

(4/5/77)

THE SEALING UP OF THE HOME OF HARBI HASSAN MUSTAFA  
EL-HADUD'S FAMILY

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Report delivered by Advocate Felicia LANGER

On September 31, 1977, Abd-el-Assali and myself, accompanied by the journalist Raimond Tawil from Ramallah, visited the village Biddu in the Ramallah region (occupied Westbank). The purpose of our visit was to look at the sealed-up house of the El-Hadud family. The family consists of six children, the youngest being at the age of one year and the oldest a boy of 8. The mother of the six is in her eighth month' pregnancy.

I am serving as attorney to the family's father, Harbi, who has been arrested and is detained since at the hold-up at the "Russian Compound" in Jerusalem under the suspicion of "hostile activity" as claimed by the occupation authorities. So far no indictment whatsoever against him was presented. (He arrested on 23.7.1977).

When we arrived at place after a hard journey over an unpaved and hilly road and a narrow path leading to the house, the following scene unfold before our eyes: A small pink coloured house, all the windows and the door sealed up by concrete fillings. Even the little room at the groundfloor, looking like a small store-room, which has been used by the family as kitchen, was sealed up. Moreover, the well at the yard, which has been the sole source of water for the whole family, was sealed up too by concrete. On the face of the well, as well as on the sealed windows the soldiers painted the Star of David (the symbol in the Israeli flag) and the date of the sealing - September 18, 1977.

Harbi's wife, Nashte, told us, that on that day, without any previous announcement, an Israeli officier whom she did not know, arrived at her home. Only at a later stage he became aware of the fact that this officier was the military governor himself. He ordered her that she and her children have to evacuate the house within half an hour and to take with them all their belongings, otherwise everything will be destroyed. The woman, who was sick at that day, fainted on the spot when hearing the order. After recovering and apprehending the calamity befelling her and her family, she asked for mercy from the side of the officier, the Israeli army, and even the mercy of Prime Minister Menachem Begin. She presented her six small children and pleaded, that neither they, nor she herself, were involved in anything against the authorities, although these detained her husband and are free to judge him to their liking. She even turned to this officier's conscience, pleading with him that he himself probably has children of his own, and therefore, how could he possibly look on, while her children become homeless. The officier did not response at all. When she announced that she will rather die than move from her home, the officier turned to the village mukhtar who accompanied him, and ordered him to bring men from the village. After these arrived, he ordered them to remove the woman and her children, together with their belongings from the house by force and without delay. This was done. When the smallest, one-year old boy was brought out into the burning sunshine, the woman again pleaded with the bystanding soldiers and asked for mercy, but to no avail. After that, several dozens soldiers, which took part at the action - some working, others guarding with pointed guns - pulled out window sills from their sockets, sealed up windows and doors, and then the well in the yard too.

The woman and her children found shelter in a nearby dark pit, where the day's light does not reach them. They suffer intolerably from thirst, since bringing water to that place is very difficult because of the unpaved road and the winding and steep path. The children want to drink and to wash themselves. When we arrived at the spot, one of them asked us to give him some water.

Some days before I saw the sealed-up house, the woman came to see me and told me of her plight. I run a letter to the Military Governor of the Yehuda- and Samaria district (the official name given to the occupied Westbank by the Israeli authorities) protesting the inhuman deed and demanding that the house and the well should be opened immediately, so as to put an end to the unbearable sufferings of that innocent family which has become the victim of collective punishment contradicting elementary principles of justice.

I intend to appeal to the High Court of Justice against this injustice. I shall turn to public opinion in Israel and the world, in order to reveal this case of brutality, alien to human feelings, and representing a severe break of the Fourth Geneva Convention. *Diante*

I very much hope that everybody with conscientious feelings will lend his hand to act in order to save human dignity and the right of human existence of people in their homeland, and their right to have a rooftop over the head.

Tel-Aviv, October 1977

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*F. Langer*