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Testimonies

IDF demolishes the home of the a-Rimawi family, October 2001

Zahara a-Rimawi, homeowner

I have four daughters. The eldest is twelve years old and the youngest is one year old. I am married to Muhammad Fahmi A-Rimawi, who was arrested on suspicion of aiding the cell that killed Minister Ze'evi.

In the early hours of Wednesday [24 October], I was awakened by the sound of gunfire and helicopters. I looked out my window and was surprised to see many soldiers on the road that is about ten meters from our house. I heard knocking at the door. It was Shadi, one of our neighbors. He said that the soldiers wanted me to come outside. My daughters woke up and started crying because of the loud noise. I went outside to the soldiers - I was barefoot and in pajamas. The soldiers heard the sound of my daughters crying and asked me to get everyone out of the house quickly. Shadi went to get my parents and my brother's wife from the top floor.

At the same time, my brother 'Abd al- Muhsan and my sister's son lham stood outside facing the wall, their hands tied. I quickly took my daughters outside. The rest of our family who lives in the building with us also exited. The younger children cried, and we all stood around barefoot and in our pajamas because the army told us that we had to leave within five minutes, and threatened to blow up the house. I embraced my children, because it was early in the morning and very cold. The army took my sister's son and my brother away in a jeep, and the rest of us remained outside. The soldiers surrounded us and aimed their guns at us but did not fire.

The soldiers sent a dog into the building and tens of soldiers followed it in. Meanwhile, we sat outside and heard the heavy firing and saw helicopters circling above. Once in a while, armored vehicles passed by on the street. The children continued to cry and wet their pants, because the soldiers would not let them to go into the house to use the bathroom. Only at 6:30 A.M. did the army leave the building. I took my daughters inside, helped them shower, and made something to eat. Outside, the firing stopped and the soldiers left.

At 9:00 A.M., the soldiers came back, bringing my sister's son lham with them. They took my sister, lham, out of the house and questioned her for an hour. Her son, Hamdi Quran, is one of the men suspected of assassinating Minister Ze'evi. They asked her about the mobile phone that she had, and she said that she had sold it. They called me and asked about the mobile phone, and about the whereabouts of Hamdi. They threatened that if we did not give them the information, they would demolish the house. I said that I did not know where he was. The interrogation lasted half an hour. Then the soldiers ordered lham and me to go back into the house. We were very frightened and decided to leave the house and stay with neighbors. Only my father remained in his apartment.

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At 6:20 P.M. on the same day, a large force of soldiers came and took my father out of the house. We were still at the neighbor's house. The soldiers circled the house for fifteen minutes. I do not know exactly what they were doing. They left the area, and two minutes later I heard the sound of an explosion. The house went up in flames.

All four apartments in the building were completely demolished. The soldiers would not let us take anything from the building. Before moving in with the neighbors I had managed to grab only a few pieces of the children's clothing. Now I am living with my four daughters in my uncle's house nearby, and I hope that they will help me rebuild my house.

Zahara Ahmad Yusef a-Rimawi is 33 years old, married and a mother of four. The testimony was taken by Raslan Mahagna on 29 October 2001.