

# Voices From the Occupation



**Name:** Yahia Z.  
**Date of Incident:** 14 October 2010  
**Age:** 16  
**Location:** The Gaza Strip, Occupied Palestinian Territory  
**Nature of Incident:** Shot whilst collecting building material

**On 14 October 2010, a 16-year-old boy is shot in his right leg whilst collecting building material in the Gaza Strip, about 450 metres from the border fence with Israel.**

Sixteen-year-old Yahia lives in Beit Hanoun, North Gaza, with his parents and his 18-year-old brother, Musa. Yahia has four other brothers but they are all married and have moved to homes of their own. Yahia explains that his family is living in harsh economic circumstances: *'My father has been without work since 1997. He used to work inside Israel but is prevented from doing so now. We have a small store inside the house selling sweets and a few other items, but the income doesn't exceed 300 to 400 shekels (US \$80-100) per month. We also receive assistance from the Ministry of Social Affairs and some charity.'*



Yahia dropped out of school when he was 14 and looked for work to help support the family, but found nothing. *'Then I heard that my neighbours and friends were collecting gravel from the Erez industrial zone, about one-and-a-half kilometers away from our house. We don't have much gravel in Gaza,'* explains Yahia, *'because of the Israeli embargo, and prices are high.'* So, on Sunday, 10 October 2010, Yahia, his brother Mohammad and a friend, started collecting gravel. *'Mohammad had rented a donkey cart for 30 shekels (US \$8),'* recalls Yahia. *'We also brought work tools such as shovels, sieves, pickaxes and buckets. Between 7:00am and 2:30pm we collected half-a-ton of gravel from the industrial zone which was destroyed by the Israeli army when it withdrew after previous incursions and invasions. We sold the gravel for 70 shekels and paid 30 shekels for the donkey cart, and we then split the rest three ways, around 13 shekels each (US \$3.40).'*

Last Thursday, 14 October 2010, Yahia, his brother and his friend again headed for the industrial zone at 5:00am. *'When we arrived,'* recalls Yahia, *'there were only 10 workers there because it was so early. Usually there are more than 100 workers. Mohammad started hitting rocks with the pickaxe to break them into smaller pieces. My friend collected the broken pieces and put them in the sieve I was holding to separate out the dirt and we would then put the gravel in buckets and load onto the cart.'* Yahia remembers that it was a quiet morning, without shooting, which he says is unusual. But then at 8:00am he heard a single gunshot and felt something hitting his right leg. *'I fell down on the ground and started screaming because of the extreme pain. I was about 450 metres from the border at the time.'* Yahia was picked up by his brother and friend and placed on a cart and then transferred to an ambulance which took him to Kamal Odwan Hospital. *'When we arrived at the hospital my blue jeans were all covered in blood. I was feeling dizzy and felt all my blood was running out of my body. I fainted as soon as I arrived at the hospital.'*

Yahia was released from hospital the same day and taken home. *'I will never go back to the industrial zone even if I starve to death. I'll focus on getting better and find a much safer job.'*

16 October 2010