

Operation Cast Lead: 5-year-old killed in air strike whilst coming back from kindergarten

On 27 December 2008, Israel launched Operation Cast Lead with targeted air strikes followed by a ground invasion amidst continued bombardment from land and sea. On the same day, 5-year-old Tamer was walking home from kindergarten when Israeli F16s bombed the area near his house in az-Zeitoun. Tamer was critically injured in the incident and died at the hospital.

The following information is based on an affidavit taken by DCI-Palestine from Imran (25), neighbour of the victim, on 4 March 2009.

On 27 December 2008, Tamer (5) was walking back home after kindergarten, when the area was bombed. His neighbour, Imran, who was walking behind him, reports:

“When he was about 170 metres away from the street entrance that leads to his house, I suddenly heard a huge explosion, followed with smoke and dust filling the place, and the deafening sound of F16s in the sky. At that time, I was looking at Tamer. He was walking ahead of me, about 50 metres away to the south. When the huge explosion took place, I saw him fall to the ground. He immediately stood up and ran south towards his house. Once he ran about five metres, another explosion took place [...] At this point, I felt something hit my head. I fell to the ground. I heard people shouting everywhere around me. I recall people carrying me to a private car. My head was bleeding. I was placed in the back seat of the car. I looked around and saw Tamer placed near me. His head was bleeding profusely. His clothes were torn. His body was bleeding as well; especially from his pelvis.”

They were both taken to the al-Ahli hospital in the centre of Gaza and placed in bedclose to each other. Imran reports: *“More than four doctors and nurses surrounded him. I heard them saying that he was critically injured in the pelvis and that his penis must be amputated. His pelvis was critically injured. I heard them saying that his chest was critically injured with shrapnel. Then, they took him away. My head was stitched and wrapped with some bandages. I was discharged but I stayed in the hospital, waiting to know what would happen to Tamer.*

Tamer's father, Hasan, came to the hospital after he was informed. He asked me what happened and I told him what I had seen. Fifteen minutes later, at around noon, one of the doctors came and told Hasan that his son Tamer had died because of his critical injury. An hour later, Tamer's relatives came to the hospital and took him to the house. His mother took her last look at him. Then, we buried him.”

Child killed in the incident:

- Tamer Hasan Ali al-Akhras (5)

DCI-Palestine documented the deaths of 352 children as a direct result of military attacks during Operation Cast Lead. In addition, five children died as an indirect result of the offensive (one baby born prematurely during an air raid; three children killed by unexploded ordnance; one child who had undergone heart surgery a week before the offensive and inhaled white phosphorous fumes).

DCI-Palestine, 5 September 2009