

**"My Story is Part of the Story of the Palestinian People"  
Here in Palestine our Dreams are Confiscated and our Lands are Stolen**

The story of Mufida Ahmad Khaled told through Lana Omar, Jayyus Village  
-Excerpted from *The Wall in Palestine*, PENGO/Apartheid Wall Campaign

My story is part of the story of the Palestinian people and their long journey towards freedom and independence. I am a mother like any mother in this vast world. I am 35 years old, married to a man who works as a guard at the Jayyus Secondary School and I have 6 children. I live in a house with two rooms and a kitchen. We took a \$US4000 loan from the bank to supplement my husband's salary, and we are still paying this debt.

And I found myself and my family deep into debt and with no other source of income than my husband's meager salary, which barely covers life's basic expenses. And then we had to find a way to pay for the loan, but how? A few years ago, I took the opportunity and accepted the first job offered to me, to work at a small sewing factory from 6:30 in the morning until 3:30 in the afternoon. Despite the meager amount of money that this job offered (not more than 600 Israeli shekels--\$US150--per month) I accepted the job because the debt was heavy. But there was also the need for someone to care for my children until I return from work. Despite my mother's poor health, she took responsibility for caring for them while I was at work. There were many instances when I had no other choice but to have my daughter, who was 6 years old at the time, to stay at home and miss school for one or two days to take care of her younger siblings.

I worked in very hard and dire circumstances. The responsibility was very big and the burden was heavy. Taking care of my house, children and family and attending to my job was putting me under extreme pressure and causing me overwhelming fatigue. More importantly, I needed to be focused and alert so that life could continue, as I feel greatly responsible for my family. I cannot afford to neglect any of my responsibilities towards my family, especially since our life circumstances are very hard. Despite everything, I kept within me a place with dreams and hopes for a better and more beautiful future.

At the time I took the job, we did not own any land to cultivate with trees. During the olive harvest seasons, we used to work on others' lands in order to secure our annual intake of olive oil, as it is an essential part of the family's sustenance. My husband and I decided to save some money from the little that we had and which would be on the expense of my children's needs and their wellbeing in order to purchase our own land and trees. We saved each and every penny and kept it safely for this great family aspiration. We did everything in our capacity and sacrificed to save 1000 Jordanian Dinars (\$US1400) to buy a piece of land cultivated with 8 large olive trees. Our goal and our dream was finally realized. We felt like we had achieved a great victory by buying the 8 olive trees. Our happiness was so great that I cannot describe how we felt during the first harvest upon gathering the olives from the trees that we owned through blood, sweat and tears. We were satisfied and content with the little that we could have.

We didn't know what was waiting for us. It seems that life was laughing at our happiness, knowing that it will not last. So often we dream as if there is no Occupation. We draw a picture of a bright future in front of our children's eyes. We were happy when the sun rose because we reached the land before its rays and light came onto our land. We planted eight small seedlings in the same piece of land despite our knowing that there is insufficient space for these seedlings to grow into large trees. But, we also knew that our land is generous with us, tolerates hardships like ourselves and shares our sadness and hopes because we share one story, one history and one civilization on this land.

Last September, people in my village started talking about the Israelis' intention to build something that will cut through Jayyus' lands and that will be known as "the Fence" or "the Wall." I thought to myself, "Aren't the Israelis satisfied with all the lands they have stolen and

confiscated so far?" I never imagined that we would be affected in any way by the separation wall being talked about in the village since all we own in this life are these 8 trees on a piece of land not larger than 1 dunum.

One day, a day that I will never forget and that was harder on me than losing my soul; people told me that the Wall will cut through my land, my trees and everything that I have sacrificed for. Just a few weeks after being told that the Wall will cut across my land, the olive harvest season began, in October 2002, and it was one of the best, most fruitful seasons I had ever seen. It was as if the olive trees were bidding me farewell, providing me with everything they could offer before departing. It was as if the olive trees were asking us to continue giving and sacrificing everything we have and all that is precious to us until the final day of our lives.

My family and I went to pick the olives from the trees, only to find that the Israelis had placed red demarcations on the olive trees and blue demarcations on the edges of the nearby lands. At that time, we knew that these markings meant the uprooting of the trees and the destruction of the land. Olive bits were dangling from the branches, twinkling on the pure land and kissing it. My hands were shaking as I started to gather the fruit, as if they were one of my children. I was never able to give more of my time and feelings to my children as I had given these trees, because I had stayed up nights and sacrificed time and effort, and comfort, to have these trees; I took care of them as if they were my blood and my flesh, my baby.

The olive trees were parading their fruits, proud like a bride wearing a crown on her wedding day. I used to stand in front of the lofty tree trunks which had been a part of this land and its history for hundreds of years. I would imagine, at times, the story of this tortured land just as I myself am tortured. I was miserable and could not help but burst into tears, even though I would never shed a tear in front of the world and my kids.

On a sad day, I stood with my husband and six children outside our house, located in front of our land and trees, watching the hands of the oppressor mowing the trees branches, exposing it, making it naked, throwing its braids and amputating its trunk. The scene continues, and the tyrant proceeds with his crime by moving his bulldozers and huge machinery to trod on the land and smash it, destroying and killing every green thing, uprooting the trees from their roots and thus converting the land into a lifeless desert.

All eight of us stood counting our eight trees as they were going through this intentional crime, as if the oppressor was meaning to torture the trees before totally destroying them. Yes, that was the oppressor's intention, but more importantly he meant to torture us as well, before and after we lose our trees. It is not a coincidence that God gave us 8 trees, one tree for each member of my family. Each one of us started to console the other for his tragedy. Our only consolation was that God is with us and He is the one who gives and takes and he is the most merciful of all.

People might look at this wall from various perspectives and according to their ideas and predispositions and they might write about it in various languages. But for me, this wall is like a heavy burden placed on my chest causing me to suffocate and lose my breath each time I look at my land. This Wall besieges my mind and my existence. It steals the sustenance from my children. It represents the feeling of suffering and oppression and tyranny. I see in it the ugliness of the tyrant and the cruelty of the slayer. I see it as a symbol of the hate that will prevail among people. I see in it the oppression against innocent, simple, helpless people whose care for and love their land and provide sustenance for their children. I see it as a disgrace to every living soul who loves goodness and peace.

I ask God to help us get rid of this oppression. I convey this message to all the mothers and women of the world, women who carry in their wombs the message of purity and motherhood. To women who carry in their hands the banner of freedom to defend women's

dignity. To women who refuse the oppression and subjugation of women, to women who call for equity and justice. I say to all these women: Here in Palestine our dreams are confiscated and our lands are stolen. Here in Palestine, there are women and mothers who have lost their children, brothers and husbands. They lost their lands and jobs, they lost the freedom and means to raise and educate their children. Despite everything, we have a strong will to succeed. The Occupation and oppression can not steal our love for goodness and peace for all humanity. I call upon the women of the world to raise their voices in the face of the occupier through solidarity and through defending and supporting the rights of women in Palestine.

**Article Taken out of the PENGON report titled**  
***The Wall in Palestine: Facts, Testimonies, Analysis and Call to Action***



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