

## **A Bride In The Dress of MARTYRDOM**

### **Seventeen year old Martyr, Aayaat al-Akhras**

Ululation's were mixed with tears, for today is her wedding day, even though she has not worn her white dress to be wed to her husband-to-be who has been awaiting this day for over a year and a half! Instead she wore a soldier's uniform and the Palestinian scarf and beautified herself with her noble red blood to transform her wedding into a Palestinian wedding that brings happiness to the hearts of the mothers of the martyrs and the wounded.

In July, Aayaat was to hold her wedding like any other girl in the world, yet she insisted on being a bride in the suit of blood in which only the likes of her are wed, in order to bring pride to her Palestinian people by succeeding to kill and injure tens of Zionist occupiers in a successful heroic operation undertaken by a girl in the heart of the Zionist entity.

### **A wedding, not a funeral**

In a modest house in the Deheisheh refugee camp, the mourning for martyr Aayaat al-Akhras took place. I was used to hearing wailing and crying when a bride is prevented from completing her marriage, but I was surprised to hear pleasant ululation's and singing near the house, and to see the martyr's patient mother receiving women coming to congratulate her. With great difficulty, I managed to speak to her, and she described to me the last morning Aayaat left home. She said:

"Aayaat woke up unusually early, or rather she did not sleep at all that night. She prayed the morning prayer, then sat down to read from the Qur'an. She wore her school uniform, and told me she was going to school to revise the lessons she had missed. I was surprised as the day was Friday, a public holiday for all the country's schools! But she told me it was the most important day of her life, so I prayed that Allah help her and grant her His pleasure.

The mother continued: As soon as I finished that sentence I noticed a sparkle in her eyes as if I had given her hope, and given her success through those words. She looked at me with her radiant smile, and said: That is all I ask of you, Mother. And she went out quickly with her sister Samaah to school.

### **Knowledge till the last breath..**

Martyr Aayaat al-Akhras was born on 20 February 1985, a student in the 3rd year of secondary school [sixth form], the fourth of her 7 sisters and 3 brothers. She was known for her excellence in her studies, as she achieved excellent results in the first term of this year. Despite knowing the time for her operation, she continued her revision, and spent long hours of the last night revising, and went to school to attend the last lesson to

emphasise to her colleagues the importance of knowledge which she had always stressed.

Regarding that, her friend Hayfaa said that she had advised her and her friends to remember the importance of their studies, and to be determined to pursue their studies whatever the circumstances and the dangers.

Hayfaa', who still refuses to believe the news of Aayaat's martyrdom added: For a week, Aayaat had been keeping the pictures of all martyrs in her school desk, on which she had written many slogans about the excellence of martyrdom and martyrs. But I never imagined that she intended to join them, for she had been collecting the pictures of martyrs since the beginning of the Intifada, which made her more determined to achieve the highest grades at school.

### **Farewell Samaah..**

The martyr's mother continued, after a tear could not but flow down her cheek: Then her sister Samaah came back at 10 without her, and I felt worried and my heart beat began racing, for security conditions were very severe, and the camp could be attacked at any moment. And I felt the painful nightmare of worries and the interminable torrent of questions: where had she gone? Was it conceivable that she may have realized her dream in martyrdom? But how? And her fiancé? And the wedding clothes she has prepared?

Every time I was about to leave, she asked me to stay, as if she was saying good bye, or rather, wanted me to keep her memory of the last meeting and her loving eyes so that it would be the last thing I remembered of her." Despite Shadi's attempts to show patience and strength, he confessed his dear wish: 'I wished to accompany her in her heroic operation, and to become martyrs together. May she be blessed, and I pray that Allah enables me to join her soon!'"

### **And her dreams?**

And while the mother was struggling between the voice of reason in denial and her heart indicating she had undertaken a martyrdom operation, news came that a martyrdom operation had taken place in Nataynya, and that the bomber was a girl. The mother added, tears choking her voice, "Then I became certain that Aayaat would not return, and that she had become the bride of Palestine. She was determined to get revenge for 'Issa Farah and Saa'id 'Id Who were martyred when helicopters shelled their house next to ours."

### **The making of Death..**

Martyr al-Akhras was keen on collecting all the names and pictures of martyrs, particularly martyrdom bombers, and dreamt of becoming, like them. But her gender was the main obstacle, and she spent her days dreaming of martyrdom, until martyr Wafaa` Idris succeeded in undertaking the first martyrdom operation by a Palestinian girl, and Aayaat's desire to follow in their footsteps strengthened. She broke all security barriers, and was able to get to the leaders of military work, to become a member of al-Aqsa Martyr Brigades despite her previous refusal to follow any political group or participate in student activities.

Aayaat's mother affirmed that Aayaat was struggling hard to cover her real wish for martyrdom which she never stopped talking about. She used to say: "What is the point in living when death is surrounding us? We will go to it before it comes to us, and get our revenge before we die."

### **Chocolate sweets..**

As for her sister Samaah a year 10 student and her close friend and confidante, she lost consciousness when she heard the news of her sister's martyrdom, despite knowing her intention to undertake her heroic operation. She described to us the last farewell, in her tear-choked voice. I saw light in her face and a happiness I had never seen, as she gave me some chocolate sweets and told me in a loving voice: "Pray and ask Allah to grant me success." And before I asked her: "What for?" She said: "Today you will hear the best news, today is the best day of my life, the day I have been awaiting for so long. Do you want me to convey your greetings to anyone?" I answered mockingly: "Give my salaam to martyr Mahmoud and martyr Saa'id" because I was certain that she would not dare to undertake an operation, and that no-one would help her, and that she refused to belong to the student organization...

She continued: "Blessed be her martyrdom, for she deserves it for her bravery, and I pledge to her that I will take the path of martyrdom, for we are all martyrs in the making."

### **My Bride's Wedding**

As for Shaadi Abu Laan, Aayaat's husband-to-be, only a few hours before her martyrdom, they had been dreaming of their marriage, their house which they had not finished decorating and which was to become their home in July after her Baccalaureate exams. They had been engaged and awaiting their marriage for a year and a half, and they had been dreaming of their first baby whom they agreed to name 'Adiyy after long discussions, and how they would raise him to become a hero who would liberate Al-Aqsa from occupation. However, suddenly and unexpectedly, Shaadi fell from his dreamland to the nightmare of occupation, to realise his bride had become the bride of Palestine, after blowing herself up in the heart of the Zionist entity.

As soon as I asked Shaadi about his fiancée Aayaat whom he fell in love with through friendship with her brothers, and asked for her hand in marriage early September 2000- a tear fell down his cheek and he said in a tear-choked voice: "We were planning to have our wedding when she finishes her exams this year, but it seems Allah ta'aala planned something else. Perhaps we will meet in Paradise, as she wrote to me in her last letter."

Shaadi was silent for a moment, to contemplate Aayaat whose image was still present before his mind, then continued: "She was dearer to me than my own soul. I knew her as a girl with a strong character, strong determination, intelligent, she loved her country, loved life, and dreamt of security for her children, that is why Zionist occupation was a permanent disquiet." He added: "Every time she dreamt of the future, martyrdom interrupted her dreams, she would take me from our marriage dreams to dreams of martyrdom operations, and the images of the enemy's losses, and our blood with which we would be taken to paradise, and we would both promise to become martyrs together."

Shaadi added - as a smile illuminated his face that was full of pain: "During my last visit, she insisted on my staying longer. Every time I was about to leave, she asked me to stay, as if she was saying good bye, or rather, wanted me to keep her memory of the last meeting and her loving eyes so that it would be the last thing I remembered of her." Despite Shaadi's attempts to show patience and strength, he confessed his dear wish: "I wished to accompany her in her heroic operation, and to become martyrs together. May she be blessed, and I pray that Allah enables me to join her soon!"

Palestine's bride Aayaat al-Akhras will remain an example for every Palestinian woman and man looking for security among the rubble of the massacres of murderer Sharon, and giving his blood and future as a price for this security.