

Ramallah couple arrested for selling daughters

Khaled Abu Toameh, THE JERUSALEM POST May. 10, 2007

A local husband and his wife have been arrested by the Palestinian Authority police on charges of selling their two daughters to young men. The two girls, aged 12 and 13, were sold for 2,700 Jordanian dinars [approximately NIS 15,000] and NIS 7,000, said Col. Issa Hijo, commander of the Ramallah District Police Force. He said the two men who bought the girls were brothers aged 23 and 25 and that they had been arrested on charges of raping minors.

"What is astonishing about this case is the fact that the two girls were sold with the approval of their mother and the parents of the two men," Hijo said. "This incident takes us back to the period of slavery. What is even more shocking is the fact that the two men's mother argued that this was an accepted custom." The police commander did not reveal the identity of the suspects. But he said the parents and the two brothers were now being held in custody pending their trial. He said the latest case, which has shocked many residents here, was an indication of the growing crime rate in the city and its surroundings.

"There has been a 200 percent increase in crime in the area compared with the period before the intifada in 2000," he said. "We call on parents and families to look after their children and prevent them from engaging in criminal activities." According to the police commander, the Ramallah area has also witnessed a significant rise in cases of fraud and forgery over the past few years. He said more than 2,300 suspects in the area were wanted by the police for involvement in various types of crime.

In another gruesome case, a 43-year-old Arab merchant from Jerusalem, Ibrahim Beiruti, was kidnapped and brought to Ramallah, where he was robbed and murdered. The murderers, who were later arrested, had cut the victim's body into pieces. The colonel attributed the upsurge in crime to the "political atmosphere," unemployment, poverty, harsh economic conditions and the weakness of the PA security forces.

The PA police here have launched a major security operation in the past few weeks aimed at enforcing law and order. During the operation, more than 100 cars stolen from Israel were seized, but no action was taken against the thieves or those who were driving the vehicles.

In a separate incident, PA policemen beat doctors and nurses at the emergency room in a local hospital, witnesses said. The assault took place late Tuesday night when a group of police officers brought one of their colleagues to the hospital. The doctors and nurses were attacked after they decided to send the officer home because his condition did not require hospitalization. Following the attack, the emergency room was closed down until further notice.