

**Voice of Women**  
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**28 February 2002**

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**Caught between economic hardship and violence: Women pay the price in the current crisis**

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Palestinian women have always demonstrated the readiness to challenge their terrible economic, social and political situations and to work with dignity in any employment sector if necessary in order to save their children and their families from humiliation and hunger. However, the phenomenon of domestic violence, physical battering and mistreatment of women by their husbands has been increasing since the outbreak of the current Intifada, a major factor being the increasing unemployment faced by men. Several women have reported that since their husbands lost their jobs they have become aggressive and irritable, beating their wives and children without remorse. "Our lives have become hell," one woman said sadly.

The difficult financial situation of many such families has added to the physical and emotional pain of women, forcing women to seek new solutions. They have knocked on the doors of many organizations looking for work but usually without success, as a result of the overall economic crisis and high rates of unemployment. It is worth mentioning, however, that the Palestinian Working Women Society for Development has managed to provide links for women to jobs as housekeepers. The Society looks for suitable arrangements and guides the women through the process of signing a contract with their employer in order to make sure the women's rights and dignity are protected.

**Military actions by Palestinian women demonstrate the significance of Jerusalem**

**Widad Al-Barghouthi**

Wafa' Idrees might be the first Palestinian woman to have committed a 'suicide' attack against the Israeli occupation, but one must never ignore or forget the dozens of other Palestinian women who have been deeply involved in military actions against the Israeli occupation since 1967.

Fatima and In'am Barnawi, Rasmiyyeh 'Odeh, Mariam Al-Shakhsheer, 'Aisheh 'Odeh, Laila Khaled, Rasheedeh 'Abdo, among many others, are women who committed themselves courageously to the military resistance during its early years. The fact that most of their actions took place in Jerusalem bears witness to the historical attachment between Palestinians and Jerusalem.

Many Israeli historians have documented the stories of these women from a biased perspective; for example 'Uzi Ben Zeeman in his book "Jerusalem...A City without Walls." In a chapter entitled *Terrorism*, he describes every detail of their military actions, their plans of action and the consequences. However, what 'Uzi calls terrorism is perceived by Palestinians as national heroism and legitimate struggle against an illegal Israeli occupation -- actions through which they hope to restore their dignity. Therefore, it is important that those women who have survived rewrite history from their perspectives, without the distortions of facts and motives created by Israeli historians.

**More than 10,000 Palestinian women have been in Israeli jails:  
Heroic acts of the women's prisoners' movement  
Amin Abu Wardeh, Nablus**

Palestinian women have shown great courage, perseverance and strength in challenging the inhuman Israeli occupation, on the one hand, and the traditional customs and perceptions controlling women, on the other. According to the Palestinian Detainees Club, approximately 10,000 Palestinian women have been imprisoned in Israeli jails for political and military reasons since the beginning of the Israeli occupation. The periods from 1967 to 1976, and during the first Palestinian Intifada from 1987 through the early 1990s, witnessed the highest number of women being jailed in Israeli prisons.

Israel's imprisonment of Palestinian women has not been confined to a particular sector of women; it has imprisoned both old and young. It has also imprisoned mothers, such as Majida As-Salaymeh, Zahra Kar'ush, Rabeeha Diab, 'Itaf As-Salaymeh and others. Some of them gave birth to their babies behind bars and were forced to live with their newborns for long months and years in jail, as in the cases of Umaymah Al-Agha and Sameeha Hamdan. Many of them have reported being subjected to barbaric physical and psychological torture, as well as threats of rape. However, their perseverance, courage and many forms of protest – such as conducting long hunger strikes – has enabled them to recover many of their violated rights, such as having access to books and clothes and being allowed visits with their families. On several occasions they were successful in demanding to be separated from Israeli criminal prisoners, who threatened and harassed them continually. In 1996, for instance, the unity and determination of Palestinian women prisoners won the release of all women prisoners. As a result of the peace talks, Israeli Authorities agreed to release some of the women prisoners; however these women refused to be released, and protested until all women were released together in 1997. All of these instances provide evidence of women's strength and their struggle alongside Palestinian men, challenging one of the most barbaric and inhuman occupations on this earth.

## **42 Palestinian Women and Girls Martyred in 17 Months! Nablus**

According to the International Human Rights Solidarity Organization, Iman Mansour, 28, from Nablus and the mother of three children, is the 42nd Palestinian female to be martyred since the beginning of the Intifada in late September 2000. She died as a result of a heart attack, when Israeli tanks invaded 'Askar Refugee Camp on the 11<sup>th</sup> of February, 2002, near to her home. Palestinian women have been killed in various ways by Israel, including:

1. Dying during bombing or shooting attacks on Palestinian neighborhoods,
2. Choking from tear gas,
3. Heart attacks as a result of fear,
4. Israeli soldiers and settlers' attacks,
5. Being denied hospitalized during illness or while in labor, by blocking the roads.

Included among the 42 females martyred are nine children ranging 24 days to 10 years in age, in addition to 10 elderly women above the age of fifty. From the beginning of the first Intifada in 1987 until today, the number of Palestinian female martyrs has reached 179, demonstrating Israel's indiscriminate use of force against Palestinians which favors torture and killing.

The International Human Rights Solidarity Organization stresses the need for immediate international protection for the Palestinian nation, an end to Israel's violence committed against Palestinian civilians and forcing Israel to comply with international human rights standards and UN resolutions.

### **Fida' Ghannam, Another Palestinian Child Victim of Israeli Settlers' Conspiracy...**

Fida' Ishaq Ghannam, a fifteen-year-old from Hebron, was arrested one morning while on her way to school. She was accused of trying to stab an Israeli settler child walking with her mother in Tal Ar-Rumeida Neighborhood in Hebron.

That morning, Fida' was walking towards her school, carrying her schoolbag like any other school child. It was filled with books, copybooks and pencils. Her teacher has asked the class to bring along a kitchen knife that day for their vocational education class. The knife, unfortunately, could be seen sticking out of Fida's schoolbag. She was walking along unaware when suddenly the Israeli settler child started screaming loudly, calling to the Israeli soldiers standing nearby. Fida' was arrested immediately.

Fida' insisted during interrogation that she had never intended to stab anybody. However, the contradictory statements of the settler's child, stating one time that Fida' had tried to stab her and another time that she had just seen the knife in the bag, were used to keep Fida' in Israeli custody. The judge ruled to keep Fida' in detention until her case was decided. Because of her young age, Fida' may be released on bail. Until then she is being held in Al-Maskubiyeh prison, notorious as the worst of the Israeli prisons.

According to 'Issa Qaraqe', Head of the Palestinian Detainees Club, there are 13 Palestinian women prisoners in Al-Maskubiyyeh prison living under terrible conditions such as torture, threats and solitary confinement. They are deprived of family visits and of personal items such as books, clothes and appliances.

**Dr. Sumaya Naser in Germany:  
We are not aspiring to better living conditions under occupation!  
Voice of Women, Berlin**

Dr. Sumaya Naser is a professor at Birzeit University and the former Director of the Jerusalem Center for Women. She is politically active and well known in German-speaking countries through her frequent political lectures in the region. During a lecture in Berlin she mentioned the following:

*Her opinion of the German role in the Palestinian-Israeli crisis:*

"The German role is inconsistent. We must repond to this by taking responsibility for spreading the truth, pushing for peace, and calling for the end of the Israeli occupation and the implementation of UN Resolutions."

*Her opinion of the role of women during the Intifada:*

"Women's role during the current Intifada differs with that during the 1987 Intifada, due to the militaristic character of the former."

*Her opinion of the Israeli government:*

"Sharon is far from being a peace leader. He isn't interested in a peace process because he insists on implementing his Zionist plans of confiscating and occupying Palestinian land and transferring Palestinians from Palestine. Therefore it is impossible to achieve peace with this government."

Dr. Naser stresses the importance of stating our demands clearly: "We don't aspire to better living conditions under the Israeli occupation, but insist on ending the occupation of our Palestinian land. We must state this loud and clear."

In the same lecture, Dr. Mitri Ar-Raheb, clergyman of the Lutheran Church in Bethlehem, stressed the need to initiate a strong public relations network with German organizations to be able to influence change on the German decision-makers and the biased media.

**Al-Adha Feast brings pain to the hearts of students from Gaza  
Ahmad Saleem, Ramallah**

Rawya Al-Farra, Suha Judeh, Aya Mustafa Khalil and Nasab As-Shawwa are Palestinian women students from the Gaza Strip studying at Birzeit University in the West Bank. For months, and sometimes even years, students from Gaza have been deprived of seeing their families in the Gaza Strip as a result of the Israeli closures and restriction of movement to and from the Gaza Strip. With Al-Adha

Feast approaching, these students are feeling especially homesick, longing to see their families. Feast days are the most difficult for them. While all the other students leave the dorms and go home to celebrate with their families in West Bank cities and towns, Gazan students remain alone in the half empty dorms trying to deal with their loneliness by spending the feast days sleeping or calling their families on the phone. The tragic news coming out of Gaza, of many people being killed and homes being destroyed, fill the students from Gaza with fear for their own relatives, intensifying their longing to see them. They fear that one day their own father or mother might get harmed or killed without having had the chance to say goodbye. How can anyone celebrate a feast under such stressful and tragic circumstances? Nasab As-Shawwa, who has been unable to celebrate the past three feasts with her family, says: "I sometimes cry because I miss my family so much. I wish with all my heart I could be sitting next to them."

**Fatima loses her two sons 40 days apart: I wish they had seen my face before dying**  
**Muhammad As-Sa'id, Palestinian Working Women's Society for Development**

Fatima Yusef Al-Kasbeh, 36, from Qalandia Refugee Camp, talks with great sorrow about her two sons who were killed by Israeli soldiers, tears flowing from her eyes. Yaser, 11, was killed in cold blood when a group of Israeli soldiers attacked him and his friends near Qalandia airport. He was shot in the head although he had done nothing to threaten the soldiers. Forty days later, his brother Samer, 15, died from wounds sustained from a 250 mm bullet in his head while protesting Chairman Arafat's house arrest at the PA Headquarters in Ramallah. He spent a week in a coma and then died. Their mother says, "I wish they had seen my face before dying, even if for a second...there is no more room in my heart for another tragedy. I have lost all that I own; they were the most precious thing to me. My sadness is twice as great, and my tragedy has doubled."