

Khadija Herez, Resistance Activist

(Born in 1942, in Majdel Silm [South Lebanon]; currently living in Beirut's southern suburbs; recorded in her home. Language: colloquial/educated Arabic.)

Let me start with my childhood. Until seven, it was a happy childhood. We were in the South, and my mother and father were at home. I was the youngest. I was very indulged by my father, my mother, and my siblings, because I was the youngest. I mention this phase because it is related to certain social issues. Because after this stage - I said my childhood was happy - after I was seven, my father fell in love with another woman. Of course problems started at home, a phase of misery began. I would see my mother and father fighting, and for sure this upset me. I remember that I used to cry alone at night. The pillars of the family were shaken, because of the entry of another woman, of course a man changes his behavior with his wife and with his children as well. After this my mother brought us, and came to Burj Hammoud, [Beirut] because she did not accept to be with another woman, my father's second wife. We were together, my mother, my uncle and my older siblings. We lived in Burj Hammoud.

We started adjusting to the new atmosphere and I made friends. I became thirteen years old. I don't know if I have skipped some phases, I want to go back to childhood. The first phase, from five years and above — my brother was older than me, he was in school, my father didn't put me in school based on the idea that it's a loss for a girl to go to school - so this needs emphasis. The school was near our house. My brother used to go to school, and I would follow him. I was about six years old. I would follow him and stand behind him in front of the door. My brother would enter the school and I would stand and watch the children, how they stood in line and sang the national anthem. I would memorize most of the songs, the national anthem, and all these things, until I got tired, and went home. Of course I would go back with 'a broken wing.' When my father saw this, he would say, "Khalas! Next year I'll put her in school, haram, Khadija is intelligent." He saw that I memorized the poems given to the children, and my brother did not. My brother would hit me because I memorized and he didn't. Every year he would say, "Next year", and I would dream of the coming year. I would dream of my satchel. That phase was full of dreams. Every year there was this dream that was broken. It was broken under the pressure of social customs. Even if my father wanted to put me in school, my uncle would say, "You want to teach girls? Tomorrow she'll get married and leave". So he taught the boy and didn't teach me. It seems that I had persistence, that I wanted to learn. When we stayed in Burj Hammoud, it so happened that - God Almighty was preparing the circumstances - we stayed near a school. I was in my twelfth

year. I insisted to my mother that I wanted to go to school. In any possible way I wanted to learn. If you saw the film *Zahrat al-Kandoul*, I would walk and look at the billboards or any book, I wanted to read come what may. Once I was telling this to my mother and she was sitting thinking. She said, "I want to speak to the teacher, maybe he'll teach Khadija." When she said



Picture Credit: May Masri and Jean Chamoun

these words, I felt that she opened a path for me. She said, "But we need money, because this is a private school." Our income was very small. My older siblings worked. So I told her I would work at the tailor's, there was a tailor that specialized in brides' dresses, I would work and earn money in order to go to school. My mother agreed. She was happy for me to be educated, but found it difficult to pay. I went to the principal of the school, they were our neighbors. I sat in the administration office. I talked to him, and my excitement showed. He said, "That's it, come tomorrow and I will give you the books and you will learn." The next day, I went, I couldn't wait to go. When I got there I entered, he wanted to put me in first grade, because I didn't know anything. I went red and green and started sweating. I was tall for my age and they were very young, and they all stared at me (laughs). I felt very uncomfortable. I sat, the teacher was explaining, I was very nervous, and the atmosphere in the class was tense. I went out. I went to the teacher in the administration. He said, "What's wrong?" I said, "I don't know, it's very difficult, because the others are so young." He said, "It's alright, will you sit here, and I will teach you?" I said, yes. So in two or three days, I finished the ABCs.

I studied for seventeen days, then my thyroid got infected. I was very weak. I went to the doctor, and I had a tonsillectomy. The doctor told my mother that she should take me to the South because of my health. My mother took me to the South. Now I began getting suitors, and the school phase was gone. But when anyone asks me, I don't say that all I've done is a literacy class, I say that I've taken my Baccalaureate. Yes, because I read and write as if I had. I have written for several magazines. I have also participated in several conferences, conferences for women in Iran and here in Lebanon. So my education was like that, seventeen days (smiles). I took my BA in seventeen days.

After that, like I said, just what any other girl might face, especially if she has any degree of good looks, the marriage demands start, persistently. Our environment is one that prefers to marry the girl off hastily - "Her marriage is her protection." Ideas like that. So marriage was obligatory, by force that is. A

person came, and I did not want him, I did not want to marry him, but [my] parents insisted because he had a good name and a good family, things like that. They insisted, and there were many problems, and the marriage took place by force, and it lasted by force for sixteen years. But during those sixteen years I was always sad, always going back to my parents' house, and leaving it again. And these children came during these phases, in between the anger and the reconciliation, and his travels. I won't say anything about him except that we did not get along. Also marriage was imposed on me. It was imposed on me and I did not feel that there was anything in common between me and this person. So I began living in misery all over again. I got beyond the childhood misery after my father and mother were separated. I lived a phase of calmness and education and achievement. Then we started suffering again in the middle phase, if I can call it that. Finally a separation took place. In addition, after I was separated, there was a very big tragedy. He stopped me from taking my children. And of course when a woman is attached to her children and they are attached to her, it is tragic. The children and I all suffered. At the same time, despite all this suffering, I had to go every week to the South to see the children because they were there and I was here. I had no one to spend money on me, so I was also looking for work so as to keep myself, and be able to see my children and give them [money]. This, despite crying and suffering, because I had left my children. I could not continue with them, and staying away from them was very difficult. I suffered more than enough.

In this tragic situation, I had to look for work and learn. I enrolled in a nursing school and entered an institute that teaches typing and English. In the morning and evening I worked in the archives of Al-Wahda newspaper. There was a newspaper that was issued by the National Committees, I also worked in its archives, to cover my expenses and trip to see the children. This was the time when the political situation and the occupation of Palestine started engaging my thoughts. We were in Kuwait, my family and I, in 1967, during the June war. Of course I was following the news, minute by minute, second by second. It could be because I was living a life of deprivation, a life full of suffering and anxiety, maybe this pushed me to feel with other peoples - Palestinians, Vietnamese - my sympathy with them was above the usual. Whenever I heard that they had caught a young man in Palestine, or they had taken land or destroyed a house, I would feel a lot of pain. Or any country - Nicaragua, or any other country of the world - whenever I heard of oppressed people who are struggling for liberation, I would sympathize and interact, and even live with them, live with them in my imagination, in my house, with my children. I was living with them, and my dream started growing. I wanted to become a rebel with the rebels.

I was like - young women dream about suitors - I was dreaming of how to become a rebel, how to go to Palestine, how to meet Abu Ammar, how my children will become *fida'yeeen* when they grow up, how we will live in the wild. I lived in these fantasies. When we came to Lebanon, and there was the disagreement between my husband and me in 1979, and we separated, it was like a chance to realize my dreams. This wasn't why I got a divorce, it was because the marriage was wrong from the beginning, there was no harmony between us, and I spent sixteen years of my life getting angry, and being reconciled, and divorcing, and returning together for the children's sake. This last separation was final because it was the third time. In the Islamic *shari'a*, after three divorces a woman cannot go back. So I freed myself for a period in order to build myself as a new person. I wanted to achieve my dreams of education, and of revolution. I never thought of marriage or of other things. So I affiliated with the National Committees. The National Committees were a group of Lebanese men and women, who worked socially, militarily and politically. We were separate from the Palestinian Resistance. The National Committees were Lebanese. There was also the Lebanese Students' Union. These were young men and women who were Lebanese and who wanted to liberate Palestine. I joined them. At the same time, as I told you, I entered a nursing school and an institute to learn language and typing. I started working on building myself. I worked with great enthusiasm, like someone who had been imprisoned and was let loose. It was as if I went out to the world all over again. I was involved in this political work among people who were striving to liberate their land. We participated in all these demonstrations, sit-ins, any voice was raised to demand the rights of people, I was one of the participants.

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This is an introduction to a very sensitive and important part of my life, which was my capture. The Israelis captured me. Now we have reached the 1980s. In 1982 the Israeli invasion took place. Before the invasion, and after I started learning, I met a man - he is from our village and we are related - but what brought us together was our encounters at political meetings. There was mutual attraction and we got married. He was the political officer in charge of the second sector in the South, the middle sector. I was in Beirut. But he was in the National Committees. Thank God, we were compatible on every level, mentally and

emotionally. We had a daughter who was the fruit of harmony and love. During this time, in 1982, the Israeli invasion of Lebanon happened.

After the Israeli forces entered Lebanon, they captured my husband. He was wanted from the beginning. They arrested him, with other people, they arrested many. I started working against the occupation, in every possible way. We would organize demonstrations, we would distribute leaflets, all

against the Israeli presence on Lebanese lands. They used the pretext of the PLO, and getting rid of the Palestinians, but that is not what they did. They took everybody. They did not discriminate, they invaded Lebanon and overdid it too.

So my husband was in detention, and I was working on the ground against the Israeli occupation. We had demonstrations, we demanded the liberation of the prisoners in Ansar, we demanded Israeli withdrawal from Lebanese lands. Because of these actions, I became followed by the Israelis. When there were demonstrations, I was the one leading them, and I would be shouting at their head. It was obvious that I was the organizer. As a result the Israelis started following me.

To move to the subject of the men in Ansar [Israeli detention camp], we were organizing demonstrations to demand their liberation. There were around five thousand men. They arrested them in different ways, we can say savage and brutal. They entered houses in a brutal way, arrested many. Before I entered prison, they had taken five thousand men to Ansar camp. The situation in the detention camp was very bad. Ansar camp was on a hill side. They made the men sleep on the ground, on rocks, under tents. The prisoner would put his shoes under his head to sleep. At the beginning they were not allowed to leave the tents. Around twenty men in one tent, forced to stay all the time. Conditions among the prisoners were very bad. They had to put their head between their legs and their hands on top of their heads, three times a day, morning, noon and evening, so that the soldiers could come in and count them. They stayed like that for three months.

During this time, I was moving around in the South and organizing womens' demonstrations. There were no men to participate. We were clashing with the Israelis. We clashed more than once and I was injured. The crowd took me, that day they carried me to the Red Cross to treat my injuries. When we reached Sur, the Red Cross wasn't there. I said, "I don't allow you to touch my wounds until the person in charge in the Red Cross and the Press are present. I want my voice to reach the farthest place in the world." I was telling them this while I was bleeding. I climbed into a car. I did not let them touch me. Finally the person from the Red Cross came, and someone from Al-Nahar newspaper and Al-Safir, and I think someone from UNICEF. I spoke to them, I said, "They [Israelis] said that they invaded in order to stop Palestinian missiles from reaching Kiryat Shmona. Now they are sitting in the cafes on Hamra, and they have taken all our men and put them in prison." I had brought children who were carrying signboards, their fathers were in detention. They wrote on the signboards "I miss you, baba!" - touching, affecting words. Most of the prisoners were lawyers, teachers, or doctors and had nothing to do with [politics]. What is important is that we were able to reach out

with our voices. I accomplished the aim of the demonstration as I bled.

Of course, after this they followed me. I couldn't sleep at home anymore. Every month, the Red Cross would bring and take letters between my husband and me. I used to write a couple of words, "Muhammed, I'm alright, and Maryam our daughter is alright." You know, in the beginning your [concern] is your own husband, then you see that all the men are detained, the whole nation is detained. So your concern grows. It is no longer a private matter.

"In Nabatiyeh prison we had underground cells, it was a place where even animals could not be put"

After that they started pursuing me, I couldn't stay at home. I was always driving. I would put my daughter next to me in the car and move from place to place. We had work, surely. We were rousing people against the occupation. Convincing people to go out in demonstrations against the occupation isn't easy. It requires a lot of work. How do you convince them? I used to focus on those whose families were imprisoned - her son, her husband, her brother - so that she would respond to me.

My last demonstration before they captured me was on the blessed A'eed al-Adha. The Israelis always attempted to calm things down, to pacify people by differentiating between them and the prisoners. [They would say] "These men are in prison because they are troublemakers, but we won't bother ordinary peaceful people." Of course it wasn't true. They started publicizing on their radio that they were going to release prisoners on the A'eed. Now we knew that was just to lower tension, and that if they were freeing anyone, it must be people who had no importance. They never released a man who mobilized people, only young children. They took a lot of children, also handicapped people. They didn't spare anyone.

I want to go back a little bit to the invasion. When they invaded it was June. We were in our village, Majdal Silm, and we were going back to the village which we were living in, Bazourieh. On our way back, we saw tanks, they moved and nobody seemed to pay attention. The tanks had orange flags on them. We were astonished. Usually we saw Palestinian tanks, but these were different. We approached slowly, and before we reached home in Bazourieh people told us there is an Israeli invasion. We went to a village called Aiseer where we have friends. My husband escaped, he went into hiding. Israelis were everywhere, in all the villages and on all the roads.

Up to that moment I hadn't seen them [Israelis]. Our friends' house overlooks the road. It was sunset. We began to see the Israeli tanks and troops and equipment advancing. And the villages of South, I won't say that I am fanatic over them, but I am part of this land. It is normal for me to love this land [voice

shakes], because its people are good-hearted. But these people, the farmers who plow the earth and live with the land, these have a purity in their relation to their land. The South has long been the object of shelling, shelling, shelling from the Israelis, and attack by commandos, and kidnapping and killing. I feel solidarity with it, as people and as land. When I saw the Israelis everywhere, entering and walking, I felt deeply upset. Their war machines were stepping on this pure land, they were spoiling this beauty, this purity, and innocence, they were stepping on it brutally. I felt as if I have a daughter and someone is raping her in front of me, and there is nothing that I can do. I started screaming and crying, I started beating my head on the wall. I started pulling my hair. I could not watch this sight (voice rises). The world was silent as they entered. Weak people, they killed them, animals, they killed them, land and trees, they broke them. There was a destruction of humanity, of everything that was beautiful. In the midst of this silence, I couldn't hear a single voice of rejection that would cool my heart. There was universal silence. And they, in their savageness and strength were killing these defenceless people, and no one resisted them. This was a very difficult moment, and it could be that from this moment I decided to attain martyrdom for the sake of this land. After they took my husband, after they took the other men to Ansar, we started to act.

My last demonstration before I was captured was in November. I gathered a very big group of women - sisters, mothers, wives, and relatives of prisoners. I gathered them saying that we would go up to Ansar. We wanted to see the prisoners, and see who would be released. Each one had hope. Few were the houses where a man wasn't taken. It was difficult getting to Ansar - there were many check points. "Why are you going there?" We arrived at a place very close to the camp. Ansar camp resembled the camps which the Nazis designed for the Jews, and which they applied to us. It was a large camp. It was surrounded with barbed wire, all around, and hills of sand. You get there, but you can't see anyone. The sand hills were very high, and you couldn't go up because of the barbed wire. You could only see the tent tops. Fifty meters before the camp, there was a check point. "Where are you going?" We said, "We are coming to meet the prisoners you are going to release." So they let us pass. We reached the camp. We gathered, we were many.

An officer came out, he wanted to see what was happening. All the women started talking at once. He said, "Choose one to speak for all of you." They chose me. He said, "Why are you coming here?" The other women were saying things like, "I want to see my son, please let him out" [in a begging voice]. I said, "I am here to ask you why are you here?" He said, "What do you mean, why are we here?" I said, "Yes, why are you here? Isn't this Lebanese land? It is not Tel Aviv. (raises voice) Why are you here?" He said, "How can you say this?" I said, "I came to tell you that you are not a defensive army as you call yourselves, you are an army for destruction, for killing and for crime." He wasn't going to tolerate this, he directly called a soldier and said, "Get her out of here." The soldier came after me with his baton. Chaos started, naturally. I started running,

and when I ran, he started shooting. Fear and chaos took over, the women started screaming. As I was running, I saw a high hill where they had placed a water reservoir to give water to the camp. I tried to climb up, but the sand was slippery. Even though they were shooting at me I finally reached the top. From there, the camp was right in front of me. I screamed "Allahu Akbar! [God is greatest] Men! We are here! We are a women's demonstration!" And I started screaming 'Muhammad,' as loud as I could (smiles). In that same moment all the men came out. They started climbing on each other's shoulder to see what was going on outside. The men inside started shouting, and the women outside were screaming. One would scream, "My son!" The other would shout, "My mother!" Of course no one knew anyone.

Chaos took over. They started firing at them inside, and firing at us outside. We scattered in the wilderness and in the fields. The sun was setting. God knows how we were re-gathered and went back home. Inside, among the men, some were injured. But this was the spark that incited the men's freedom. The Israelis stopped — they were allowed to go out of the tents. They saw that the women - this is good to focus on since your journal is a women's journal - this women's demonstration made five thousand men rise up to take their rights as prisoners from the Israeli state. They started demanding their rights and clashing with the soldiers. They started going out when they wanted, asking for better food, they demanded all the rights which they had lacked before - clothes, beds, everything in the Geneva Convention which the Israeli state signed. The spark was launched by the women's demonstration.

After this of course, they followed me more than before. They didn't wait long after the demonstration, around two months later they arrested me in the South. It was through a trick. It was the beginning of November. I had our daughter with me. Every night I would sleep somewhere different, partly because I was pursued and partly because of my work. I went home to get winter clothes for my daughter. I got there at sunset. I was exhausted, and missing my home. I sat and read, and fell asleep. Maybe that's what God Almighty wished. We both fell asleep. I didn't wake up until I heard a bang on the door. It was eleven o'clock at night. I opened my eyes and it was dark. Even when I looked out of the window, the whole village was dark. I asked, "Who is it?" She said, "Ilham." Ilham is our neighbor's daughter. I felt safe so I opened the door, and it was very, very dark. I opened the door and a man entered. I said, "Who are you?" He said, "I am Sa'eed. Don't you know me? I'm Abu Tarek." Abu Tarek was a Resistance leader. I said, "I don't know anyone called Abu Tarek." I was still arguing with him when the soldiers pushed the door open, and entered, and he disappeared. I never saw him again. Naturally they started — they attempted to terrify me the minute they entered. They started shouting and cursing. I told him, "Don't shout, there's a child sleeping, she's only one and a half." When I said that, they shouted louder, one of them hit me with the end of his rifle. They pulled me to the stairs. I was barefoot, in my nightgown. I was going down and thinking, what will happen to her? As I

went down I saw the neighbors' doors open. There was no one. On the second floor, in the apartments under us and adjacent to us, the doors were all open, and they were empty.

After I left prison, I found out that they had dragged Ilham by force, and made her stand at the door. When she had knocked, and said, "I am Ilham", they took her away. They also took everybody from the apartments. I don't know where they took them. Terrorism! They came for me, why should they terrorize the whole building? They cut off electricity from the whole village. They scare a little girl! Their ways are terroristic and they accuse us of terrorism! Later I found out that one of them wanted to shoot her, and the other refused, and they fought over it. Because I kneeled to get my shoes, he yelled at me and hit me with his rifle.

When they took me, of course two were on either side of me, and they put a gun at my head. I started laughing, "What! I must be very important" (sarcastically). They swore at me and said, "Quiet! Not a word!" They took me to the Shajara center in Sur, the interrogation center for military people. They seated me at a table and said, "Read! We will come soon." Everything was in Hebrew. No one came. I started to lose my nerve. It was night time, one o'clock. They work on weakening the nerves and breaking you. They suggest things that are terrifying, especially for a woman. Eventually five investigators came. All five of them talked. They put a bag on my head, my hands were tied behind my back. They became swollen. It turned three o'clock, or more, God knows. I was about to break down, I had no more [strength], beating, terror. How long can I endure? They stayed like that for fifteen days, interrogation and torture. They threatened me with rape. Of course when they threaten and your head is in a plastic bag and your hands are tied, you don't think, impossible, they won't rape me. Also because he would pull my shirt off. The investigation period was the most difficult period of my life. It was something you can't dream about. At the same time I could hear the screams of the men. They were always being taken, they moved all day long in the South seizing men. I would hear the men's screams. What can I tell you? Now my mind is lost (drinks water).

I stayed fifteen days during which I was exhausted, I kept passing out. Thank God, they were not able to take any information from me. I told them I'm a housewife, I cook, I sweep the floor, and things like that. The interrogator would go crazy. "Am I a donkey?" he would say (laughs). "I know everything about you." The accusation against me was transporting missiles directed at Kiryat Shmona. The Israeli/Lebanese meeting was supposed to take place there. They accused me of this, and I was innocent of it (laughs). He said, "How did you transport them, how? We have thirty thousand soldiers here. We invaded Lebanon so that the children of Kiryat Shmona can sleep comfortably." But we Lebanese, our children must not

sleep peacefully. There is constant shelling and bombing on us. My children grew up under shelling. Rare was the night when I didn't have to wake up and take them and escape to a shelter. There were no shelters anyway. We dug holes and made them into shelters. The government didn't do anything for us.

They moved me to Nevi Terza prison, in Palestine. They took me, I remember the car drove for about five hours. It was a pick-up, my hands were tied, the bag was on my head, and my feet, too. A soldier sat next to me with [a gun at my head]. I saw him from here [under the bag]. All this distance, with this exhaustion, and I am a woman! The investigator used to drag me by my hair, he would lift me by my hair and beat me with his big army boots! He would hit me with his hands on the back of my head until I passed out. Then he would throw water on me, and he would talk dirty to me. Is this civilization?

We reached the prison in Ramleh. I didn't know where I was. The prison has a huge gate and high walls, and an old tree without leaves. It was depressing. When I entered, they gave me a bunch of clothes to carry. I entered a very long corridor. I heard the voices of the Palestinian girls, the prisoners. The corridor was long and there were rooms on both sides. I walked in the long corridor. They asked me, "Where [are you] from, Lebanon?" I said, "Yes." They started calling each other, "Girls, a prisoner from Lebanon! (shouts), a moujahida, a fida'iyya from Lebanon." They started clapping, they were very happy. They hadn't expected a Lebanese woman to be a fida'iyya. I was the first Lebanese [female] prisoner. At that time there was no women's prison in Lebanon.

A new suffering journey started. But what reduced the suffering and gave me strength was what I acquired in the Ramleh Prison for women. They were very strong. It made me so proud, they are like rocks, Palestinian women in prison. They made it a kingdom, not a prison. They gave the Israeli warden a hard time. She would tell them, "Go on shout, fight, pull my hair. When I want I can lock you in." Then the Palestinians would tell her, "One day this key will be with us." They had lots of persistence and courage, they weren't afraid. They studied while in prisons. They had a library as big as the wall, full of books. They struggled, they made contacts with the Red Cross, and international organizations, as well as international lawyers to make this library. It had all kinds of books - politics, literature, health. Each new prisoner makes a program [list] of all the books she needed. I tell you they turned it into a kingdom. One prisoner had been there for seventeen years. Her name was Therese Hanafi. She was released after we left. Rawda Baseer had been there for nine years. Hanan Maseeh had been there for twelve years. They had formed a government and divided the roles. There was a woman in charge of the library, you took the books from her. When you finished the book there was a discussion,

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everybody would meet and discuss the book with the one who read it - what had she understood from the book? But there was tragedy as well. There was a child of one and a half years old. Her mother had given birth to her in prison, and they kept her there. A little child inside the cell - where are the Arab kings? Where are the rulers of the world? Where is humanity? When she is two years old, she won't be able to stay, they'll take her out of prison. Her mother is in prison, her father is in prison, her grandparents are in prison. Some organization will have to take her.

After three months, they made a branch of Ansar prison for women, in South Lebanon, in a government building for tobacco in Nabatiyeh. They transferred us. They made underground cells. In Neve Tirtsa there had been twelve prisoners from Lebanon - not Lebanese but from Lebanon - Palestinians, a Turk, a Lebanese from Ghazieh. When we became twelve women we demanded that we should be detained on our land, not in Palestine. We demanded this from the Israeli government, but later we regretted it. With the Palestinian prisoners, the atmosphere of the prison and the conditions all were better in Neve Tirtsa. It was an official prison. Whereas in Nabatiyeh we had underground cells, it was a place where even animals could not be put. They put us there in the beginning of September, the beginning of the winter. We spent the first three months in the cells, we couldn't even stretch our legs. It was very cold. There was no lavatories. They made us do pipi [urinate] in front of each other in a container which remained with us in the cell. And the wardens behaved in a disgusting way. They would steal from each other, they had lice in their hair. And yet they think that we were raised in forests!

I stayed one year in prison. We had cultural activities, I made a wall magazine out a chick pea can. We didn't have pens or papers. We had prizes for the best poem or thought. The prize was a grain of salt, maybe, because they rarely gave us salt. We always ate canned beans, with no meat or anything. We started craving for potatoes (laughs). One time they gave us fried potatoes, three pieces for each. We hid them, to look at and smell, because they were related to the outside world. We also made demonstrations on Mother's Day because some of us were mothers.

I was the only one whose husband was also imprisoned. The men prisoners supported my husband when he went to demand the right to visit me. The visit was forbidden. So they made demonstrations and demanded that my husband be allowed to visit me. After seven months they allowed him to visit me in prison. When he came, it was a big surprise because of course I hadn't been told. I was standing at the door of the cell. I heard his voice, I grabbed the bars of the cell and I started screaming, "Muhammad, Muhammad!" I banged on the door until they brought him. Of course the wardens surrounded us. I sat with him, and I hadn't seen him for nine months. I couldn't talk and he couldn't talk. I would say, "What?" He would say, "What?" (her eyes redden). He came in his [prison] clothes and I was in

my prison clothes. It was pathetic. We were wearing the same thing, both of us, worn-out soldiers' clothing.

When we finally got out there was a new tragedy. Our daughter who was one and half when I was captured couldn't recognize me, Maryam [voice shakes], she couldn't recognize either of us. Of course she had stayed at her grandfather's house, they had come and taken her. When I was released, they brought her to my house. I tried to carry her, she cried and told her grandmother. "Look at this woman, she wants to take me." I would cry, "No, no, I am mama, I am Khadija." She would look at me like that and say, "Mama was taken by the Jews, but she will come." I would say, "I am your mama." Then I started singing the songs I sang to her when she was a child, so that she would remember. I got her old toys that were at home. After two days she said, "Are you the mama that the Jews took? You came now?" She was two at that time, two and a half (pause). For two months she was scared of her father. We had brought her and escaped to Beirut, the occupation was still there in the South. She was attached in the beginning to her father and suffered a lot. She stopped eating and we had to give her serum. It took her a while to forget. When she forgot about her father, they arrested me. She suffered for her mother. Her grandmother told me that she spent two months crying [voice shakes] day and night. During the day she would go around the house shouting, "Mama!" Every time she saw a red car coming she would say, "Mama is coming", because my car was red. She had hardly forgotten me and adjusted to her grandparents' house, and started to consider her grandmother her mother, when we came. What did we do? We took her from her grandmother. Her grandmother was in the South, under the occupation, and we were in Beirut. Again she spent two months crying. My nieces and nephews would hold her, she couldn't sleep at night. She would say, "I want my family, I want my home."

Thank God, we are still with the Resistance. After I left the prison, I joined the Islamic Resistance. Before I was in prison, in 1982, this movement arose. I started coordinating with the Islamic Resistance, and my work is with them. There is no longer a Palestinian Resistance. There is a group of young men and Hizbollah. I started working with them. I was coordinating with them, the Resistance and Hizbollah. Now I am in Al-Shaheed Organization as the director of the Program for the Support of the Mothers and Wives of Martyrs. My work is involved with wives of martyrs who are raising their children, so they won't leave them or put them in an orphanage. My role is social now, but it is also supporting the Resistance. Al-shaheed [the martyr] is a resistance fighter before he is a martyr. When the fighter goes out to fight knowing that his family will be protected and receive all its rights in life, he will be at ease. This is a support for the Resistance. May God grant us the strength and energy to persist in supporting liberation movements, supporting rights, and fighting oppression wherever it exists, in Palestine or elsewhere.

Recorded and translated by Michelle Obeid