

Operation Cast Lead: Two children blown to pieces by shell in Khan Yunis



Ibrahim Abu Daqqa (15)



Mohammad Abu Daqqa (14)

Ibrahim (15) and Mohammad (14) Abu Daqqa lived in ad-Daqqat neighbourhood in the village of ‘Abassan al-Kabira, northeast of Khan Yunis, with their parents and three siblings. On Thursday 8 January 2009, at around 2:30pm, they headed to their uncle’s house to cut grass and take it back to their house to feed their goats. They had attached the lawn mower to their bicycle, and towed it behind them. Their youngest brother Shadi (10) was playing marbles near their uncle’s house, and knew his brothers were approaching from the sound of the lawn mower attached to the bike. He hid from Ibrahim and Mohammad, as he knew they would ask him for help, and he wanted to finish the game with his friends. Shadi’s friends’ father was also outside calling for his children to come for lunch. When Ibrahim and Mohammad were about to enter their uncle’s house, a shell was fired from the Israeli border and there was a huge explosion in front of their uncle’s house. The first thing Shadi and his friends saw after the explosion was the children’s father lying on the ground. The children started screaming. Shadi ran to ad-Daqqat Street, from where he could smell gun powder and smoke. Through the cloud of smoke, he saw the bicycle and the lawn mower destroyed. Then, he saw Ibrahim and Mohammad on the ground. When he approached, he saw they had been blown into pieces. Shadi passed out from the horror. His friends’ father also died the next day as a result of his injuries. Speaking to DCI in February 2010 Shadi reports having nightmares about his brothers’ death. He regrets hiding from them and wishes he had died with them and not have to live with the pain and trauma of remembering those horrific scenes.

The following information is based on an affidavit taken by DCI from Mohammad and Ibrahim’s brother, Shadi Abu Daqqa, on 18 February 2010.

Ibrahim (15) and Mohammad (14) Abu Daqqa lived with their parents and three siblings in ad-Daqqat neighbourhood, in the village of ‘Abassan al-Kabira, northeast of Khan Yunis City. On Thursday, 8 January 2009, at around 2:30pm, they headed to their uncle’s house to cut grass and take it back to their house to feed their goats. They had attached the lawn mower to their bicycle, and towed it behind them.

Their youngest brother, Shadi (10), was playing marbles with two friends near his uncle’s house. As they were playing, Shadi’s friends’ father, Ibrahim Abu Tair, started calling out for his children to come for lunch. They also heard the sound of a bicycle. Shadi knew his brothers were approaching from the sound of the lawn mower attached to the bike. Shadi explains: *“At that moment, we heard a bicycle approaching from the north, and I realized it was my brother Ibrahim’s bicycle because of its special sound; because a lawn mower with wheels was attached to it. We used the lawn mower to cut grass and carry it from my uncle’s house to my house to*

feed our goats. The sound of the lawn mowers' wheels was special and I could recognize it easily."

Shadi was sure that if his brothers saw him, they would ask him to help them with the grass for the goats. As he wanted to finish the marbles game with his friends, he hid from Ibrahim and Mohammad: *"I was south of the house and they couldn't see me. We had stopped the game until they entered my uncle's house."*

Suddenly, he heard a strange sound, like a missile or a shell being launched. Then, he saw *"something travelling very fast in the sky"* coming from the Israeli border. Few seconds later, a shell landed, causing a huge explosion. Shadi remembers: *"I felt great fear and horror and hid with the children (...) We attached ourselves to the fence because we were very scared of the explosion."*

At that moment, they saw Ibrahim Abu Tair, who had been calling his sons, on the ground. Shadi's friends started screaming. Shadi rushed to ad-Daqqat Street, where he could smell the gun powder and smoke. He looked to the north and saw a cloud of thick smoke. As the smoke faded, he saw the bicycle and the lawn mower on the ground, destroyed. Shadi was desperate to find his brothers: *"I looked all over the place but couldn't see clearly because of the thick smoke that was arising in front of my uncle's house. I was very scared and didn't know what had happened to my brothers Ibrahim and Mohammad. Were they inside the house? Were they lying injured on the street? What happened to them?"*

Then, he saw Ibrahim and Mohammad on the ground: *"It was strange because their bodies seemed small. I ran towards them and looked at them. They were dismembered, blown into pieces. Their legs were on one side. Their arms were on another side. Their bodies were covered in blood. The innards were out of their abdomens. I couldn't believe what I was seeing."*

Shadi passed out from the shock. When he came around, he saw his father and his brother Ahmad running towards him: *"My brother Ahmad came and took me in his arms, whereas my father started crying for my brothers."* Then, ambulances arrived and took the bodies, as well as Ibrahim Abu Tair to hospital. The next day, he was also pronounced dead by the doctors.

Speaking to DCI in February 2010 Shadi laments: *"I still don't know why my two brothers and Ibrahim were targeted. (...) I can't forget seeing them on the ground with their legs and arms dismembered and scattered all around them. I still have dreams about them. I still see this horror film in my sleep. I wish I had gone to help them and hadn't stayed to finish the game, so I could have died with them and not stay behind living this horrible situation every night. I can't focus on my study anymore."*

DCI-Palestine, 19 August 2010