

Conversation with Haneen

Wiggins:

I sat with Haneen in her home in the Dheisheh camp in April of 2009. We talked about her life, studies, work and her family. We spoke in English. Here are some excerpts from our conversation.

Haneen

"I am attending the Open University in Beit Jala and working at UNRWA. I was hoping to study French and to become a translator and to study English as well. My parents have supported me in going anywhere I want to go to study. When I thought seriously about going to France I decided it is too hard to leave my homeland and too expensive. I have decided to stay and to do something good for Palestine. Palestine needs its young people.

I work at UNRWA in the morning and I work with people in very hard situations. I help people fill out the necessary forms to get food, work and cash and the help they need. Then I go to the Open University in the afternoon to study and take my examinations. I work to help my parents because both my brother Murad and I are in the University and the tuition is expensive. Murad also works during his time off - in building and construction.

My younger sister Moony is in the Dheisheh School. She plays basketball and she is very good at sports. Moony is having serious problems with her neck. My parents have talked to many doctors. They say that she needs surgery. They have decided to do the surgery in Al-Quds/Jerusalem Hospital. My parents have to get a special permit to take Moony to Jerusalem, it is very difficult. But they say that she will be ok and that the surgery is not dangerous. My youngest brother Ma'an is very good and very active. He is in high school and he has grown so much, now he is taller than me. Ma'an plays tennis and football and ping pong. My mother and my father work very hard at their jobs. My father is the director of the Al Feneiq Cultural Center in Dheisheh and my mother works as a nutritionist in Hebron. My mother comes home from work very tired, she cooks and she sleeps a little bit and that's it.

It is hard for all of us to get enough sleep in the camp. The soldiers come at night and shout bad words and make loud noises with small bombs. They are happy when we are upset and when we are not sleeping. A few nights ago my friend and I had finished a big examination and we were planning on going to my house to celebrate and eat chips and watch movies. The soldiers came into the camp and we had to cancel our celebration. Sometimes you just want to think about something other than the occupation, but it is impossible.

I went to al-Khalil/Hebron with my mother the other day and I saw the streets full of Israeli flags, I started to cry. It is very hard to see Israeli flags in Palestine on our land. I wanted to take down all the Israeli flags and put up Palestinian flags. Ok, I know that I can't. If I did they would shoot me. But I will not die for this reason. I will stay and I will face the problems of the occupation. I talk about this with my mother and my father. Each night we talk about the news: about Gaza, about Bi'lin, about Dheisheh, Bethlehem, Ramallah and all of Palestine. We want to know what is happening in all of Palestine. We want to know where we are and where we're headed"