

The JENIN INQUIRY.org

Report on the Israeli Invasion of Jenin Refugee Camp

Appendix G: "Shoot every window, spray every house": The Methodology of Hiding Atrocities

"However many wanted men we kill in the refugee camp, and however much of the terror infrastructure we expose and destroy there, there is still no justification for causing such great destruction."

--Israeli army officer in the Jenin refugee camp¹

Virtually every survivor Jenin Inquiry spoke with testified that either they themselves or someone they knew were shot while in their own homes, many while looking out their windows to see what was happening. One such example comes from a 58-year old male resident of the camp:

"Friday the 5th of April 2002 I heard many strong sounds and lots of shooting from tanks and Apache helicopters. At the end of that long night, the tanks had to widen the road in order to enter the camp. On Saturday the 6th I was cautiously looking out a window from the upper floor to see what was happening. I heard tanks and bulldozers smashing homes so they could enter. At that time I didn't know there were snipers.

I was in my home like a regular person and I saw that the bulldozers had smashed a door of my home, making a big hole in the wall. I was turned to the side and standing 10 feet away from this opening, peering outside. I couldn't see the soldiers but they could see me. Suddenly, a shot came into the room and I began to bleed heavily from my chest. I had no idea what happened but I thought the bullet went straight into my heart and I was going to die. I put my hand over my heart and went downstairs as the blood poured out."

A doctor imprisoned in the Jenin hospital for the entirety of the invasion testified that early on in the invasion, the doctors were forced by the soldiers to shut all the blinds to windows overlooking the camp.

Two points arise from these events. The first is that the Israeli army did not want witnesses to their activities in the camp. This is reinforced by the fact that from the beginning of the invasion, the entire camp was sealed to the press, humanitarian workers, medical personnel not present in the camp, and all other foreigners. The order to seal the camp was not an adjustment made while the operation was taking place but a component of the plans made by the military commanders before the invasion occurred.

¹ "Peres Calls IDF Operation in Jenin a 'Massacre'", Amos Harel and Aluf Benn Ha'aretz, 9 April 2002.

Second, civilian inhabitants of the camp were shot in their own homes due to direct orders by Israeli army commanders to do so. Whether in revenge or as another method of diminishing the possibility of witnesses, orders were given to spray the camp with gunfire from the early moments of fighting. Despite intention, both were effected results from the stated orders. Testimonies such as those quoted above were not a result of an accident or civilians being caught in the middle of a fierce fight. Here is testimony of an Israeli reserve soldier in Jenin refugee camp:

“‘After the first moments of the fighting, when a commander was killed . . . the instructions were clear: Shoot every window, spray every house—whether someone shoots from there or not.’ To the question of whether he saw civilians get hurt, the reservist answered, ‘Personally, no. But the point is that they were inside the houses. The last days, the majority of those who came out of the houses were old people, women, and children, who were there the whole time and absorbed our fire. These people were not given any chance to leave the camp, and we are talking about many people.’”²

Many innocent civilians were injured or killed as a result of these orders. Through death and injury, the quantity of what inhabitants in the camp could witness, especially as word spread of the atrocities being committed, was diminished to some degree. These orders and their implementation did not, however, achieve their goal completely of barring inhabitants of witnessing the burden their families and neighbors were being forced to carry. To the contrary, a powerful body of cohesive, corroborated survivor testimony has allowed interested parties to rebuild the entirety of the invasion and testify clearly of the war crimes committed by the Israeli army in the Jenin refugee camp.

² Quoted in *Israel/Palestine: How to End the War of 1948*, Tanya Reinhart, Seven Stories Press, NY, 155.