

Sworn Statement

After having been warned to tell the truth and nothing but the truth or else I shall be subjected to penal action, I, the undersigned, Samaher Fawzi Muhammad 'Ayayda, of Palestinian nationality, holder of ID No. 950333336, born on 22 December 1984, a housewife and a resident of Ras al-'Aroud area, Sa'ir town, Hebron Governorate, would like to declare the following:

I live with my husband, Khalil Sharif Rateb Jabarin, born on 7 January 1978, as well as my children, Nagham, almost three years old, and Rateb, almost one year old, in our house in the area of Ras al-'Aroud in the town of Sa'ir. Our house is located on the main street, but is a little bit below it. My husband's parents' house is behind, but adjacent to our house. My parents-in-law live there with their four daughters and two sons. Below both of these houses is my husband's grandmother's house. She lives alone on the ground floor, but is currently in the United States of America visiting her son, Anwar. While she is away, my brother-in-law Tha'er, who is about 28 years old, is staying at her house.

My husband works as a car mechanic in a garage located at the entrance to our house. At about 12:30 am on Monday, 6 October 2008, my husband was repairing a car in the garage. Having left my children asleep in the house, I was there with my husband. At that time, I saw an Israeli military jeep pass in front of our house, followed by a military bulldozer and truck. Then, a group of about 30 infantry soldiers arrived. One of the soldiers approached my husband and asked him: "What are you doing here right now?" Khalil answered that he was a mechanic and that he was working in his garage. The soldier also asked him about me and my husband said I was his wife. I knew that the soldier was an officer because he issued his instructions to other soldiers. While he was talking, a group of soldiers approached our house.

My husband and I heard them knock on the door. I was worried about my children who were asleep. As he spoke Hebrew well, I told my husband to inform the soldiers that our children were in the house. The whole time, the officer and soldiers spoke in both Arabic and Hebrew, which I can understand a little. After Khalil talked to them, I saw five soldiers surround him and shout, claiming that he had yelled at them. They demanded that he keep silent and pushed him onto a chair inside the garage. Then, an officer led Khalil towards the house. I tried to follow them. At first, a soldier prevented me, but then allowed me to go. My husband told me to give him the house key. He opened the door which leads into the veranda and to the living room. Two windows in the veranda overlook the living room and sitting room. After they entered, soldiers pushed Khalil onto a chair on the veranda. Meanwhile, a number of soldiers dispersed all over the house, which comprises three rooms in addition to the utilities.

I went to the bedroom where my little children slept. My son Rateb was crying, so I tried to get him back to sleep. I succeeded and he fell asleep within 15 minutes. Immediately then, an officer entered the bedroom and told me to lift up the mattress of the big bed. The officer looked underneath the mattress and bed. Afterwards, he went to the sitting room, where our computer is located. Soldiers called me and demanded that I turn on the computer, which they could not do because they did not know the password. Having done so, they demanded that I leave. I went back to the bedroom. An officer followed me and said that they wanted to search the room. They had already searched every room in the house. He told me to take the children out, so I moved them to the veranda. There, I saw my husband, his father, 50 years old, and his brother Muhammad, about 24 years old.

When I had been inside the house, I had heard the steps of soldiers approaching my husband's parents' house. I also heard them knock on their door and lead people towards my house. These people had been my father-in-law and brother-in-law. After I left my children with their father and grandfather, I returned to the bedroom and asked the officer if I could take my money and gold from the room. He allowed me to do so and then demanded that I return to the veranda. While we were on the veranda, we heard cupboards opened roughly, drawers with their contents thrown on the ground, and beds and pieces of furniture turned over. During this time, soldiers were present with us on the veranda. Soldiers were also in every spot in the house as well as positioned outside at windows and doors and around the house. At about 2:30 am, a person who carried a large bag on his back came in. He took out some tools, opened the computer case, removed some parts, put them in his bag, and left. Then, I heard kitchen tools thrown on the ground as well as glass being broken. At about 3:00 am, two soldiers took Khalil from the veranda to the living room. In less than five minutes, I saw them take him out with his hands shackled behind his back with plastic handcuffs and his eyes covered with a piece of cloth. Khalil was still in his work clothes and had not washed his hands. They led him out of the house.

My father-in-law suffered from high blood pressure and after seeing what happened to Khalil, his health condition deteriorated. He fell from the chair on the ground and started to throw up. He also suffered from a headache and pain in his stomach. I thought his blood pressure was high. Therefore, I requested that the soldiers allow me to go to his house and fetch his medicine. Before I gave him the medicine, however, a soldier demanded to look at it. Then, he allowed me to bring some water from the kitchen for my father-in-law to swallow his pills. Inside, all of the kitchen's contents were on the ground. After my father-in-law took his pills, he asked a soldier to allow him to go to the toilet because he was about to throw up. A soldier went with him.

Later, I heard soldiers knock on the door of the storage unit next to our house. Soldiers called me and asked me about the key. It was at my father-in-law's house and the soldiers demanded that I get it. "Tell the lady who is upstairs not to come," a soldier told me, referring to my mother-in-law. After I told her this, my mother-in-law took the key and went to the soldiers. A soldier ordered her to give him the key. My mother-in-law responded: "I will open it for you. I want to see what you will do." One of the soldier's replied: "We don't want you to see. Go back to your house." However, she refused and stayed outside. Then, a soldier called and told me to take my mother-in-law to her house. I told her this, but she insisted on staying outside. Then, a soldier told my mother-in-law that he would give her two minutes to return to her house. Otherwise, he would damage everything in the storage unit. She returned and sat in front of the door. While soldiers were inside the storage unit, I heard objects being broken. In addition to food supplies, the storage unit also contained an electric air conditioner that worked by using water, as well as unused computers and computer accessories. We heard these fall on the ground.

After my mother-in-law sat down in front of her house door, I returned to the veranda. I found my father-in-law lying on the ground and vomiting in a plastic bag. Then, I heard soldiers call one another by their names: Christian, Yuval and Anil. Later, I heard soldiers shout and ask her about the house of my husband's grandmother, who was away. It was between 4:00 and 4:30 am then. I heard her say that it was the house of her mother-in-law, who was abroad. They also asked her about who was inside. "The owner is abroad, but my son, Tha'er, is sleeping there," she answered. I told my father-in-law that soldiers had gone to the grandmother's house and he said there was gold and money inside. So, I asked a soldier who was with us on the veranda if I could go and take the money and gold before they searched the house,

but he prevented me from doing so. While on the veranda, I heard my mother-in-law say to the raiders: "I want to go with you and get the gold and money because the homeowner is not here."

However, they broke and knocked down the door without even giving Tha'er a chance to open it. From the veranda, I saw soldiers leading Tha'er with his hands shackled behind his back. He was not blindfolded. They seated him near my house door. In the grandmother's house, I heard cupboard doors coming off their hinges and drawers being broken. Having evacuated Tha'er, the soldiers also demanded to see the ID cards of the male family members. I saw a soldier talk on his wireless telecommunications device and read off names of ID holders as well as their ID numbers. Then, I saw a female soldier lead a dog with a muzzle on its mouth towards the house backyard, where my husband kept vehicle parts and equipment inside the body of an old car. The female soldier and dog stayed behind the house for almost 15 minutes. When she returned, a white car arrived. A person, who I thought was an intelligence officer, got out and spoke with Tha'er in Hebrew, which Tha'er did not understand. Then he yelled at Tha'er in Arabic: "Tell us what you have." Tha'er replied: "I do not have anything." The officer said: "We heard that you have explosives. You can either choose prison or tell us where the explosive device is that you have." Again, Tha'er denied the charge.

My father-in-law heard the conversation with Tha'er while he was on the veranda. "This is my son and he works in Beer Sheva," my father-in-law shouted repeatedly. However, a soldier yelled at him and told him to keep silent. Meanwhile, my mother-in-law came out to see what was going on. She stood about one and a half metres away, but the raiders told her to go back to the house, close the door, and not to look through the window. Then, I heard soldiers beat Tha'er. "Don't you have mothers? Don't you have sisters? Why are you doing this?" my mother-in-law screamed at the soldiers. "We are here to play," a soldier replied. "If you want to keep your family safe, tell us what you have," a soldier said to Tha'er. They continued to interrogate Tha'er until before 6:00 am. Then, they blindfolded him and led him outside.

At about 5:30 am, groups of soldiers had gone in and out my house to see what their peers had done. Earlier, my brother-in-law Muhammad requested to go to the toilet, but his request was denied. When he tried to sneak to the toilet without the soldiers' permission, a soldier pushed him against a wall and ordered him to stay where he was. At about 6:00 am, the soldiers left. I went to the street and saw the raiders withdraw. I managed to take the plate number of a raiders' vehicle – it was a military jeep with the registration number 65559 on a black plate. After they left, we discovered that they had searched my husband's parents' house at about 1:00 am. They took out my father-in-law and brother-in-law and led them to my veranda, where they stayed until the raiders left. We also saw that they had damaged the contents and furniture of the grandmother's house, including a locked wooden door and room doors. They also broke a wooden box, measuring 40x30x25 centimetres, in which the grandmother used to keep her important documents, gold and some money. Additionally, soldiers destroyed the storage unit and threw food supplies on the ground. Having also climbed to the roof, raiders also searched and threw around marble stones, firewood, sacks of old clothes, vehicle parts and equipment. Two gold rings and a sum of 7,000 US dollars belonging to my husband's grandmother were missing from the box which the raiders had broken. We realised the missing property after we phoned his grandmother. We also learned that a number of houses in the neighbourhood were raided and searched at the same time. On the next day, Friday, 10 October 2008, Tha'er was released, but Khalil remained in detention.

This is my declaration and hereby I sign, 12 October 2008.

Signature: Samaher 'Ayayda

Name not withheld

Field researcher: Hisham Sharabati