbisi pointed out that according to article 12 of the Palestinian Labor Law, every owner must send a statement to the Employment Office in his residential area presenting information about the facility, including the nature of the work at the facility, its address and location, the number of workers at the site, the name of the owner, and the name of the manager. The Employment Office is to be notified if a new manager is appointed so that the Inspection Department can visit the institution to make sure that all laws and regulations are fulfilled.

The Ministry of Labor must ensure that the Labor Law is implemented even if the facility is not licensed because it is not the responsibility of the Ministry of Labor to issue licenses but of the Ministry of Industry and Trade and the municipalities.

He pointed out that the ministry makes every effort to work together with the other ministries to establish adequate rules and regulations in order to protect female and male workers and their children. The Ministry of Labor asked the Ministry of Industry to provide it with a list of the industrial facilities in Palestine that were granted licenses since the establishment of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) in the self-rule areas. This is in order to enable the labor inspectors to visit the facilities and to examine to what extent the Labor Law is being implemented in these facilities. The inspectors in Palestine submit reports to the Ministry of Industry, while in some Arab countries, such as Egypt and Tunisia, the Ministry of Industry has the right to refuse licenses according to the remarks submitted by the labor inspectors.

He noted that there should be a complementary relationship between the concerned ministries, such as the Ministries of Industry and Tourism and the Ministry of Local Government, which is responsible for granting licenses and protecting the workers inside these facilities.

The Director of Democracy & Workers’ Rights Center (DWRC), Hassan Al-Barghouti, commented by saying, ‘The accident revealed the lack of supervision over the implementation of the Labor Law and the lack of sovereignty of the Law in Palestine, as well as the lack of coordination between the official parties. If, for

example, the municipality grants a license to a factory or institution, the Ministry of Industry does not have information about these institutions. The same is true for the Ministry of Local Government until its inspectors visit the site. Besides, the budget does not allow the ministry to employ inspectors with high qualifications and an adequate level of efficiency.'

Mr. Barghouti stated that driven by our need to invest, we devalue human life. The issue is not about improper working conditions or licensure, but rather it involves employing workers below the legal age. The incident revealed that several children of six and seven year of age work in the factory. This should lead us to become seriously concerned about our future as human beings. We are required to stop violations practiced against our right to life and to place life and well-being before profits.

Mr. Barghouti calls on Palestinian President Yasser Arafat and the Palestinian Cabinet to declare 21 October of each year a day for health and occupational safety. He stressed the importance of transferring the factories from the residential areas into the industrial zones.

He calls on female and male workers to refer to the Democracy & Workers' Rights Center to submit reports about their factories, their locations, working conditions, and safety and health conditions.

Hassan Sharake, Head of the Ramallah branch of the Palestinian Labor Union, describes the site where the incident took place as a prison cell. The room has no windows and the door was closed when the factory was burnt.

He confirms that most factories in Palestine are unprepared for accidents due to a lack of public safety measures. Most factories are not furnished with a dining room or restroom. Such needs are basic and essential for the worker who spends eight hours or more at work.

Sharake calls on the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) to respond to the amendments made to the Palestinian Labor Law by the Labor Union in agreement with employers. They agreed upon a 42 hour work week, while the PLC asks for 48 working hours. Employers also agreed to grant working women a three-month maternity leave, while the PLC would like to see a shorter leave period. He concludes by urging female and male workers to refer to the Labor Unions in order to protect themselves and to address their concerns .

Samar Hawash from the Palestinian Working Women Society (PWWS) strongly condemned the incident and described it as painful and tragic. 'We strongly condemn the incident because there is no law to protect the working women. If it exists, there are no mechanisms that ensure the safety of workers in general and women in particular,' she stated.

Ms. Hawash noted that the incident should be considered a serious precedent shaping future working conditions through exerting pressure on decision-making authorities, such as the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) and the executive authority in order to protect female and male workers.

Mahmoud Ziyada from the Workers' Rights & Development Studies Center denied that there is a law for health and occupational safety, but said that there are signs regarding the importance of providing precautionary measures. He revealed that 70% of workers do not have health insurance.

When asked about the investigation committee, Mr. Ziyada replied by saying, 'The ministers should be held accountable for the accident and the investigation committee must be made to answer a number of questions, amongst which are those related to the working conditions, as most incidents occur due to reasons related to inadequate working conditions, not to reasons related to safety conditions.'

**Memorandum submitted by the General Union of Palestinian Women (GUPW)
to the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC)**

Mr. Ahmad Qurei', Head of the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC)
PLC members,

The General Union of Palestinian Women (GUPW) strongly condemns the tragic accident that took place on Thursday, 21 October 1999 in the lighter factory in Hebron in which 14 working women in the prime of their lives were burnt beyond recognition. This accident was not the first of its kind to have taken place as a result of human errors and lack of follow-up and accountability.

In light of the frequent accidents which have caused the death of tens of workers, we recommend the following:

1. The Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) must read the Palestinian Labor Law accurately, especially articles related to health and occupational safety conditions. The PLC should be held responsible toward the workers by approving a just and contemporary law that ensures the minimum public safety measures.
2. The investigation committee follow-up must examine the circumstances of the accident in cooperation with the concerned parties and take punitive measures against those responsible for the accident.
3. Employers must provide proper and decent working conditions that ensure the dignity of workers in accordance with the terms of the Palestinian Labor Law, especially those related to transferring the factories into the industrial zones.
4. Employers must set minimum wage for employees working in Palestinian institutions to preserve the dignity of workers.
5. Official institutions must conduct regular inspection tours to the factories to limit violations in accordance with the international legislation.
6. Employers must be prevented from employing children under 16 years of age.
7. The 21st of October of each year should be declared a day for the working women to commemorate the victims and to evaluate the situation of female and male workers.

General Union of Palestinian Women
27 October 1999

Al-Bureij Women's Health Center opened

Non-governmental health organizations play a key role in developing health programs and services provided to women, especially those related to reproductive health.

The Director of the Women's Health Center in Al-Bureij Refugee Camp, Firyal Thabet, noted that during the years 1995-1998, the center provided reproductive health services to 9,649 women in the refugee camp and the surrounding area. The center provides services to 52% of the camp's population (30,000), and 25% to women between the ages of 15 and 49 in the neighboring camps.

Ms. Thabet added, 'The center was established in December 1995 with the participation of the Italian Institute for Women's Development (IDS) and funded by the UN Population Fund (UNFPA). The center, the first of its kind in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, is affiliated with the Culture and Thought Institute in Khan Younis, which was formed by a group of women's committees in 1991.'

With regard to the center's goals, Ms. Thabet said, 'The center aims to develop and improve the psychological, social, reproductive, and legal health services provided to women. This is in order to enable women to perform their role effectively and to support them to obtain their full rights.'

The center includes a number of departments, each of which provides a certain type of health services. The medical clinic, for instance, provides family planning services, gynecological services, pregnancy services, and ultrasound services. A female specialist, a midwife and a female nurse work in the medical clinic. Over the past three years, the medical clinic received around 3,884 cases, while the counseling department received 1,225 women seeking legal, psychological and social counseling services. The Counseling Department is open seven days a week and has a female psychological and social counselor who provides individual counseling concerning family affairs and living and social conditions. In addition to providing services inside the department, the counselor follows-up the cases through conducting home visits in coordination with the concerned institutions with the aim of integrating these cases into society.

The center also provides physical activities, which include physiotherapy and exercises before and after pregnancy. The number of beneficiaries from this service amounted to 477 women, while the number of beneficiaries from the educational lectures held inside and outside the center amounted to 2,309 women. These lectures aim at strengthening and enabling women to participate in decision-making policy and improving their living conditions.

Over the past three years, the center conducted 1,240 home visits. These included before and after pregnancy, family planning, health education, psychological and social cases.

Al-Bureij Women's Health Center is also interested in cultural contests. The number of contests conducted by the center amounted to 614 dealing with women's reproductive health and others. The center has a special department for research. The

department carried out two programs, one of which is about natural breastfeeding, and the other is about family planning. The center also has a library, which includes a collection of books and references in the fields of medicine, psychology, sociology, women's health and children.

Ms. Thabet confirmed that over the past three years, the center has been able to attain a number of achievements, most importantly monitoring pregnant women from the first month of pregnancy. This helps in discovering problems encountered by pregnant women at an early stage. A second achievement is that the center has been able to attract a good number of pregnant women to attend educational courses related to pregnancy. A third achievement is that the center has been able to shift some misconceptions among women, such as fear of exercising during pregnancy. Women have become convinced of the importance of doing exercises before and after pregnancy. A fourth achievement is that the center has been able to address psychological and sexual problems faced by women. The center has become a meeting place for women who need support from others. A fifth achievement is that the center has empowered women to ask for their legal and social rights without fear. More women now have the confidence to make decisions with regard to birth control and improving the living conditions of their families.

Ms. Thabet concludes by calling on women to give their physical, psychological and social health top priority, because healthy women are capable of building a healthy society. A woman's health reflects negatively or positively on her family.

Low presence of women in the Israeli labor force **Amin Abu Wardeh**

A recent report released by the Arab Organization for Human Rights pointed to the low participation of Arab women in the Israeli labor force compared to Jewish women. In 1994, the number of Arab women above 15 amounted to 305,000, 17% of whom work outside their homes, which means that 83% or 253,000 women did not constitute part of the labor force, the report noted.

On the other hand, 52.5% of Jewish women aged 15 and above worked and got salaries in 1997. The high participation of Jewish women in the labor force can be attributed to the prevailing traditions in the Jewish society, while the Arab society considers women responsible for taking care of children, cleaning and cooking and discourages them from working outside of the home, especially outside of their residential areas.

The report pointed to the reasons affecting the employment of Arab women, such as lack of transportation between the Arab villages and industrial zones and lack of kindergartens and nursery schools to take care of children while their mothers are at work.

The report noted that thousands of Arab women lost their jobs in the textile industry due to the transfer of the factories to Jordan and Egypt where the labor cost is cheaper. Due to lack of job opportunities available to Arab women in these two countries, the employers employ women under unbearable working conditions and

low salaries below the standards set by Israel according to the International Law for Human Rights.

According to a recent research conducted by the Arab Institution for Human Rights on the working conditions, 70% of working women expressed deep resentment and dissatisfaction with their working conditions.

Women sacrifice to improve conditions for their families Khawla and Mai Ahmad

This article sheds light on women who have made great sacrifices and become involved in the labor market in order to improve the living conditions of their families. Elderly people throughout the world are placed in special institutions for care, while in Palestine women work extremely hard to provide for their children and to improve the living conditions of their families after their husbands' death.

A 55-year-old married woman and a mother of three children tells her story by saying, 'My husband died after a prolonged struggle with cancer. I rejected the idea of having a second husband although I was still young. I decided to take care of my children. I worked picking olives inside Israel to provide for my children. My eldest son finished the high school and traveled abroad to pursue his university education. I was waiting for his return impatiently to take the responsibility undertaken by me, especially as I was getting older and my health condition was deteriorating. After he returned, I was shocked to find that he wanted me to continue working in order to help him to marry a young woman he met abroad. I am still working despite my weak health in order to provide a decent life for my family.'

Um Fathi, a 65-year-old married woman and mother of four children tells her story by saying, 'I married a wealthy man when I was forty years old, after previously rejecting the idea of marriage. I had three sons and one daughter. My husband died after seven years. My husband's sons from an previous marriage kicked us out of the house. I decided to work to provide for my children. I was able to teach my children, two of whom are now at university and the others are in high school. They are doing extremely well in their studies.'

She adds, 'I will continue working until my children attain the highest academic degrees. I will continue working to achieve what I was hoping for for myself through my children so that they won't go through what I have been through.'

A local study entitled 'The Health of the Elderly: Reality and Challenges' was presented by Ikhlas Jamil, the Director General of the Social Care and Rehabilitation Department at the Ministry of Social Affairs and prepared by Abdullah Bashir. The study noted that the number of elderly people in Palestine above the age of 60 is expected to reach 10% of the total population by the year 2025 due to social and medical developments in society.

October 21st : Palestinian Working Women's Day

Um Karmel

The death of 14 young working women in the lighter factory on 21 October 1999 could have shaken entire ministries and departments, had there been a just and impartial investigation in the incident. The fact that it hasn't makes their death even more bitter. I wonder if there is a difference between one death and another. It would seem that there is upon examination of the circumstances of the incident. On 20 May 1990, nine years ago, seven Palestinian working men were shot dead by a Jewish settler while on their way to work early in the morning. Their death was extremely bitter and their need to work in the Jewish settlements was even more bitter. Demonstrations erupted throughout the Palestinian Territories in the West Bank and Gaza Strip to express deep anger over the incident. The Israeli government declared the settler innocent and described him as mentally unfit. The list of those responsible for the death of the 14 young women in the lighter factory is very long. We have the right to have a national industry. We need a national industry in the full sense of the word. An industry that preserves citizens' rights, security and safety. We do not need more victims. I suggest that 21 October of each year be a day for the Palestinian Working Women in order to warn those who underestimate the workers' rights.

Special interview with neurologist Jourjeit Qadis

On 21 July 1989, a 20-year-old young man was shot by the Israeli soldiers once in his head and again in his arm. Following the incident, the city of Ramallah closed down to mourn the martyr. In the evening hours, news spread throughout the city that the young man had not died but was severely injured. He had a surgical operation. Some said that the operation took 17 hours, while others said 15 hours. Dr. Jourjeit Qadis, who performed the operation, said the operation took around eight hours.

While I was preparing a report about those injured following the signing of the Oslo Accords between the Palestinians and Israelis, I met one of the injured, Diab Zayed, from the village of Abu Qash, near Ramallah. I still meet him from time to time in Ramallah. His health condition has improved dramatically. From that time Dr. Qadis reputation for proficiency, sincerity and modesty has become well-known.

Dr. Qadis is originally from Jaffa. Her family left Jaffa and moved to Nablus following the Naqba -- the expulsion and dispersion of the Palestinian people from their homeland in 1948. She was born in Nablus. In the early fifties, her family moved to Ramallah. She finished her high school education in 1971 and in 1972 she traveled to Germany to study medicine. In 1986, she returned to her homeland with P.HD in neurology.

During the interview, Dr. Qadis was asked about the longest operation she had performed during her medical career. She replied, 'The longest operation was performed on a young man who was severely injured in the head by the Israeli soldiers during the intifada. The operation took 13 hours, during which the surgical team was changed and I was the only one who continued in the operating room for 13 hours. This experience proved that success is not impossible. I also proved wrong those who had told me that my little hands couldn't perform this job.'

One woman dies every minute due to pregnancy
Hasan Salim

Gynecologist Salawa An-Najab noted that scientific studies have shown that giving birth to more than five children increases the mortality rate amongst pregnant women and newborn babies. The likelihood of having intelligent children is high when mothers maintain a minimum period of two years between each pregnancy. Dr. Najab stressed the importance of keeping a period of at least two years between each pregnancy to maintain women's health in a good condition and to establish a healthy family free from psychological or physical illnesses.

According to statistics released by 'Mama' Network, 585,000 die every year- one pregnant woman every minute due to reasons related to pregnancy. Most of these cases occur in the developing countries. Statistics have shown that 200,000 women worldwide die due to a lack of family planning services. Around 350 million women lack necessary information about family planning services or cannot reach them.

Nada becomes a victim of torture
Kamleh Asho'ur

A 45-year-old woman Um Nada married a man whom she had never met at the age of 20. She tells her story by saying, 'Problems began when I learnt that my husband intended to have a second wife. He took my two children and kicked me out of the house refused to divorce me. I lived with my father and cared for him until he passed away.'

She goes on to say, 'My 19-year-old daughter Nada is handicapped and suffers from epilepsy. Before I left my husband, I placed my daughter in An-Nahda Women's Society. Her health condition was good. She was taken out of the society after my husband got married. Her stepmother placed her in a storage room and closed the door.'

Nada's body was covered with burns and scars because her stepmother tried to get rid of her. One day, the neighbors noticed heavy smoke coming out of the house. They called the ambulance and the firemen to extinguish the fire. They broke down the door and took Nada out of the room and took her to Nablus Hospital for medical treatment. Nada's mother insisted on taking her daughter home to live with her. She rented a house and filed a complaint against her husband. She finally obtained a divorced after 11 years.

'Six months ago, I enrolled my daughter in a charitable society through the Social Affairs in Ramallah for 600 shekels a month, 400 of which are paid by the Social Affairs and the balance by me. On 28 September 1999, the society called me and asked me to fetch my daughter because she was very sick. When I arrived at the hospital, I found my daughter in a miserable condition. She had a high fever and

could not speak. The social worker told me that my daughter was aggressive and that she carries a knife and tries to attack those around her."

Um Nada goes on to say, 'I took my daughter and returned to Ramallah. The next morning, I took her to Ramallah Hospital. It was a big shock when she was examined by the doctor. Her body was covered with bruises and injuries to her head and arms.'

When asked about the reason Nada was beaten by the social worker, her mother said, 'Nada is used to taking a rest after lunch. The social worker did not allow my daughter to have her rest after lunch and used to punish her by turning her face to the wall for long hours.'

'My daughter was physically, psychologically and morally tortured. Her health condition is getting worse and worse, although she has been in the hospital for 40 days now. I have a medical report from the hospital about her health condition. So, I am going to sue the society. I would like to express my thanks to the Social Affairs for helping me, especially the Social Counselor Radwan who is trying hard to bring my daughter back to society,' she said.

The Society's response

The Society's Administrative Director said, 'The girl is aggressive. She repeatedly attacked other girls. What the social worker did was in self-defense.'

The Head of An-Nahda Women's Society, Na'ela Rabah, said, 'Nada entered the society several times. She suffers from mental retardation and epilepsy. On 8 July 1999, we learnt that Nada was taken to a boarding school. Her condition is not severe and she is not aggressive. She used to respond to the counselors and never attacked anybody. But if she likes something, she takes it and if anybody tries to take it from her, she defends herself.'

Extraordinary concerns of an ordinary woman: The right to life is sacred Itaf Yousef

A huge march was held in front of the Ministry of Labor to express condemnation and anger over the death of 14 young working women in a lighter factory in Hebron on Thursday, 21 October 1999. This incident demands that those responsible be held accountable and have the integrity to leave their posts, because there is nothing more valuable in the world than human life.

If our institutions and factories are not better than the lighter factory, all female and male workers are in real danger and there is no limit to what could happen if no precautionary measures are taken. What happened in Hebron should be a lesson for everybody. Decision-makers must stop their policy of 'irresponsibility' and the ministries must coordinate with each other. They all share responsibility for the incident. It makes no sense that the municipality can grant a license to any factory without providing the Ministry of Industry and Trade or the Ministry of Labor with adequate information about the factory. It makes no sense that a factory can change the nature of its production without the knowledge of the labor inspectors or the concerned

departments. If the factory can change the nature of production without anyone knowing, it means that none of the labor inspectors are doing their jobs properly.

The incident was strongly condemned by some people and treated with no concern by others, as evidenced by the large participation of women and low participation of men in the march that took place in front of the premises of the Ministry of Labor. The victims were all women. So, let women demonstrate. The issue is not an issue of victims, but an issue that concerns female and male workers who work in places that lack the minimum public safety measures. All workers risk being killed or get injured. All institutions and ministries have to raise the slogan, 'The Right to Life is Sacred'. Our factories, schools, hospitals, and roads must prepare themselves to embody this slogan. It makes no sense that our children remain exposed to dangers. How many children died as a result of the negligence of a driver or a failure in an elevator? How many schools are in danger of collapsing due to the inadequate standard of the construction materials? It makes no sense that profits are more important than human life.

He and she: Wives and children have had enough of dreaming
Laila Yousef

In many instances, Palestinian men are forced to leave their homeland in search for better job opportunities as a result of the difficult economic and political conditions. They leave their families. Some remember what they left, while others forget. They start a new life and have a second wife.

A man left his wife and his only son for thirty years. Suddenly, he remembered his family and decided to return to his homeland. His wife had grown old and his son had married and had children. His son waited for his arrival at the airport, filled with confusion over meeting this father that he did not know. How would he be able to call him 'Dad'? Could he ever feel that this man is his real father?

The author Antwan Ma'louf expressed in his novel *The Men* the experience of a wife who was overwhelmed by strong feelings of anxiety when years passed and her husband did not return. She took care of her only son for many years and dreamt of her husband coming back. When he returned, he was afraid that his son would reject him after his long years of absence. He stayed in hiding from his son, and for months he met his wife only at her parents' house. When she returned home in good spirits time after time, her son began to question what was happening. Where did she go? Who did she meet? She left the house every day in the morning and came home in the evening hours accompanied by a man. Who was he? In the novel, the author describes the woman's hesitancy until she finally tells her son that the man whom she meets is his father.