



matter is not only a geographical one. Sabra and Shatila were more accessible to the butchers, nothing more. The hunted people are more than the inhabitants of Sabra and Shatila. They are all the Arabs, and all those who believe in liberating all occupied Arab land and Jerusalem.

## TESTIMONIES OF THE LIVING

Before beginning, it is important to note a basic point which is that this research does not give final answers. It is totally impossible, in a research like this, to arrive at final numbers or even claim to narrate the story exactly. We convey what we hear, but each one who has lived through this experience will relate the tragedy as seen through his eyes. No matter how much we hear, there remains much to be heard. The awaited book on this subject will not be written today, but tomorrow. Its author will be a young boy whom fate saved from death. We are waiting for this boy to grow up and write.

From November 1982 until the end of 1983, I recorded testimonies from the relatives of victims and from the inhabitants of Sabra and Shatila. Recalling the memories of that difficult year and the stories of scores of witnesses, I cannot forget any of them, no matter how many they are. None of them was a scientist or a leader. They were simple people who had witnessed a tragedy that many wish to forget. They were the heroes in an unheroic age. They exposed themselves to persecution if they spoke, yet they spoke.

How can I forget the fear in the children's eyes? And the torture in the mothers' eyes? How can I forget their small, connected houses where nothing covers the tile floor in December, and ruins overlook you everywhere - from the window and from the roof. There is no money for restoration and no decision for restoration. The walls that had been splattered with the blood of the martyrs, are now covered with pictures - pictures of the martyrs.

In Shatila, you walk from house to house in narrow streets that are often narrower than the hallways of modern buildings. The walls are bent and curved; they often seem decrepit. So you ask: How do these houses and walls protect the people from massacres? How can they protect them from cold and rain? How can they guard their whispers and secrets, or their pride? They told me that they sleep in the shelters nightly. In the shelters? Why? At that time, there was no shooting or war. Why to sleep in the shelters now? And they remain quiet. There is no answer to my question. Their silence was an overly polite answer to my ignorance. When they spoke at last, they confessed that the shelters will not protect them from a new massacre, but they feel more safe there, even if only a little. If they sleep in their houses, memories like ghosts will keep them awake. If they sleep with the crowd in the shelters, the vividness of the memories haunting them fades, and for a short while at least they can sleep.

In the many, continuous meetings, the testimonies are similar. They affirm, coincide and contradict what was reported. If I was asked about the importance of those mee-

tings, I would unhesitatingly answer that the living testimonies are the primary and fundamental documents. The press, for its part, spread news, interviews and pictures that were extremely important in raising international awareness about what happened. This was followed by a series of tribunals, in Cyprus, Oslo, Athens, Tokyo and Bonn, from 1982 to 1985.

## THE KAHAN REPORT

My conviction in the testimonies alone as a mode of research, was shaken after reading the Israeli report on the massacre, the notorious Kahan report issued in February 1983. The international media gets the credit for being the first to bring the massacre to the conscience of humanity everywhere. These same newspapers began to stress Kahan's report, presenting it as an indication of the existence of 'democracy' in 'Israel'. The newspapers also began to stress the contents of the Kahan report, while the truth is that its contents are totally contradictory to what the newspapers originally published about the massacre. We will present one example:

The report states that the number of child victims was only 20, and what newspaper that had released pictures of the massacre had not shown this number many times multiplied? Despite that, the report was presented by prominent newspapers as proof of Israeli 'democracy'; that was the excuse of the foreigner in defending the Kahan report. Foreigners who defended the report supported this by saying: «it was a good report. I didn't read it, but I read about it.» The question of numbers did not mean much to me in the interviews with the witnesses, and often I recalled Toynbee's statement: «The large number adds to the graveness of the tragedy and torture, but it is impossible for a human to be more than 100% criminal.» That means it is enough to kill once to be a murderer. In 1961, in a public debate, Toynbee replied to Hertzog, the Israeli ambassador to Canada, who was antagonized by Toynbee's comparison of what happened to European Jews with the massacre of Palestinians in Deir Yassin. According to Hertzog, the victims of Deir Yassin were a few hundred and thus did not merit comparison with the millions of Jews who fell victim to Nazism. Following Toynbee's line of thinking, I had not been seeking the depth of the tragedy in numbers, but today it seems that we are living in the era of Kahan, not Toynbee. It became necessary to search for the numbers and investigate all the details.

## FIELD RESEARCH

The field research was carried out in March and April 1984, i.e., after the ghost of the May 17th agreement had vanished. It had not been possible to do any field research in the camps in the shadow of this agreement (between Lebanon and 'Israel'). It is impossible to give a complete picture or even a concise one of the field research in this presentation. It is also impossible to cover all the distortions in Kahan's report. From the fallacious figures presented there, we will choose only four: the number of victims, the number of females, the number of children, and the number of Palestinians as opposed to Lebanese. Our discussion of these numbers is part of the reply to the claim that what occurred was a murder, not a massacre. To facilitate the process of replying, it is necessary to indicate some of the points relevant to the field research.

1. This research is an individual effort and no more than that. The primary credit goes to the Palestinian and Lebanese youth of the area, who volunteered, enthusiastically and responsibly, to distribute the forms and have them filled out, beginning in their own homes and families, and moving to the neighbors' homes, from the nearest to the farthest. I need not mention that the trust among them was the basis for this effort.

2. The goal of the field research was very clear to everyone. What was needed was to record the event in the most detailed manner. Nobody had preconceived convictions. However, all agreed that in our struggle with the Zionist enemy, we do not need exaggerations or underestimates. Everyone's motivation was loyalty towards every martyr and kidnapped, Arab or ►