

## Operation Cast Lead: 14-year-old boy killed by a shell in Rafah



*Ismail Abu Snima (14)*

**Ismail Abu Snima (14) lived with his family in the village of ash-Shuhada', east of Rafah city. When Operation Cast Lead began, his father decided to move the family to his brother's house, around three kilometers away from theirs, as he thought it would be safer there. On 4 January 2009, Ismail went back to their neighbourhood with his uncle Subhi (40) to collect some things, and to convince Ismail's sister, Abeer (21) - who had stayed at her house with her husband and two children - to join them at her uncle's house to take refuge from the war. Once they got there, Ismail went to his sister's house, while Subhi went to his own house. About half an hour later, as Subhi was coming out of the house, he saw Ismail carrying some sacks about 250 metres away. Abeer's son, Raddad (5), was walking behind him. At that moment, a shell struck. The street was filled with smoke. When the smoke faded, Subhi saw Ismail on the ground, his head and face covered in blood and dust, and his bones smashed. He had been killed by the shell. Raddad (5), was also on the ground, crying. He suffered from shrapnel injuries in his head.**

The following information is based on an affidavit taken by DCI from Ismail's uncle, Subhi Suleiman Ahmad Abu Snima (40), on 16 February 2010.

When Operation Cast Lead began on 27 December 2008, some missiles landed in empty agricultural lands in the ash-Shawkeh area of the village of ash-Shuhada', east of Rafah city, near the Abu Snima house. Both Subhi and his brother Abdullah lived in the house with their families, in separate apartments. Abdullah and his wife had eight children. Ismail (14) was the fourth child.

When missiles started landing nearby, the two brothers decided to move with their families to their brother Ibrahim's house, located in Mraj area, west of Rafah city, about three kilometers from their house. As Subhi remembers, *"we were scared that the Israeli army might invade our area and arrest me, my brother and his sons."*

During their stay at Ibrahim's house, Abdullah was worried about his daughter Abeer (21), who had stayed in her house in ash-Shawkeh area with her husband and their two children, Raddad (5) and Fares (3). When the ground offensive began on 3 January 2009, their fear escalated. Subhi explains: *"We couldn't sleep that night because of the news of the invasion to the eastern parts of Rafah city, and because we kept hearing huge and deafening explosions."*

On Sunday 4 January 2009, at around 3:00pm, they talked to Abeer. She said Israeli troops had invaded the an-Nahda neighbourhood, one kilometer away, but that the situation in their area was still calm. In view of this, Subhi decided to go to his house to bring some things for his wife. Abdullah asked him to take Ismail with him, so he could bring Abeer and her family to stay with them at Ibrahim's house.

When they arrived, things were calm. Ismail went to his sister Abeer's house to help her with her children and belongings, while Subhi went to his own house to collect the things he needed. About half an hour later, Subhi headed to Abeer's house. Suddenly he heard the sound of an artillery shell being fired. Subhi describes: *"I left the house and headed north. I had walked for about ten metres when I heard a strange sound in the air. It seemed like the sound of an artillery shell coming from southeast, where the Karim Abu Salem Crossing Point is located."*

As he heard the shell being fired, he saw Ismail carrying some sacks, about 250 metres away. Abeer's son, Raddad (5) was walking behind him. Suddenly, there was an explosion: *"Suddenly, a huge explosion took place and shook the entire area. I tried to take cover from the explosion and rushed back to the house. When I reached the door, I looked behind and I saw thick smoke filling the street, about 260 metres away from me. That was the distance between the house and the location of Ismail."*

When the smoke started to fade, Subhi saw Ismail on the ground about three metres away. When he reached him, he realised he wasn't moving. His head and face were covered in blood and dust. Raddad was also on the ground, crying, and his face was also covered in blood. Subhi remembers: *"I started moving Ismail. His arms and legs were covered in blood and were twisted strangely beneath him because the bones were smashed."*

Then, Subhi saw some young men approaching. The men carried both Raddad and Ismail and put them inside a car. Subhi drove with them to Abu Yousif an-Najjar Hospital, where the doctors immediately confirmed Ismail's death. He was buried the next morning.

Raddad was injured in the head with shrapnel. Due to the situation in Mraj area during war, the whole extended family moved to al-Arab School in ash-Shabora area in Rafah city. *"We stayed there until the war ended on 17 January 2009, when the Israeli troops withdrew from the invaded area on Saturday evening. We came back home the next morning."*

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