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Editorial: Preparing for the days ahead

The recent brutal and racist aggression by Israel against the Palestinian nation, and its reoccupation of Palestinian cities and towns, have taught Palestinians an important lesson. No matter how much blood is shed on the Palestinian side, how many homes are razed to the ground, how many children are maimed and orphaned, there is no one in the international community or the Arab world who is prepared to take a stand against Israel's never ending violations of human rights and dignity. Palestinians have learned that their only strength arises from their internal unity, and that never again must they depend on external parties in solving their problems. They must be prepared for a period more bloody and difficult than the one that just happened, therefore the first step is to establish a national unity government, which sets a plan for a new Palestinian strategy, upon which every Palestinian is entitled to act.

Jenin Refugee Camp: Looking for an easier way to die
Amal Jum'a, Jenin Refugee Camp

I arrived at Jenin Refugee Camp at 6 a.m. Scenes of destruction, shock and depression were everywhere. I am still trying to get to my house, to see my father and mother. Are they still alive? Israeli tanks leveling the remains of people's homes, crushing every brick underneath them and maybe the bones of humans: children, men and women, whose homes were destroyed on top of them while they were asleep. Through their loudspeakers Israeli soldiers announce: "You are under curfew!" Everybody is a target of their shells; those who only face bullets are lucky. I was forced to sleep in a neighbor's home, not being able to get home even though the house was only 200 meters away. Somehow my younger brother ended up stuck at our neighbor's house too. I couldn't believe he was alive, after all that I have heard over the past few days. We managed to get home the next day,

overwhelmed with relief to find everyone safe. Eventually I had the chance to look around the camp -- or what is left of it: Al-Damj neighborhood and Al-Hawasheen. I could only stand there, fixed to the ground, unable to believe the scene, while I hearing voices around me speaking the names of people killed, imprisoned and others who lost limbs.

There I saw Um Khaled sitting on top of her destroyed home as she has been for ten days, dusty tears on her cheeks, waiting for somebody to help her lift the rubble of her wrecked home off of the body of her 32 year-old disabled son. I was told that she asked Israeli soldiers to help her lift the wreckage with their bulldozer because her son was underneath, and they responded by dumping another load of rubble over the spot where his body lies. A few days later I passed by the same spot, and saw the twisted metal remains of a wheelchair.

Nawal Kharyush, the wife of Muhammad Khalil, told me: "I heard on the news that my husband has been killed. I went out of the house amid Israeli gunfire and shelling, looking for his body. I looked among many dead bodies lying in the streets. I found a leg torn off a person's body. I saw chicken and pigeons pecking on the bodies of neighbors and friends, who just a few days ago were full of life and energy. I wanted to find my husband before his body rots. I was told that Israeli soldiers hung his body for two days from the front of a tank as it roamed through the camp shelling and destroying everything. I found him buried in the hospital's yard later on. His yellow shirt and thick hair were his identification card."

**Seven women martyred in Nablus, some of them sisters
Lubna Al-Ashqar, Palestinian Women Journalists Office, Nablus**

Dozens of Palestinian civilians have been found dead under the ancient ruins of the old city of Nablus, a few days after Israeli attacked with extreme aggression. The beautiful homes of our ancestors were transformed in seconds into the graves of men, women and children. The Israeli gun-ships and tanks shelled indiscriminately, targeting every ancient stone, as well as every human soul. Zaha Freitekh, 40, and Rasha Freitekh, 38, and eight members of the Shu'aibi family were all found dead under the wreckage of their homes. Nabeela Al-Shu'aibi, 40 years old and pregnant, and her husband Sameer, 49; their three sons, Abdullah, 8, Azzam, 6, Anas, 4; her father-in-law, Umar Al-Shu'aibi, 85, and her two sisters-in-law, Fatima, 55, and Abeer, 36, have all perished, leaving behind great agony and suffering among their surviving relatives. Rescue workers have described the tragic scene in which the eight were found saying they were all hugging each other as if they wished to be together when death fell upon them. Kamleh Al-Sawalmeh, from Balata Refugee Camp near Nablus, was also killed. Trying to flee her home which Israeli tanks were shelling, she and her family went to their neighbor's home finding that almost 100 people were already hiding there. It was only seconds before that house was bombarded leaving several killed, and many injured and in shock.

**Children express their feelings at Khalil Al-Sakakini Cultural Center:
They are wise beyond their years
Ramallah, *Voice of Women***

Dozens of Palestinian schoolchildren from age ten to twelve participated in the workshops and activities organized by Khalil Al-Sakakini Cultural Center in Ramallah, provided in an effort to reduce psychological and mental distress caused to children by the most recent Israeli aggression against the city. Through the different games, dialogue and drawing sessions, children expressed their feelings, fears and thoughts. Some of them showed disappointment in the world's silence towards their misery. Others described images which affected them profoundly during the Israeli invasion, such as seeing Israeli tanks flattening cars to the ground, or seeing snipers sitting on top of their homes or in their gardens shooting at their neighbors and friends. Muneira Zreiqi, an actress, explained how Palestinian children, although young in age, have become older than their years in terms of their thoughts and feelings, talking about matters which in other countries are normally discussed by adults. Some wished they could rescue people, others wished they could go to Jenin Refugee Camp to help rebuild the destroyed homes and streets. The Israeli occupation has killed their childhood. What is striking about their drawings is the fact that only four colors are used, namely those of the Palestinian flag. It seems as if all children have internalized these colors only, which represent nationalism, freedom and dignity for them. Dr. Muhammad Breigheth, a psychologist, stated that a high percentage of Palestinian children, especially those suffering direct Israeli occupation, are undergoing psychological distress reflected in acts of self-injury and violence against others. He stresses the need to conduct more psychological sessions for children to help them overcome their deeply hidden pains, fears and suffering.

I'll remain as a thorn in their throats...

Issa Qaraqe

Dozens of Palestinian women have been arrested by Israeli authorities since the beginning of the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip in 1967. They have been tortured, beaten, deprived of their most basic human rights, and kept in isolatory confinement. During the Al-Aqsa Intifada, the number of Palestinian women prisoners had increased from 4 to 14 by 1 January 2002. As never before, Israeli authorities are employing all means of torture against them: beating them, breaking their hands, dragging them by their hair through the prison's corridors, their noses bleeding, tying them on iron beds in painful positions and choking them nearly to death by spraying tear gas in their faces and cells. Amneh Muna, 25, Sua'd Ghazal, 16, Sawsan Abu Turkey, 13, Rabi'a Hamayel, 14, Wijdan Bujeh, 14, and many others have faced terrible conditions, yet still courageously stand up to their enemy with pride and confidence. Itaf Alayan is one of many Palestinian women prisoners who challenged Israeli authorities in 1997, refusing to accept the administrative detention imposed upon her. She undertook a 40-day hunger strike, refusing even to drink milk, shocking prison authorities and raising a great national outcry in support of her. Finally, she won the battle and was released. Fatima Al-Ja'fary is another prisoner standing up with great courage in the face of torture, to the extent that an Israeli interrogator once told her, "I have never seen a woman more courageous and strong than you are." A few words spoken to an Israeli interrogator by Sawsan Abu Turkey, who is only 13 years old, sum up the message all Palestinian prisoners are trying to convey through their steadfastness and patience: "As long as there is a soul suffering in prison under your torture, you will never be free!"

They killed him in front of his disabled daughter:

Israel's new policy of "bleeding to death" **Ahlam Hammad, Gaza**

After inflicting great suffering upon the Palestinians, forcing women to give birth at Israeli blockades, bombing homes and indiscriminately killing innocent civilians, Israelis seem to have adopted a new pattern of killing which involves long hours of torture. "Bleeding to death" is the way dozens of Palestinian men and women have died after being shot by Israeli snipers or tanks and prevented from receiving any medical treatment, with soldiers shooting at ambulances and killing medical staff. Ibrahim 'Ali Barhum, 43, from Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip, was shot while trying to flee with his son and disabled daughter from their neighborhood, but unfortunately Israeli bullets were quicker than his footsteps, hitting him in the head. No ambulance was allowed near him. Any ambulance attempting to do so was shot at. Ibrahim was killed in front of his children and left to bleed for four long hours until he died. He was a father trying to save his children, something anyone would do.

According to Dr. Riad Al-Za'nun, Palestinian Minister of Health, since the outbreak of the Intifada in September 2000:

- 124 ambulances have been destroyed
- 12 physicians, nurses, and medics have been killed
- Dozens of medical staff have been arrested while in duty

Their seven storey home destroyed: Um Sameeh Hindiyyeh instills hope in her children **Mirvat Sadeq, Palestinian Women Journalists Office**

The Hindiyyehs are a large extended family from Nablus who have worked very hard over the past forty years to overcome homelessness and suffering. They finally managed to build a seven-story building which has fifteen apartments, home to forty-five members of the family. They have suffered Israeli aggression like many others. Their building has been shot at and bombed, forcing all 45 of them to leave their apartments and stay together in just one apartment for safety. On the 3rd of April 2002, the Hindiyyeh family were surprised to hear Israeli soldiers calling them with loudspeakers, demanding all inhabitants of the building to leave within ten minutes or die because they were going to blow up the building. Um Sameeh was shocked, refusing to believe that this was happening. People started leaving the apartment, but she refused. Her sons tried to convince her to go, because there was nothing they could do to prevent the destruction of their building. With other option, Um Sameeh left her home. Once everyone was out, the Israelis started shooting, shelling and burning everything inside the building. Shops, storage rooms, and the interiors of the apartments were all burned in front of their owners' eyes. A few minutes later the soldiers started planting explosives in different parts of the building and then blew it up, leaving the huge building leveled to the ground along with all the belongings of the families, destroying in an instant all the long years of work that were invested to build these homes. Um Sameeh went into shock and nearly fainted, watching her life being destroyed. "Why are you destroying our homes?" she screamed, with tears flowing from her eyes. A soldier answered, "This is war, and in war everything is permissible!"

Manal shot by soldiers while at home in Ramallah

Ahmad Saleem, Ramallah

Manal left behind three sons and one daughter: the eldest, eleven years old; the youngest, two. They remember their mother with their eyes filled with tears: her words, and every aspect of her life; and how they saw her fall, and how they watched her die. Her husband was with the children in the garden, Manal was on the veranda hanging up some laundry. Ramallah was occupied by Israeli soldiers, who were literally shooting at everything that moved. Suddenly, Manal saw soldiers moving in the nearby Daraghmeh building. She rushed to tell her family so they could hide before anything happened. But with no warning, Manal was shot in the chest. She died immediately. Her family heard her sigh, and then she was dead. When the ambulance eventually arrived, Israeli soldiers prohibited it from reaching hospital and detained the medical staff and Manal's body for two hours. Manal's father and mother, husband and children and other relatives are suffering deeply as a result of their loss. Not only has she died, but she was killed in front of her children, never to see them grow up. "She always wanted me to become a doctor," her eldest son Abdullah said.