

Operation Cast Lead: Two boys killed in direct airstrikes outside their homes

“It is like he was meant to die with his friend Suleiman, my relatives, my brother, and my son. No one survived.”



Left to right: Mohammad Qdaih (14) and Mamdouh Qdaih (17)

Around 3:00pm Jameel Qdaih (40) had just returned from the mosque with his son, Mohammad (14). He chatted for a short while to the group of friends, neighbours and relatives gathered outside his house, and went in. After nagging his mother for a Shekel, Mohammad left the house to go to the shop. As soon as he stepped outside the door an explosion rocked the house. Jameel ran outside to see his brother, cousin and four neighbours lying covered in blood. They all appeared to be dead. Mamdouh Qdaih (17) was the only one to have survived. He

stood up and ran home. A crowd gathering around a casualty further away alerted Jameel’s attention. It was his son Mohammad, lying badly injured, barely breathing. Jameel jumped in an ambulance with his injured son. Meanwhile, Mamdouh was killed in a drone attack while running home. His brother, Salman, found him dead on the street, 20 metres from the house, his leg blown off. As for Mohammad, he was pronounced dead four hours after arriving in hospital, at around 8:00pm.

The following information is based on two affidavits taken by DCI-Palestine from Mohammad’s father, Jameel, and Mamdouh’s brother, Salman, on 31 August 2009:

When Jameel Qdaih (40) returned from the mosque around 3:00pm on Tuesday, 13 January 2009, with his son Mohammad (14) he found a group of friends sitting outside his house in Khuza'a village, Khan Younis. He remembers: *“Some of them were sitting in chairs, and some of them standing. There weren’t many people on the street. I recall seeing my cousin Naji Abu Qdaih (47), my neighbour Hamdan Abu Rok (22), my brother Yaser Qdaih (34), neighbours Ghassan Abu Zar (22), Hasan Abu Rjaileh (20), Suleiman Qdaih (19), and Mamdouh Msa'ed Qdaih (17).* He remembers that apart from some drone planes in the sky, things were relatively calm.

After chatting with them for a short while, he went inside the house at around 3:30pm. His son, Mohammad nagged his mother, Ghada, for a Shekel, and ran off to the shop. Jameel remember hearing an Apache helicopter overhead. No sooner had Mohammad left, than a huge explosion shook the house; Jameel presumes it was from the Apache helicopter. *“Mohammad!” my wife immediately screamed.* As Jameel ran out the door, he knew his brothers, relatives and neighbours had been hit: *“...because of the sound of the missile, dust, and shrapnel scattering everywhere.”*

He looked out the door: *“I saw a massacre had been committed in front of me. The first person I saw was my brother Yaser. Next to him were Ghassan Abu Zar, Mamdouh Abu Rok, 'Ala Abu Reedeh and Suleiman Qdaih. They were all on the ground and covered in blood. I saw Mamdouh grabbing his cousin Suleiman Qdaih and screaming ‘Allah is the greatest!’*

Then, I saw him standing up. His right leg was covered in blood, I presumed he was injured. He started running up the street.”

Jameel shouted for an ambulance and tried to revive his brother Yaser; all the men were unconscious. He noticed some local boys gathering around a body. As Jameel stood up to go over, he feared it would be his son Mohammad... It was. *“He was hardly breathing. His entire body was injured.”*

Jameel went in the ambulance that took his son to hospital. *“I had lost hope for my brother Yaser and the rest of the youngsters. About four hours later, at around 8:00pm my son Mohammad was pronounced dead.”* He was confused when another fatality was brought in: *“It was Mamdouh Msa'ed Qdaih. I was very shocked because when I had seen him earlier, he was fine. He had been only lightly injured.”*

Mamdouh's brother, Salman (21) remembers Mamdouh had left the house that day around 3:00pm to call on his friend and cousin, Suleiman 'Emaish "Qdaih" (19). They were both outside Jameel's house, 300 metres from Mamdouh's house, when the first explosion took place, Salman later found out. While Suleiman was killed outright, Mamdouh, only slightly injured, ran towards home to break the news: *“Apparently, Mamdouh had run back towards the house to tell us what had happened and that many neighbours and relatives including our cousin had been killed in the bombing.”* Salman heard the second explosion that killed his brother, 15 minutes after the first, at 3:45pm. He ran to the street to see if anyone needed help: *“I saw a young man on the ground and thick smoke in the street, about 20 metres east of the house. I immediately headed towards him to pick him up and try to rescue him.”*

Salman was stunned to see it was his brother: *“Once I got near, I was shocked to see it was my brother, Mamdouh. He was lying face down; his right leg had been blown off. He was injured in the head and on the right side of his chest. I realized he was dead”*

Mamdouh was taken to Naser Hospital in Khan Younis and like all the others who had been outside Jameel's house, pronounced dead.

When Jameel spoke to DCI in August he speculated about how his son, brother, relatives and neighbours were wiped out that day, Mamdouh who had survived the first explosion, was killed 15 minutes later. *“It is like he was meant to die with his friend Suleiman, my relatives, my brother, and my son. No one survived”*

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