

Operation Cast Lead: Boy (4) killed and sister injured by missile as they play in their yard

“When we ask my youngest son Basem about Marwan, he says he is in heaven and points to the sky”



Marwan Qdaih (4)

Around 11:30 on 6 January Marwan (4) was playing outside with his siblings when his father, Hasan, drove up in his ambulance to deliver bread to his mother. The family live in ‘Abasan village, Khan Yunis. Hasan kissed Marwan and the other children before heading back to work. When he heard an explosion minutes later, he responded to a call to go to his neighbourhood, where a missile had struck. A crowd was gathered outside his house and his cousin was holding the unconscious Marwan. His daughter Lama (13) was injured. He drove them both to Naser Hospital where doctors pronounced Marwan dead. He had suffered internal bleeding due to a neck injury. Lama recovered, but his children are traumatized by the event and their school work has been badly affected.

When Hasan got a call on his ambulance radio to go to al-Qdaihat neighbourhood in ‘Abasan village, Khan Yunis he responded immediately. Hasan lived with his wife and children, including Lama (13) and Marwan (4).

On 6 January 2009, Hasan had left to work early: he was an ambulance driver. He describes the sense of danger prevalent during those days: *“Israeli drone planes, F16s and Apache helicopters as well as the artillery were striking in every direction. It was frightening.”* When, at 11:30, his wife called him to bring some bread, he delivered it immediately. He knew she had no flour in the house to bake bread, nor was there any in the shops due to the blockade. He dropped it off at home, kissed his six children goodbye as they played in the yard, and headed back to work at the military hospital in 'Abasan.

He was only a few minutes away when he heard a loud explosion which he presumed was caused by a drone plane. *“I heard on the ambulance radio about a missile hitting somewhere in al-Qdaihat neighbourhood and I was asked to go to the scene of the incident. I immediately drove the ambulance to al-Qdaihat neighbourhood to see what had happened. I was worried for my children because I had left them playing in the yard.”*

When he reached the house, his worry grew when he saw a crowd of relatives and neighbours gathered outside. His cousin was holding his son Marwan (4) in his arms: *“Marwan was unconscious. I couldn’t see any blood on him. I also saw my daughter Lama. Her right thigh was injured. The bone of her right thigh was fractured. I immediately put her in the ambulance in the back, and put Marwan on the front seat beside me because I knew he was in a critical condition as his eyes were focused upwards and not moving.”* His other children were screaming in fear. In Naser Hospital, doctors told Hasan that Marwan was suffering from internal bleeding due to a neck injury; a few minutes later, they confirmed his death. As for Lama, she stayed in hospital for several days and was discharged later on.

When Hasan spoke to DCI in August 2009 he reported that Lama has recovered physically, but not psychologically: *“She is confused and cannot focus. This is having a negative effect on her study after the incident, not on only her but also most of my children are experiencing the same thing. Mohammad, Hala and Rahaf have lost their concentration.”* The children miss Marwan a lot and don’t understand that he is not coming back: *“They always cry over their brother and ask whether he is going to come back or not.”* *“When we ask my youngest son, Basem [3] about Marwan, he says he is in heaven and points to the sky.”*