

THE MOTHER OF EVERYBODY

An interview with Jamela Shalalden & Abd Salayma



Jamela "Um Abd" Shalalden is born in a village outside of Hebron. In 1987 married a man from the city and moved to Hebron. She has two daughters and one son. Today she lives just off Shuhada Street in Tel Rumeida with her son, his wife and one of her daughters.

Jamela Shalalden in her livingroom.

Jamela is known as "the mother of everybody", she is a warm loving person with a lot of people caring about her. "I barely know her real name", a man from the area laughs "I only call her Um Abd or Omi [arabic for mum]". We meet in a room next to her sunny back inner court and she starts telling a story that takes us back to a horrifying night in 2012.

"The soldiers came in to our house in the middle of the night, the clock must have been around 2 am in the morning. First they started banging the front door and surrounded the house. They caught us by surprise, I just manage to grab a robe to cover up". Jamela describes an absolute chaos breaking out in her own home. "I wanted to know what was going on, why were they all in my home in the middle of the night?". In the turbulence one of the soldiers pushed Jamela into a wall, the hit crushed her toes on the right foot. Meanwhile her daughter filmed what was happening with her phone. "One of the soldiers,

a druze¹, told her that if she didn't stop filming immediately she would be in big trouble. He told her that he was going to rape her until she wished she was dead", she retells.

"They tried to hold me back, they held my hands behind my back. But I bit them and as soon as I got my hands free, if so only for a second, I slapped them", she continues. "They tried to handcuff me but I just fought back, all the time. And when they handcuffed me to a chair, this chair", she points to the green plastic chair she is sitting on "I kept on fighting them with it. They couldn't stop me"

Eventually the soldiers called the police who handcuffed Jamela into their police car and brought her to jail. But before the police got there Jamela manage to run into the cabin of the check point outside the corner of her house and smash all of its technical equipment. "They jailed the soldier responsible for the cabin for half a year I think, because he didn't manage to stop me".

But it wasn't Jamela that was the main target for the armed force, it was her son Abd. Abd nowadays works as an English teacher in the Qurtoba school in Tel Rumeida. He is 24 years old and a charming young man with a contagious smile. He serves me and his mother cappuccinos while talking about that night back in 2013, "Afterwards they told me that I was arrested by mistake". During the arrest of Abd they tried to provoke him to say stuff that they could use against him in court. But since he didn't fall for that trick there were no charges against him whatsoever. "They brought me to military jail though, were you don't even have the right to make a phone call. The cells are tiny and they keep the light on at all the time. You don't

h a v e a n y apprehension about time. I shared the cell with children. Children!" He makes a pause. "There is no proper food and the toilet that everybody shares is in this tiny cell as well."



There is a film capturing the moment when the soldiers, men his own age, are arrest Abd. He is handcuffed, blindfolded and led away from his home

Jamelas son, Abd, works as an English teacher in Cortuba School, Tel Rumeida. He is often invited to talk about the cause at universities all over the world

¹ Arabs that are serving the Israeli military. Due to their under dog position within the military many people claim that the druze are the worst individuals of the occupational force since they are willing to go further in their warfare than anyone else

and family. While disappearing from the eye of the camera you can still see him holding his back straight. His mother is screaming, crying and fighting with the soldiers trying to stop her from running after her son. Before the camera is closed she faints at the street outside her home, surrounded by soldiers.

"My life changed after that. They managed completely to destroy my spirit in the three days they kept me in jail," Abd tells me, looking into my eyes "After that I stopped seeing friends, I had no social life what so ever. I've always loved school and I used to have great grades, but they all dropped. And it wasn't easy to get back. Slowly slowly though I've manage to get back, but it took me over a year. And I'm still not completely healed. In the beginning I had nightmares every night. And I still do, I'm still struggling in so many ways. Still when I hear the door open I think it's them."

Both Jamal and her son Abd were jailed. Abd got released without a trial after three nights *"But I had no clue were I was", Abd tells me "Still in prison soldiers forced me in to one of their massive jeeps, you know? And just started driving. I tried to have a look through the tiny window but the soldier next to me forced me to sit with my head between my knees. After awhile my back started to hurt and I just tried to stretch it a little bit. When I did the soldier threatening to shot me", Abd recalls. They side of a road and drove alone in my pajamas. I was, no money, no phone, no nothing. I did have done; I started number plates of all the finally saw a white one - waved at it to stop. And took me back to Hebron he finally made it back news of what had*

"My life changed after that. They managed to completely destroyed my spirit"

Badia, my translator and got to the Shaladen's morning after the arrest. good friend from phone, managed to (approximately 475 was needed for the bail the media possible. "At

commander of the Tel Rumeida force came up to me and asked me for Jamelas medication", Badia tells us. A doctor at the prison had recognized Jamela's severe asthma and demanded to get her medication. Jamela fills in: "When the doctor later saw what kind of inhalator I had for my asthma he subscribed me a new one. He told me that the one I had wasn't good enough, but it is nothing that I could afford".

a good friend of Jamela, home early in the With him he bought a America whom, by raise the 1750 shekels dollars/450 euros) that while Badia called all the same time the

Badia took the money raised to Qalandia check point in Jerusalem where he was told that Jamela was jailed. *"I paid at the Israeli post office as one is supposed to and went to the prison to pick her up with my car. But they didn't release her. I asked them repeatedly how long it would take but nobody answered me. I got a lawyer to call the prison and they told him that they had moved her further north, to a prison outside of Ramallah. So I took my car there, but she was nowhere to be seen and the staff the prison refused to help me".* After a full day of searching for Jamela Badia gave up and at 7 pm he started to make is way back home to Hebron but got stuck in traffic. *"10.30 at night I was still just a couple of miles outside of Ramallah when Abd called me*

and said that they had released his mother from the first prison." Jamela had spent four nights and five days imprisoned. "I collected her at my way back home to Hebron", Badia concludes.

Jamela recalls her time in jail "I couldn't eat anything due to asthma, like I physically couldn't. And the stuff they served me wasn't really food either. For four days the only things I had were just some bread and labneh. And all the time I was handcuffed, they only released me when I was allowed to eat". "The soldiers bullied me as well", she continues "They pointed at me and said to each other 'Watch out for that one, she might bite you! ". The cell they kept her in was big as a single size bed, and Jamela shared it with another woman named Nora. Jamela describes the cell: "The circumstances in the room were awful, it was wet and dirty. The outlet from our toilet was in the room. The room itself wasn't even big enough for just me". And the prison staff wasn't too friendly either: "A female soldier teared my nightgown up", she points at her hips "up here". "Since I wasn't able to sew it together Nora ripped up her nylons so that we could fix it with that. But the soldiers teared that apart too. It was all like a game for them."

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Jamela continues: "The situation here is getting worse everyday. I've seen so many murders", she sighs "I'm so tired, and I'm lonely. No one in my family can come to visit me and I don't have the finances to go and see them as often as I want", she starts to cry "I'm so sorry, I always try to stay strong and positive in front of my guests". "When my daughter divorced her first husband he got custody of the child, due to the circumstances here, before that I at least had me grandson around. He was a big joy in my life". "Sometimes I hear their steps in the streets, the steps of my family, and then I realize that it is the steps of the soldiers".

The soldiers haven't been in their home since that night "But we feel like we are in jail. Surrounded from every side," Jamela says. "My message to the world", she continues "Is that I'm a human being, jailed in my own home. We are captured here under physical and mental stress all the time. Everybody in world got to know what's happening here and what it takes to live here, to come from here, to be a part of this corner of the world. They [Israel] are suffocating us and we are slowly dying. Come visit us to see yourself". And follow her lead: "We share our stories with so many people. I've shared my story with so many people. I'm even invited to speak at universities in England about what I've been through, what we are going through here. We are so many suffering from the occupation, you wouldn't even know. My message to the world is to not believe anybody. Don't believe media, don't believe anybody, don't believe me. Come here and have a look yourself instead."

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