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Report on the Israeli Invasion of Jenin Refugee Camp

Appendix E: 'Nazi Cow' and Running out of Water: The Jenin Refugee Camp is Invaded Again. A conversation with Thowera Kreeneh, 20 June 2002

Thowera Kreeneh, 23, and her sister Fatineh, 30, are in their house in the Jenin Refugee Camp with their very ill father, 76, and nine children aged two months to eight years. Six of the children are her brother's Mustafa, who has been held in an Israeli prison for the last two and a half months in administrative detention, meaning no one is allowed to visit him. However, he is able to make phone calls. Mustafa sells vegetables and has no criminal record, though he remains in an Israeli prison without charges or offense. There has also been a tank parked outside their door since Wednesday (19 June 2002) morning. The tank occasionally shoots and shells within the camp, for no apparent reason.

The Jenin Refugee Camp has not been able to recover its electrical, phone, sewer, or water systems since the Israeli military destroyed a large portion of the infrastructures of the camp in their operation "Defensive Shield" from 3-18 April. Due to these continued problems, Thowera told me in a phone call on Wednesday that they were going to run out of water in another day. By Wednesday evening, international aid workers in the camp were able to deliver limited amounts of water to Thowera, her sister, and the children, temporarily delaying the water shortage.

Israeli soldiers physically and verbally assaulted this same international aid worker, Caoimhe, 23, Wednesday for trying to deliver water to the men who were being detained inside the camp; they were forced to sit under the hot sun and not given water or food. As Caoimhe approached, she was called an "Arab fucker" and a "Nazi cow" and beaten. Her injuries are not severe and she continues to be one of the few international aid workers in the Camp.

On Thursday at 1 p.m. approximately 50 Israeli soldiers entered Thowera and Fatineh's home. After entering the home, which had two of its three floors internally destroyed by Israeli soldiers in the operation in April, the soldiers saw that there were only two females, nine children, and a very sick old man. Nonetheless, they locked everyone in one room and overturned everything in the entire house again.

The soldiers brought a big dog with them as well. They brought the dog into the kitchen and forced Thowera to give the dog a bowl of water, despite the desperate situation with water in the Camp. Thowera, Fatineh, and all the children were very afraid of the dog and set the bowl far away from it. The soldiers began laughing at them.

I also spoke with Joseph 'Irsal, 20, from the village of Seeleh, approximately 12 kilometers to the west of the Jenin Refugee Camp. His voice is normally bouncy and playful, though when he called me on Thursday night, it was flat and abused. He was at the internet café in Jenin city Tuesday night with Mohammed Sobhay Wahash, 21, and

several other friends. When they finished, they returned to the Camp, just a few minutes walk, and were standing near the Jenin Hospital, a normal hangout for these guys.

Suddenly they heard the tanks coming their way. Before they knew it, the tank was just 100 meters from them, turned its cannon towards them, and fired. Mohammed was injured, though we don't know to what extent; he was rushed inside the hospital. Joseph and the others escaped into the camp to Joseph's uncle's house. Wednesday morning, the soldiers went around the camp with a loudspeaker saying, "All men 15-50 come out of your homes or we will kill you." This was repeated over and over as they drove around the camp.

Joseph went down and was taken to the UN girls school in the camp where he was blindfolded, his hands were tied behind his back, and they were held for several hours. After some time, they were taken on busses to the Salem Checkpoint, the site where Israel is beginning to build its wall of separation, on the Green line. At Salem he was interrogated for some time and continued to be held with his hands tied and blindfolded. After more time passed, he was put on a bus and taken on the road to the village of Romani and kicked off the bus.

Before being released, the bus of men was told, "You must stay in Romani for three days. Listen to the news for when we leave Jenin and then you can return to your homes."

Joseph made his way to the next village in the direction of the camp, Seeleh, and is waiting there with other people from the Jenin Refugee Camp.

Also while speaking to Thowera today, Friday the 21st, she said they are about out of water again. I could hear the tank shooting outside her door as we spoke and she informed me, "I am going to leave the house soon to try and bring water. The children need water. How can we even use the toilet without water?" Despite the fact that there are probably hundreds, if not thousands, of Israeli soldiers in the camp, along with several tanks and APCs, snipers are posted in high positions to see the whole camp and firing at anyone moving, Thowera will have to venture out to try and bring water to her sister, father, and all her nieces and nephews. As we were about to hang up, Thowera told me a joke and we hung up laughing.

Soldiers also broke into the house of Mohammed Abu Al Hajeh on Thursday. The soldiers entered by placing an explosive device on the door, blowing up not just the lock but also most of the door. They were sleeping in the house, according to neighbors, and using it to shoot at targets from within the camp. It is important to note that no one is shooting at the soldiers and all the men have been removed from the camp, meaning they are shooting at homes or at women and children.

In the prior invasion in April, soldiers did the exact same in Mohammed's house: they entered by blowing up a door, slept in the house, shot at the fighters in the camp, defecated all over the house, broke all the windows, ate their food, and left everything in ruins. Six days before the soldiers re-entered the house this time, Mohammed, 33, and his

wife Tahani, 28, and Mohammed's mother, 70, who is also quite ill and has difficulty walking, managed to replace all the broken windows. I helped them paint the frames and they arranged the room nearly to the way it was before the invasion in April. All the windows we replaced just days before were broken again.

It is important to highlight that at the present time, Jenin Refugee Camp has few males in it; almost all of them have been taken away at the threat of death, leaving only women and children with scores of Israeli soldiers, tanks, snipers, and APCs roaming freely to loot, trash, and do what they want in the camp. The measure of fear in the voices of the women I have talked with is incredibly high as they are at the total mercy of Israeli soldiers who have little regard for their lives. They don't know if they will be beaten, abused, raped, or harm will come to their children and they are completely defenseless to do anything about it.

These are examples of specific people. However, their stories are symbolic of the larger story in Jenin Refugee Camp at this time and are not unique.