

When Women Kill

■ Rana Hussein

Journalist

Amirah Salem, 31, and Eidah Hussein, 25, took puffs from their cigarettes while drinking coffee minutes after slicing, burning and boiling the head of Amirah's 45-year-old husband in Mafrq in April 1996. The two women then mangled the victim's body, placed it in plastic bags and dumped it in cesspools around the town of Mafrq.

Amirah told interrogators that she conspired to kill her husband with the help of her neighbor because he physically abused her on a regular basis and threatened to marry another woman and abandon her. She also said that she decided to kill her husband, a mechanic, because he often brought other women to their house in her presence disregarding her feelings. Amirah purchased a gun three months prior to the incident and asked Eidah to help her accomplish her plot in retribution for her husband's constant abuse, according to court transcripts.

They decided to offer Eidah as his mistress as an alternative for him to marry another woman and he agreed, the court said. On the night of the murder, Eidah went to the couple's house and the women asked the victim to lay face down on his bed while Eidah changed her clothes. Amirah drew the gun and shot her husband four times in the head and neck.

Both women were executed by the state in June 1997. An official who attended the execution said the second the rope was pulled on Amirah, her head was decapitated and blood sprayed all over the room.

Amirah and Eidah's murder is reported to be one of the most brutal crimes in Jordan's history. Their murder was one of around a dozen crimes committed by women who were convicted and executed or are on death row.

When 22-year-old Ibtisam was escorted to the gallows by prison officials to be hanged for killing two children in March 2004, the rope became loose and she fell. The execution committee had to retie the rope and complete the execution since the Jordanian Penal Code stipulates that convicted criminals must be hanged to death.

Ibtisam was sentenced to death for pushing Fatima, 5, and Ahmad, 6, into a canal where they drowned to avenge a decision made by the man she loved to marry another woman.

Court papers said the woman met the man she liked few months prior to the incident and he promised to marry her, but his father refused and insisted on choosing another wife for him. When the victim heard about the news, she lured the man's siblings by offering them sweets and chocolates near the Jordan Valley Canal where she pushed them one after the other to their death, the court said.

Egyptian sisters Abeer and Rasha, who were employed by a 73-year-old Jordanian woman, were executed in December 1998 for murdering and robbing their employer. The two sisters sprayed mace on the victim's face then pressed a wet towel against her mouth and nose until she died and then stole her jewellery. They sold it in a Jordanian market and tried to leave the country but were arrested by the authorities at one of the Kingdom's ports.

Other women executed by the state during the past 10 years:
- In May 2002, A Jordanian woman and her Egyptian lover were hanged at Swaqa Correctional and Rehabilitation Centre after they were convicted of murdering the woman's Egyptian husband in one of the city's suburbs in 2000. The court said the two developed an extramarital affair and the woman asked for a divorce, but the victim denied her separation requests and the lovers decided to murder him, the court said.

On the night of the incident, the Egyptian stabbed the victim repeatedly with the help of the woman, then pressed a pillow on the victim's face until he suffocated then set his body on fire.

- In August 1997 a 35-year-old woman was executed by the state for poisoning her husband with the help of her Jordanian lover who received a life sentence.

The mother of nine children wanted to divorce her husband and marry her lover, but they both knew that the husband would refuse so they plotted to kill him, the court said. The lover brought rat poison to the woman and she placed it in her husband's food while the lover waited outside for the results, the court added.

Currently, there are two or three women who are on death row, awaiting a Cabinet and a Royal Decree endorsement of their death verdicts.