

## **Personal stories - from and near Open Shuhada Street**

### **Azza Family**

The Azza Family live on Tel Rumeida hill, just down from the settlement. This location forces them to protect their courtyard with a metal net. Once the path going from Tel Rumeida street was open to everybody, but now it is surrounded by the caravans of the settlers. Today the path is completely blocked and dangerous for Palestinians, due to the proximity of the path to the settlement.

The Azza family lives in their house without having to pay rent to the owner. This is because their presence protects the house from being taken over by settlers. Life has not been easy here. When they first moved in, they spent an entire day transporting the furniture because settlers were targeting them with rocks. All their sons and daughters have been attacked. Once, the settler Ev'at Shalom Alkobi assaulted the oldest son and tried to force a rock down his throat to choke him to death. The son closed his mouth and only his teeth were injured. After five years of debating the case, Alkobi was found guilty and sentenced to five months of social service in a hospital. Three years ago, the daughter Sundus witnessed the settler Etan Flashman attack her other brother, Ahmad, 13 years old at the time. He beat him, choked him, and tried to run him down with his car. The son, Ahmad, and his sister were taken to the police station and detained for six hours. Flashman could leave after one hour and claimed Ahmad had broken the mirror on his car. If a soldier had not told the truth, the two siblings would have been immediately arrested.

The main way to the house is closed by military order, and settlers block the alternative route. Now the family must use a third way to reach their house. Settlers have poured water in through open windows, tried to break the glass with rocks, and cut the water pipes. It is complicated to repair any of the damages because visitors are not allowed to come. Youth Against Settlements led a campaign to help the families in the H2 area and bought the family a fence. Sundus used to volunteer for B'Tselem to document the attacks, but the settlers would cover their faces. Since the increase in killings that started in October 2015, settlers have become more dangerous and fanatic, and are armed. The situation is uncertain and some people left the area because of all the trouble, but the family is going to stay. "We have patience", they say. "This is our land".

### **Salaymeh Family**

The Salaymeh family live on Al-Shuhada street right in front of the Beit Hadassah checkpoint. Right now this section of Shuhada street is under a closed military zone and all the people who want to reach their house have to pass through the olives trees of Tel Rumeida hill and use a ladder to climb down into their courtyard. They were forced to protect their inner courtyard with a metal net from settlers throwing rocks.

Jameela Salaymeh has lived on Shuhada street since 1988. Before the street's complete closure, she could move around as she wished. Now she says she is stuck at home. "We live in a prison here," she tells us. She has been arrested more than 25 times. The first time was ten days after her marriage. She was cleaning in front of her house when settlers attacked her and threw acid at her. She defended herself by hitting them back, and the court ruled in her favor. She says she will defend herself, no matter how many times she is arrested. 12 years ago she was attacked by the daughter of the notorious settler Anat Cohen. Jameela slapped her when she tried to pull off her hijab, and the girl fell down the stairs. The Cohen family was

angry, and a group of 100-150 settlers surrounded the house for three hours during the day. They stated they had come to attack her and tried to make her go outside, but she refused. Instead they stole the iron gate of the main way to the house and brought it with them to the Beit Hadasseh settlement.

The house is old and dates back to the Ottoman period. Settlers have broken into it many times and once tried to start a fire inside. Another time, settlers under the protection of soldiers came and threw large rocks at the house, which broke the floors outside and damaged the electricity cables and TV satellites on the roof. Jameela does not feel secure here, but she chooses to stay. Just like the house has protected her, she feels that she must protect it back, despite the trouble. Two years ago the Salaymeh family released a video of an attack, which was watched by many people. A group of around 20 soldiers came to the house in response and attacked her. When a soldier hit her with his gun, she beat him back and was forced outside. They cuffed her hands behind her back with a plastic string that she managed to break free from when she saw the soldiers arrest her only son. She went to prison for two arduous weeks before being released.

### **Sharabati Family**

The Sharabati Family live on Al-Shuhada street right in front of the Beit Hadassah checkpoint. Right now this section of Al-Shuhada street is a military zone and anyone who wants to reach their house has to climb down the hill and use rooftops of the buildings next to it to get there.

Mufheet Sharabati and his family live on Shuhada street. He was born here. Part of the family used to live close to the Avraham Avinu settlement, but the army welded the front door shut while the family was still inside. They escaped two days later. In the current house, Mufheet gained the permission to build another kitchen, but the army arrested him when he tried to bring the materials to his home. At the military camp, a group of 35 soldiers in civilian clothes beat him unconscious. He was hospitalized for six months with a broken spine. The surgery was expensive and was made more difficult because Mufheet is on Israel's blacklist.

His brother Zidane lost his eye when a settler hurled a rock at him, and he wears dentures from the time a group of soldiers knocked out his teeth on a military jeep. The family is attacked nearly every day. "Only my youngest son has not been attacked yet," Mufheet says and points to the two-and-a-half year old boy. Two of the children were once playing in the yard when a group of young settlers entered and tried to kidnap the five-year-old son. A neighbor heard the screams and managed to rescue the boy. With Israeli permission, B'Tselem placed cameras on the house afterward, but the army invaded with a large dog and demanded they be taken down. The settlers did not want their harassments exposed, and Mufheet states that the main reason the family is targeted is because they try to document all the incidents. From the roof, the ten-year-old son filmed the killing of Faruq Seder. A settler saw the boy filming them and tried to shoot him from the street. Mufheet arrived at the scene, and a settler wanted to open fire at him but was deterred by the camera-wielding Palestinians. When a group of soldiers once attacked Zidane, the father saw it from the window and slipped on the stairs on his way down to the street. The ambulance could not arrive, and he died from a heart attack. "The occupation killed my father," Zidane says.

### **Al Hadad Family**

The Al Hadad Family live on Tel Rumeida hill, in between olives trees, on the path that connects the settlement (located on the top of Tel Rumeida) and Shuhada street. This location passes through the water spring, which settlers consider holy. During the second Intifada, soldiers occupied their rooftop and part of the second floor of their house for almost 6 months. The soldiers climbed onto the roof through a metal ladder and they prevented the family from using the main entrance to enter the house. Today the soldiers have a camera on their rooftop in order to protect settlers walking down.

Soha Hadad moved into the house during The Second Intifada. For the first three months, soldiers occupied part of the house. They then moved to the roof, stayed for six months, and installed security cameras as they left. When the soldiers lived in the house, the family was required to leave the door open at all times, regardless of the weather, and the women felt pressured to always cover themselves up and wear hijab in their own homes. The soldiers once prevented the father from leaving and hit him in the chest with a gun, and another time they pushed Soha forcefully from the door. During the Intifada, the family was under curfew, sometimes from 6am to 4pm. Now, the house is a closed military zone and no visitors are allowed. Eight years ago, a soldier wanted to go to the roof. He thought there was a staircase inside and did not believe Soha when she told him otherwise. He hit her and went to the ground floor instead where the army bursted open the door with explosives to enter. Soha filed a complaint that was taken to high court, but it yielded no results.

The family has also suffered from a series of settler violence. When Soha was pregnant with twins, she went to her recently deceased uncle's house to pay tributes. On her way home, she was followed by settlers who tried to attack her. She ran away to save herself, and she lost the babies as a consequence. Four years later, settlers beat up her 14-year-old son and broke his hand. He spent eight days in the hospital and still suffers from the injury today. They took the case to court but to no avail. Soha has documented many incidents with the camera B'Tselem gave her, but it has changed nothing. Her son has been questioned naked on his way home from Jerusalem, and her daughter was nearly shot by mistake at the renovated checkpoint 56 because she did not know the procedures. Despite everything, Soha has hope for the future.

### **Abu Eishah Family**

The Abu Eishah Family live completely surrounded by the settlement of Tel Rumeida. This location, and the violent behavior of the settlers living there, has forced them to protect every windows and every entrance with metal nets. The house resembles a cage. Nowadays the only ones allowed to enter by the street leading to the settlement are the main family members.

The Abu Eishah family's home is known as the "cage house." After settlers arrived in 1983, restrictions were imposed gradually. First, the army enforced numbering of the vehicles of the Palestinian residents to let them through. The soldiers would on occasion state that they were not able to find the number and would prevent the family from entering with the car or let them wait for hours. Eventually, cars were not allowed at all and all visitors needed permission. Fixing anything in the house became difficult, and ambulances that used to arrive within few minutes now took 1-5 hours. As a result, two of Tayseer's children passed away at birth because of delays. The first time when the ambulance did not arrive, they decided to walk, and the baby was dead by the time they reached the hospital. The second time, his wife was pregnant with twins. A month prior to the birth, the family talked with the administration to avoid a similar tragedy. The wife went into labor at midnight and the ambulance arrived at 1:30. Only one child survived.

Attacks from settlers became a frequent occurrence. Settlers would break the windows with rocks or damage the cars while the family was sleeping. The family put up a fence, which needed to be replaced several times after settlers cut through it. The family has been subject to physical attacks as well. Once, a group of 50 settlers surrounded the house and tried to kill them. Shalom Alkobi broke in through the door and attacked Tayseer. Abu Samir, the grandfather, defended himself with his walking stick and managed to push the settler out. The family went to the roof, and the police arrived in the morning. Tayseer had grabbed a fistful of Alkobi's beard during the fight and presented it as evidence. Alkolbi was found guilty and sentenced five months of social service in a hospital. This was the only arrest made, though Abu Samir has filed the most police reports in Hebron.

### **Abed Al Raof Mohtaseb**

"Business is weak here, there is no one. We feel like we are living in a tomb." Abd Al-Raof Mohtaseb is 58 years old and runs a shop close to the Ibrahimi checkpoint. His customers are mostly internationals, and he sees many Israeli peace activists and international Jewish visitors come to buy from the store and drink coffee with him. "We hope to live in peace," he says, "but who has the power in their hands to give peace?" In the summer of 2015, a group of around 25 settlers attacked Abd at his shop and broke the craft. It was 11 o'clock in the morning, so the soldiers saw it but did nothing. They just told him to file a complaint. A settler had attacked Abd with an iron pipe and broke his skull. As a consequence, Abd now suffers from recurring headaches. The soldiers took him to the police station for an investigation. Abd insisted the notorious settler Baruch Marzel had been among the attackers, but the soldiers stated otherwise. The investigators decided to believe the soldiers and ruled that Abd was a liar. As a result, the file on him now imposes restrictions on his life and prevents him from going to Jerusalem. His sister lives there and he is not allowed to visit her. "They know they are liars," he says. "Why not just be fair?"

During the Ibrahimi Mosque massacre in 1994, Abd was at home. When he heard what had just happened, he hurried to the Mosque to assist the wounded and bring them to the hospital. He mentions Arafat Albari, who donated blood to the wounded. He was shot dead by Israeli snipers outside the hospital. In the months after the massacre, Abd expected the government to punish the Israelis, but instead the larger half of the Mosque was turned into a synagogue and heavy security measurements were put in place for Palestinians. "The settlers control the area," Abd says. "They are allowed to do anything, their opinions control everything." During the interview with Abd, a group of settlers walk past his store and shout insults and taunts at him. They mention Baruch Marzel and the incident that happened some months ago. "Now you saw everything with your eyes," he tells us.

### **Al Jabari Family**

Abdul Kareem Jabari is 58 years old and has lived in his house for 20 years. When the first Israeli settlers arrived, there were no real problems. Then in 1974 the settlers took control of the public stairs in the area, which was difficult for the elderly Palestinians. When Abdul built a house for his family in 1976, settlers came and destroyed it. He then built the family's current house in 1997 and was offered a blank cheque for his property. He refused it. Then the problems with the settlers really began. Settler children threw stones and cut the grape trees. After vandalizing the door and windows, the family placed a fence around the house. Each year during olive season, the settlers attack Abdul in the field, steal the crops or set them on fire. Twice, they have stolen the family's ducks and sheep as soldiers prevented Abdul from intervening.

Of the seven sons and three daughters, all members of the family have been hospitalized from settler attacks. A settler stabbed the 10-year-old son in the stomach, which another one broke Abdul's arm. The 19-year-old son's hand was broken and he still suffers from the injury today. The 11-year-old son was seriously beaten by soldiers and settlers who caused injury to his eye, and the adult daughter was once knocked unconscious when a settler threw a stone at her, giving her a concussion. The ambulance arrived after two-and-a-half hours. The driver explained that he had reached the checkpoint in four minutes but had been detained by soldiers for the remaining time. Another time, soldiers pushed Abdul into a hole and tried to shoot him. The family took all the cases to court with no results. In 2006, settlers began shooting at them. In the first case, Abdul went to the police station to file a complaint. They arrested him and let the settler go. Abdul worries about being shot all the time. He has a son with dwarfism. "How can he move around?" Abdul asks. "There are problems every day. Come tomorrow and you will see."

### **Zakyeh Mahmoud Qasrawi Family**

The scheme shows the alternative path that Zakyeh Mahmoud Qasrawi (80 yrs old) has to use to reach her house since the closure of Al-Shuada street in 2006. Her main entrance is on Al-Shuhada street and now it is completely blocked. Today the elderly woman uses the main entrance of her neighbor's home, located on a parallel street, she climbs up on their roof terrace, reaches the rooftop of the building next to hers and enters her house through a little door that had to be made right after the closure of Al-Shuhada street.

There are two doors in the house that Zakyeh Mahmoud Qasrawi has lived in for 56 years. She is 80 years old. During the curfew of 2005, the door leading out to Shuhada street was welded shut by soldiers while the family was still inside, and it has not been opened since. Trapped in their home, the family decided to make a new door in the other wall and created an entrance by force. This door is small and leads out to a narrow path that runs through several courtyards to the souq. She is allowed to use her balcony, which is protected by a fence financed by her own money, but she still does not dare venture out there in fear of settler attacks. She is afraid to turn on the light in the living room and to go there at night, and she never uses the two rooms closest to Shuhada street. Before the street's complete closure, her family was under frequent attacks by settlers who threw rocks at the windows and broke the glass and window panes at nighttime. When her family walked on the street, the settlers spit on them, hurled insults at them, and targeted them with rocks and skunk water. Sometimes they would come and dance in front of the door. The army did not stop or prevent the settler's attacks. The soldiers used to come here many times. Once, they forced Zakyeh and her family out on the street and slept in the house for the night with a soldier standing in the door.

She now lives here alone. When her children lived with her, they were often kept at home for their safety. Once, the daughter was alone upstairs when settlers broke into the house. They attacked her and pulled out some of her hair, but she managed to escape. Nowadays, things are different. "We don't see them, they don't see us," Zakyeh says. "We are scared, the soldiers are scared, I don't want to live in fear. I'm ready to live in peace." She tells us that she is happy to see internationals here. It makes her feel important. This house is her home, she tells us. She will stay here until her last day.