

How Israel targeted the children of Gaza

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These stories are not fiction. They are the gruesome reality created by the Israeli war machine. The streets of Gaza tell the stories of hundreds of children. Family members who have escaped death have not been able to escape the trauma of it all. These are some of their stories.

Gaza – Who in the world would believe that Israeli warplanes would pursue a child who had survived their initial bombing only to kill him 10 days later? This is the reality of the war on Gaza and the story of nine-year-old Ibrahim al-Dawawsa, who lived with his family in the Sheikh Radwan neighborhood north of Gaza City. Last Friday around noon, a drone dropped a missile that blew his head off, killing him immediately.

Ibrahim went out to perform the Friday prayers for what turned out to be the last time ever after he heard the call to prayer at al-Nour al-Mohammedi Mosque near his home. He had showered and worn his new clothes, as if he sensed that his moment of death is near and wanted to die pure.

This is the Israeli war machine that has no regard for children or humanity. Very simply, it dropped its bombs over the heads of people flocking to the mosque. When a missile hit Ibrahim, worshippers rushed to where he was only to find him drowning in his own blood.

As soon as Ibrahim's mother heard the sound of bombing, she screamed putting her hand on her heart, and called after him: "Ibrahim, where are you my son?" As though a mother is destined to feel the loss of her child before anyone delivers the news to her.

She ran, as she told *Al-Akhbar*, to the window to look for a sign of her son who had gone out seconds ago, only to see him carried by the neighbors. She screamed: "Ibrahim is gone!"

Ibrahim's father, Abu Jamal, went to the hospital to see his son's corpse. He found him on a bed with his skull broken, half of it gone. He started to scream in front of the cameras: "Shame on you, what did the children do to you to kill them like this. Oh God!"

The grieving father told *Al-Akhbar* that Ibrahim is the oldest of three sons. He also said that Ibrahim was hit in his left arm about 10 days before his death, when Israeli warplanes fired at children in al-Shati refugee camp on the morning of Eid al-Fitr.

"That day, Ibrahim survived miraculously and we thanked God so much for his safety," his father added.

The 50-something-year-old father said that after Ibrahim was wounded the first time, he became very worried about his children's safety, especially Ibrahim. He made them stay at

home and prevented them from going out unless it was absolutely necessary. "But he was destined to die a martyr 10 days after his initial injury."

Eyewitnesses said the missile hit Ibrahim directly and next to him was his friend Ahmed who suffered serious injuries. They were hit after the initial attempt to reach a truce that was supposed to last three days failed.

From the beginning of the war, it was obvious that the children were paying a heavy price because they were being targeted directly. Casualty statistics indicate that the number of children killed by Israel in Gaza is over 430, in addition to thousands more injured.

In another story, Israel hit another nine-year-old child in the face, making him blind in a split second, without regards to his young age. He is Mohammed Badran from al-Nusairat refugee camp in central Gaza. He now lies in an intensive care unit in al-Shifa Hospital in the hope that doctors might be able to restore his beautiful face that had been mangled by an Israeli bomb.

Mohammed's nine-member family went to sleep on the night of July 30 after having dinner to the sound of continuous shelling. A missile interrupted the stillness of their home, hitting the room holding seven children, and destroying it over their heads.

All seven of them were wounded but Mohammed's injury was the worst, in terms of the kind of injury he endured and how serious it was. According to the head of the Reception and Emergency Department at al-Shifa Hospital, Dr. Ayman al-Sahbani, Mohammed is having difficulty breathing. He is still on a respirator, "in addition to the fact that he lost his eyesight and the ability to speak."

Sahbani said the child is waiting for a permit for treatment abroad given the critical condition he is in. The doctor said Badran's case is one of the worst that they've had to deal with during the war.

Mohammed lost his right eye because the shrapnel hit his eyes. But his mother is hoping he will regain sight in his left eye even though the doctors informed her of the seriousness of his condition and the impossibility of treating him inside Gaza due to their modest capabilities.

When medical staff brought his 17-year-old sister Imane to stay by her brother's side in one room, she held his hand and started crying. He could not see her but he held her fingers tightly.

After searching for Nidal Badran, Mohammed's father, they found out that he was hit too and had to undergo several surgeries. The doctors said his condition was very critical but hours later, they announced his death. And so Mohammed lost his father too, the man who loved him and cared for him the most in this life.

As for his mother, she is busy caring for her seven wounded children whose injuries range from lacerations to the nerves to breaks and burns. She told *Al-Akhbar*: "The children were dreaming of Eid al-Fitr, instead they woke up to death. Why all this barbarity?"

An eyewitness recounted the story of another child who was killed in al-Shati refugee camp. He was struck while in front of a swing-set on the day of Eid al-Fitr and then brought to hospital. The doctors noticed that his fingers were tightly shut. When they opened his hand,

a small coin appeared. According to his friends, he had intended to use it to pay the swing-set owner when his turn came.

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