

2002/11 21-0001a - 2

Thursday 21st November, 2002

**Umm Mohammad Alhirbawi**

My name is Khadija Wehbeh a 64 year- old *Shiaa* mother for 8 children: 6 sons (including Ahmad who was kidnapped), and 2 daughters. I lost my son in 1976. I was living with my family in Nabaa in the Eastern part of Beirut. In March 1976, Nabaa was invaded by the Phalange party, and I had to leave to West Beirut. On the way from East to West Beirut, the Phalanges stopped the taxi and kidnapped my 17 year old son, Ahmad. I remember it was Tuesday, March 1976; I was trying to flee the area because the Christian militias were invading *Nabaa* and looking for the Palestinians to massacre them. I took a taxi; the taxi driver was an Armenian. Most of taxi drivers between the 2 parts of Beirut were Armenians. I had with me my son Ahmad, his Turkish friend, and a *Shiaa* young man from the Mortada family. I was trying to get them out too. We passed by the Phalanges militia roadblock in Ashrafieh (Sassine square), who told us that the Lebanese are allowed to pass. They came near the car, opened the door and asked my son to go with them. They also took the other 2 young men who were with me in the car. I protested saying that we are Lebanese and Lebanese are supposed to pass, but they did not listen to me. I waited for my son to come back. They ordered the taxi driver to go, but I did not want to leave the area without my son, and I protested. One of the three militia men came and told me not to worry because there is nothing against my son. The second man approached and hit me violently with the butt of his M.16, threatening and ordering me to leave. They took my son down to a basement of a building (Elysee). I did not see him ever since. What makes me suffer is that my son is innocent. He never carried an arm in his life, and if he sees a drop of blood he gets scared. I looked for my son every where. I spoke to all important people, but in vain. I complained to the police and filled a

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report mentioning the name of the man [Elie] who was standing on the roadblock, and whom we know very well. But nothing happened. I visited all the responsible people, but nobody cared. Nobody [from the government] even thought of interrogating Elie to ask him what happened to my son. I paid lot of money to several persons who promised they would find my son for me.

I don't understand why war started, and why it ended. I didn't leave a door without knocking at it. Muslims and Christians, meetings, demonstrations, and sit-in strikes. I did every thing I could do, and the story did not finish yet. I said to my eldest daughter "if any thing happens to me I want you to continue with my cause." The young fighting men from my area brought me during the war many Christians whom they abducted on the roadblocks. They used to tell me:" here is a Christian, at the place of your son, kill him, or exchange him with your son. But I never accepted. I am a pious woman, and I fear God. May be these Christians who were abducted were innocents like my son. They have no fault in what is going on. Once they brought me three abducted Christians. I bought them sandwiches and helped them to cross the line between the 2 Beiruts. I accept the truth whatever it is. If my son is dead, I want to see what is left from his body, even a small piece of his shirt. I will know my son, even if he is a pile of dry bones. If he is alive, where is he and why are they still keeping him? I want the truth. No, I do not accept to declare the death of my son without any proof. No mother would do this to her child Closing the file as the government is asking us to do is impossible. And if I die, my daughter will go on. I accept the truth whatever it is, but not to stay in this situation. My son is lost and I am lost too.