

Stories from beneath the wreck Gaza **children** speak



Althoraya For
Communication And
Media

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PALM's Word

The 2014 assault on the Gaza Strip began, and it was very cruel due to the long period it lasted, the thousands of tons of bombs dropped and the many lives lost, especially young children. Innocent souls moving between swings, sweets and a beautiful story before bed were murdered, and ambitions that traveled into the future were extracted. So, the holder of those ambitions thinks to become a doctor; then admires an elaborate building, imagining himself as a brilliant engineer, and sometimes he sees his ideal in a teacher following the leads of his role model. Then those good spirits are allowed to play, so they run after the ball. Each one tries to kick it, hoping that he will not miss the goal; sometimes he succeeds and others fails, and they fight and reconcile. This happens ten times or more. There is nothing wrong with that, for this is childhood. Rather, the disaster is that missiles dissipated those dreams, and eliminated any hope, and killed of the joy of reconciliation after disagreement, the euphoria of winning the match, and the happiness of a child playing with a doll made for her by her grandmother. They kidnapped a girl who was learning the arts of housework from her mother. The aggression robbed the joy that fills every heart when it sees the smile of our flowers, and tries to extinguish the energy from our homes and neighborhoods, but it will not fade as long as our land blooms with freedom, and the voice of our children is louder than the sizzling of their bullets. In order to revive the truth, here are the stories of the children, provided by Al Thuraya institution in this book.

Dr. Ibrahim AlZaeem

Director of PALM Strategic Initiatives Center-Malaysia



Althuraya Institution's Word

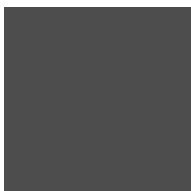
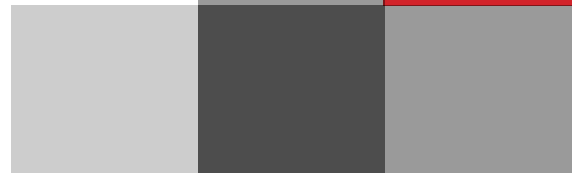
The Israeli occupation practices racist policies against our Palestinian people through every aspect of its administration. This is especially true with regards to children, who have been subjected to grave physical and psychological violations in 2014, 2021 and again this year. Israeli war crimes leave clear, lasting affects on the children, their prospects, their lives and their future.

The occupation has harnessed all its material capabilities, including its media machine by falsifying facts, gaining international support and sympathy to cover up their heinous crimes violating the internationally guaranteed rights of children.

Since its establishment in 2006, Al-Thuraya Institute for Communication and Media has taken upon itself to defend human values and support the national rights and demands of a people who insist on attaining their freedom and independence. Al-Thuraya conveys to the world the true picture of what children have been subjected via their own vision and narration.



**Child right to legal
protection during conflicts**



Child right to legal protection during conflicts

Bahjat El Helou

Palestinian Independent Commission for Human Rights

The Israeli Occupation Forces deliberately committed war crimes against Palestinian civilians especially children. The world saw the scenes of the shreds of women and children who arrived at hospitals, and the scenes of pulling bodies from under the rubble of destroyed houses.



Targeting four children from the same family by the Israeli military as they were playing on Gaza beach was shocking. The rockets tore down the bodies of the children of Baker family on Wednesday evening 16, July 2014. The children were Ahed Atif Baker, a 10-year old, Zakaryya Ahed Baker, a 10-year old, Mohammed Ramez Baker, a 11-year old, Ismael Mohammed Baker, a 9-year old. Their bodies were torn into pieces as they arrived at Alshifa hospital.

This crime was among a number of crimes committed against the children in the Gaza strip since the beginning of the military operation that left tens of thousands of Gaza's children traumatized. It badly affected their psychological as well as their behavioral health. The consequences varied between the permanent feeling of fear and panic, the lack of concentration, bedwetting, or losing the ability to speak and the appetite to eat.





The worst consequence was losing confidence in their parents as a source of protection, which affected children's future in the Gaza Strip, where most citizens suffer from Anemia and malnutrition because of the bad economic and living situation of their families. As a result of the long years of closure and blockade, in flagrant violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949, which stress guaranteeing safety to children as protected categories, and providing them with special care and treatment which protects their right to life. These regulations warn against exposing children to collective punishment and revenge. They also assure the basic principle of

humane treatment, including respect of life and physical and moral integrity, especially article 77 of the additional Protocol I, which stipulate that children shall be the object of special respect and shall be protected against any form of indecent assault. Parties involved in the conflict shall provide them with care and aid, as they require.

Article 38

1. Parties should respect and ensure rules of international humanitarian law relevant and applicable to children in armed conflicts.

2. Parties shall take all feasible measures to ensure that people younger than fifteen years old do not take a direct part in hostilities.

3. Parties shall refrain from recruiting any person who has not attained the age of fifteen into their armed forces. In recruiting those persons who have attained the age of fifteen, but have not attained the age of eighteen, they shall endeavor to give priority to those who are older.

4. In accordance with their obligations under International Humanitarian Law to protect the civilian population in armed conflicts, parties shall take all feasible measures to ensure protection and care of children who are affected by armed conflicts.

In the light of the International Community's realization of children's suffering in armed conflicts, International Humanitarian Law was created to provide broad protection for





children. In the case of armed conflict either international or local, children benefit from general protection provided to civilians not participating in hostilities, and they shall be treated humanely.

The Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 and its Additional Protocols adopted in 1977 assures granting special protection to children even if they participate directly in hostilities. It sets out a series of rules for their protection, such as the right to life, physical and moral integrity, prohibition of coercion, torture, collective punishment, and reprisals, and the protection from any form of indecent assault.

Based on the Fourth Geneva Convention, parties involved in conflicts shall provide children with care and aid as they require, whether because of their age or for any other reason. This principle sets out this protection by facilitating evacuation, giving assistance and care, providing education, and having a cultural environment for children. In



addition to the special protection for arrested and detained children, it also guarantees identification, family reunification to children.

Although the Geneva Conventions lacks direct provisions concerning child protection during armed conflicts, Palestinian Basic Law, in Article 9, sets the following rights for children:

Complete protection and care

- It prohibits exploitation for any purpose or performing work that might damage their safety, health, or education.
- It prohibits torture and tough treatment.

Palestinian Child Law No. 7 of 2004 prohibits subjecting children to works that threaten their safety, while Article 46 of this principle notes that children are not allowed to participate in military actions and hostilities. To seek this aim, countries have to take necessary actions and measures to guarantee physical and psychological rehabilitation and reunification of the victims in armed conflicts.





Children Storytelling



1

Duha Maher Sharaf

Age: 7 years

Area: Aljala'

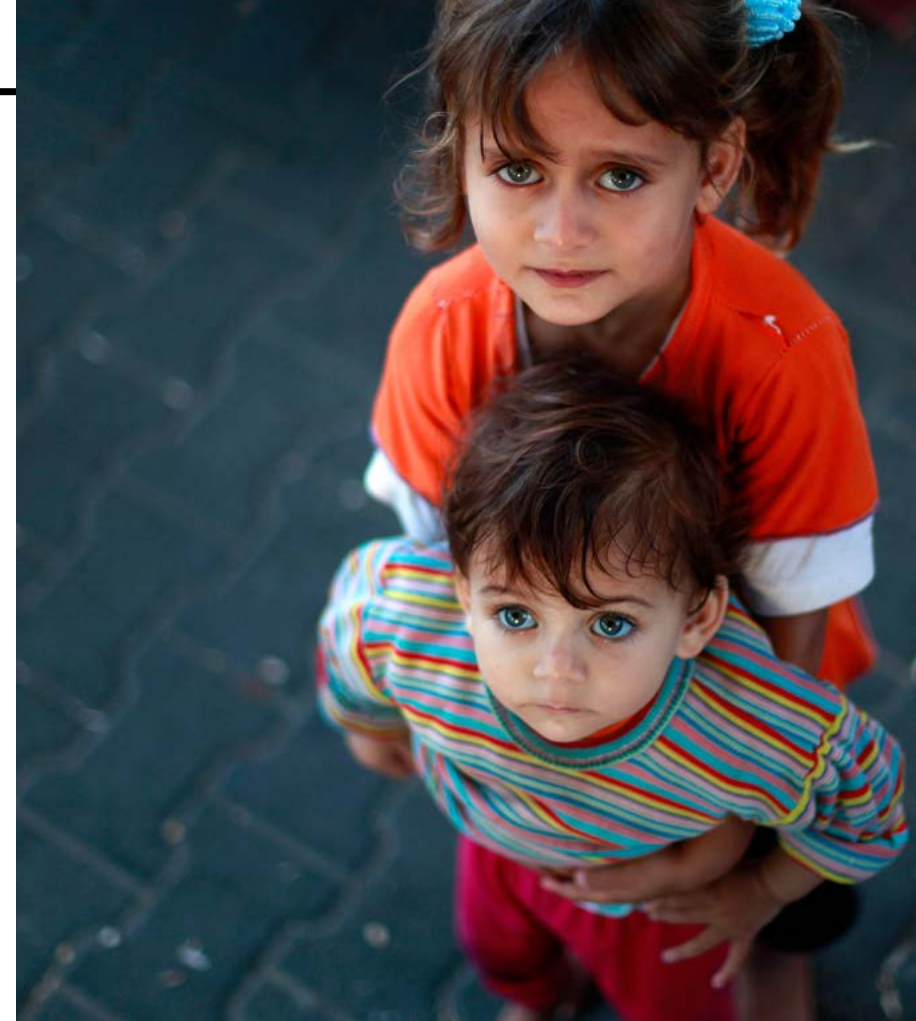
During the offensive, sadness invaded my sensation for those who had lost their homes or their jobs, and, above all, for those who had lost their beloved ones - their children. The idea of losing a family member haunted me then and scared me a lot even though my mom had desperately and constantly tried to comfort me. She taught me how to make Duaa so that when I hear the rockets falling, I would ask God for protection.

The offensive started in Ramadan, the Holy month. They did not allow us to enjoy it, nor did they allow us to enjoy the Eid following it. Unlike other children around the world, we did

not play during the Eid. I saw the children who were bombed while swinging. It was horrific; I could not bear seeing their severed limbs. In Ramadan, the warplanes bombed people while eating their Suhoor and their Iftar. I saw the warplane



throwing rockets and lanterns. I saw the mosques being destroyed over people while praying; and the houses over people while sleeping. I also saw towers brought to the ground, and families wandering around helplessly looking for a shelter after having lost theirs. Until this day, when I walk down the streets, I see the destroyed houses, mosques, factories,



institutions and entertainment venues.

What saddened me the most was seeing wounded and dead bodies scattered on the streets of al-Shejaiya neighborhood with no help. Not even the medics could reach them.

I saw the tanks and the warplanes from my balcony shelling the al-Shejaiya neighborhood. I was so scared when our neighbor's garden was targeted. I thought the rocket fell on our house. The sound was really loud and terrifying at night, and the lights of the lanterns were so scary.

We spent nearly seven days with no electricity because they had targeted the power plant. After that, we spent the remaining days with the electricity on for just two hours (or less) a day.

Bombs were thrown everywhere. I was waiting for my turn to die. It made no difference to them whether the target was a child, a woman, an elderly or a fighter. I was haunted by the fear of being left alone; of losing my whole family.

I was deeply affected when I saw al-Dalo family massacre and the children who were targeted at an-Nafaq street. I felt so sad when I saw them because they have no guilt other than being Gazans.

During the ceasefire, I went with al-Aqsa TV to film a poem in al-Shejaiya neighborhood, but the Israeli occupation broke the ceasefire and fired rockets. It was the scariest moment of my life. I burst out crying. I felt that I was about to die.



Ameera Jamal al-Eqeeli

Age: 10 years

Area: ar-Rimal

The aggression; so many things happened during the aggression. I cannot describe what I saw. So many people's homes were brought to the ground; so many people's children died; so many mothers ceased to exist leaving their infants behind alone. The worst was those who died and left only one child to suffer solely forever.

I used to be so scared when it was nighttime because they would throw lanterns that made weird whistling sounds while falling. They would light up the whole neighborhood; imagine late at night when it is supposed to be the darkest hours and it was a lot like daytime. It was so terrifying. I used to run to mama's arms the second I hear them falling. Whenever I turned the TV on and saw little children chopped

to pieces, I used to feel my heartbeats bouncing so fiercely. How they were armless or headless! It would always make me wonder how their mothers felt when they saw them like that.

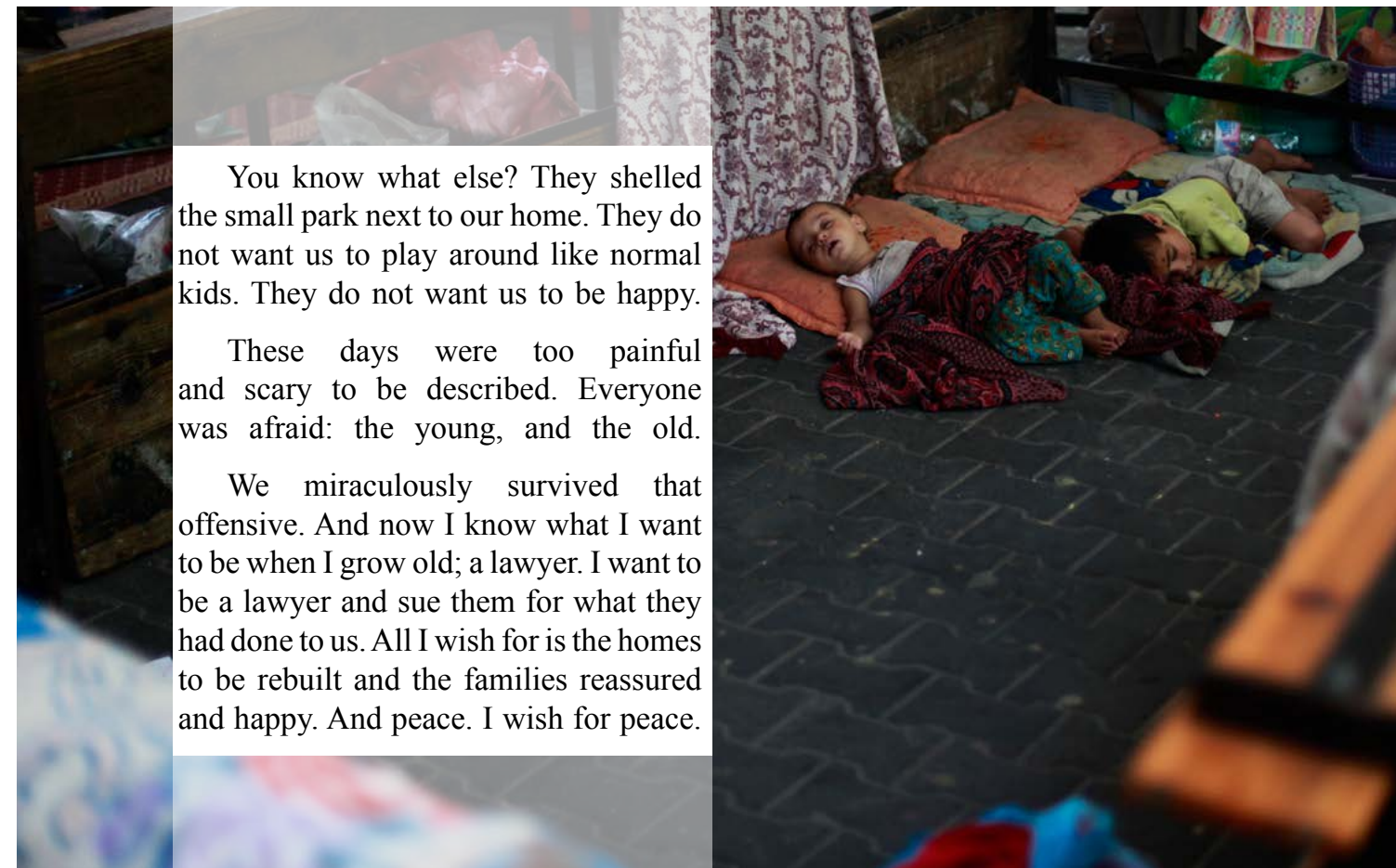
And the kids who were playing at the beach; my God, those kids were bombed while playing and so were the children who were playing around and swinging on the first day of Eid. They deprived us of the joy of celebrating our feast. We could not rejoice, buy new clothes or play like all other children. Why did they bomb the kids who went to the supermarket to buy some sweets? What! They do not want us to eat sweets too?

I also saw the people who ran from their homes and found shelters at the schools. And even those were not safe; they bombed the schools. There is an UNRWA school near our house and so



many people turned to this place for shelter, but I knew that they were not safe. The Israeli Occupation forces bombed everything, everything. The saddest thing I saw and hurt me to the bone was when they bombed Shejaiya area using tanks. I swear I cried my lungs out. It was too devastating. The places which were excessively targeted were the houses, and they would bomb them while the families were still inside. They targeted schools. They do not want us to learn! They also targeted mosques because they do not want us to pray. And I will tell you why they hit the ambulances! Because they do not want the injured to recover. They wanted them all dead. And even during our holy month Ramdan; we did not feel the spirituality we would usually enjoy during this time of the year. At Suhoor time, they would shell. At Iftar time, they would shell. It was so terrifying.

Yes the war ended, but the wound is still unhealed. Many people's children were killed. Many homes were destroyed. Until this day whenever my dad takes us for a walk or whenever I go to school, the only things I see in the street are the fading memories and the marks of woe on the faces of people, the destroyed homes, mosques, and schools.



You know what else? They shelled the small park next to our home. They do not want us to play around like normal kids. They do not want us to be happy.

These days were too painful and scary to be described. Everyone was afraid: the young, and the old.

We miraculously survived that offensive. And now I know what I want to be when I grow old; a lawyer. I want to be a lawyer and sue them for what they had done to us. All I wish for is the homes to be rebuilt and the families reassured and happy. And peace. I wish for peace.

I hope from the depth of my heart that this offensive would never return once again. What we witnessed is unimaginable. But thanks to our resistance fighters, we survived and I lived to tell my story. I love them very much because they fought for us. They used to lessen my fear and stress whenever they announced a surprise.

I will never forget seeing the “Israeli” warplanes bombing houses, leaving children and women covered with their blood. I saw women weeping for their dead children, desperately trying to wake them up, but their lives were stolen. I



saw the bombed mosques. It saddened me that they reached the point of destroying the houses of God where we learn how to pray and recite Qur'an. They also bombed our factories because they do not want us to make our own products. They want us to buy theirs by force, but we will rebuild all destroyed

factories and will remake Gazan products.

Every time I turned the TV on, I saw body parts, destruction, children chopped into pieces and people crying and screaming over their children. I saw the bombed ambulances. And I saw schools. They do not want us to learn.

I sympathized with those who had their homes destroyed and did not find a shelter other than schools, which were ill-furnished and unsafe. The 51 days of the offensive were so terrifying to all: whether a child or an elderly. Because everyone was thinking that they would be next. Everyone was waiting for their turn. Homes turned out to be unsafe too.

I always thank God for keeping me alive. I can hardly believe that I am still alive.

Falling rockets, destroyed houses, dead bodies and overpowering sorrow were our daily horrifying routine. They bombed institutions, playgrounds and towers. I was sad when I saw how 60



families would be homeless in a blink of an eye when a tower is targeted. They targeted our limited small public parks. They do not want us to play or to enjoy our childhood. Fishermen were no exception. They bombed their breadwinning equipment in the seaport; their small canoes, so I thought to myself that I would never eat fish anymore. But that sounded too silly to think of when they had lost their most precious belongings.

And those children who were playing on the beach. How they died!

All the time, I was thinking about the possibility of losing a family member as I had already lost my big brother in 2008 offensive when I was a little girl. It even occurred to me that this is it; that I would be joining him soon. But here I am and there he is. And he will always, always,



stay in my heart; our hearts. I will never forget him. I was always afraid of losing another one of my family members, or my whole family and to be left alone. And the idea of losing a part of my body or being wounded left me sleepless for so many long endless nights. It was so scary.

What frightened me the most was the whistling sounds of the falling lanterns. Their flares were foreboding the inevitable death.

I went through all kinds of fear whenever I heard a bombing. Whenever I heard a sound of a falling rocket, I thought it was going to hit our house; It was so deafening. I hated nothing more than the bombing waking me up in the middle of the night.

It was my Eid when the offensive ended. People marched delightedly through the streets of Gaza chanting for the aggression was over. But the hearts of those who no longer had a shelter or lost a family member were burdened with sorrow. I always include them in my Duaa.

Till this day, I see what the offensive had left behind: destruction and homeless people. I still can see martyrs' pictures hanged on the walls when I go to school. And who knows my picture may be hanged next if another offensive happens.

Nesma Osama Hamada

Age: 7 years

Area: at-Tofah

We live in at-Tofah neighborhood, Yafa street. The Israeli Occupation forces kept targeting our area, ending up destroying most of the houses surrounding us. Our neighbors' homes were demolished, and our neighbors' kids were murdered. During the aggression, supplication was our only candle of hope. Whenever we heard explosions, we would pray to God and recite Qur'an. We would pray for our resistance fighters that God be with them, and when we felt petrified, we used to go to our father and pray with him.

The tanks' shelling reached our house, but we did not leave.

Where to go? We had no place to go to. Our father used to tell us, "To die in our homes better than to walk around homeless." In the first ten days of the war, my cousin was killed at Barcelona Park. We only knew the next day at dawn. When they brought his body home, I could not help but cry. I loved him so much; he used to play with us and bring happiness to our hearts. May he rest in peace.

During the offensive, -wherever I looked- I saw blood, destruction and demolished homes and



dying people and injured children. They threw lanterns in the night which looked and sounded so scary. One could tell that no good was going to happen after that. The whole neighborhood would light up. Then after that, they would start shelling us using warplanes and tanks.

Ah, seeing the houses which were bombarded while the families were inside having Iftar in Ramadan was so devastating. My aunt's house was entirely ruined; it was impossible for anyone to live there anymore. The most saddening incident was when Shejaiya neighborhood was entirely bombed. Dead bodies were everywhere. Blood was everywhere. They would run in fear in all directions; and the shelling

over their heads, it did not stop.

Some families went to the schools to find a temporary home. They would sleep in the schools' yards without mattresses or anything to cover their shivering bodies. Nothing to protect their heads from the bombings or their feeble bodies from the cold. Even the schools were targeted.

I saw them with my own eyes. The 'Israelis' want to be more educated than we are, but we have the will to learn even at half-destroyed schools. It does not matter; we want to learn.

I have a dear friend who was killed during that time. She only went to buy something to eat; what was her fault? Why did they kill

her? I loved her so dearly. Nothing good happened in that offensive. Many people lost their homes or their children or both. It was a time of fear and pain.

I was afraid that I might lose my family members and be left alone like the children we saw on TV. I would always be afraid to actually see what was on TV. I did not want to see the people who lost their body parts.

We usually buy new clothes for Eid, but that Eid we could not. I was really looking forward to buying something new to wear. I wanted to look beautiful. But that did not happen. I really hope that when Eid is here next year, there would be no more killing. And we would all be happy. May the martyrs rest in peace and may the wounded are healed.



Bayan Mohammed

Age: 9 years

Area: Bani Suhaila, Khan Younis

I saw the Israeli occupation machinegun killing children, women and men. I saw it bombing houses and towers displacing and sometimes killing the families living inside them. During the offensive, I used to squeeze my head on mama's lap whenever I heard the falling rockets and the fire shootings and the screaming people. This scared me a lot. They hit near our house with some rockets. The sound of bombing was so loud. It broke our windows. When I asked my dad why the windows were smashed, he told me that it was because of pressure and that I would learn about it later at school.

Our windows were broken, but some others' houses were fully demolished over their heads like Abu Jamie and al-Haj families, our neighbors. I saw them being pulled from the rubble of their houses by the civil defence crew. They were fragmented; I could not recognize them. I could not bear looking at them. I had a weird feeling, an indescribable one. It was a mixture of sadness and fear and love and helplessness. I used to pity those who stayed alive while all of their families were not. I wonder what feelings a girl in my age would have if she sees her family members being buried in front of her.

I feared the rockets and the lanterns a lot. They lit up the sky at night like the sun at midday, but rather in a scary way. Until this day, I have a phobia about hearing the sound of a flying plane or anything loud.





It broke my heart when I learned about the martyrdom of my uncle. I had this feeling when we left our home because of the heavy shelling barrage. I was afraid that our house would be destroyed too. I kept wondering when our turn would be. I still cannot believe we are still alive.

I do not want this aggression to return because I cried a lot. I wept bitterly for the people who were executed in the bathroom by the Israeli troops. This is inhumane and God will punish all of them for what they did to our childhood, to our feelings, to us. We will withstand the strain and suffering. We will be patient, complying to God's commands.

It is true that the offensive is over, but its impacts are imprinted in our lives. The pain of losing some dear people to our hearts did not vanish. The continuous pain of seeing total destruction on our way to school every day is still there. How can we forget!

Ahmed Nasser Abu Zeid

Age: 11 years

Area: az-Zaytun

When the aggression first began, we did not leave our home; and even when the shelling got worse, we refused to leave because we knew we had no place to turn to. I have a sick sister and my father has cancer which makes it hard for him to move around. Those who had a place to go to; it was impossible for them to walk around the streets -which was why we could not get my father his medication. After two weeks when they targeted our house with a warning missile, we barely made it out of the house; they immediately hit it with an F16 missile.

We left the house without taking anything; there was no time. We hardly made it out alive. We lost our furniture, our clothes, our memories, and - and our home.


We found a school that took us in for



couple of days, but we were soon sent to another school and then another one and so on. Currently, my siblings and I are staying at Bahrain school in Tal el-Hawa and my mother has been with my father at the hospital for the past two

weeks. We have been living in the school for a while now, and the people in charge of the school have been trying to get us out. I feel so tired. I feel as if I were an orphan because I do not have my parents around me. It is not easy for me. It is not easy at all.

My most favorable time of the year is the Eid. But after everything I witnessed, I am not sure about this anymore. I saw my cousins; I, the eleven years old, saw my cousins martyred. I saw my neighbor's children getting killed. I saw the houses which fell on the heads of its residents. I saw hands and legs shattered like glass; I saw fragmented people. And I saw blood. The ambulances were bombarded and the mosques and everything. I did not know where we should go; there was not a single safe place.



My life has become nothing but schools, schools, schools. I live in a school and I go to study at another school. I actually walk to the other school and it is very tiring. I go back consumed by fatigue. The worst part is that these days the young in my country have gone grey too soon. We worry about things children should not care about. We are just children!

Why do we have to think about death all the time? Why do we have to be afraid of losing family members? All I want is a home; a shelter. May this aggression never happen again, never.





heartbreaking. I saw the shells falling and the flaming lanterns. I heard the shells falling and the flaming lanterns. I felt the shells falling and the flaming lantern.

When they intensified the shelling, we were so scared and could not stop crying, so my father decided to take us out of the area. We headed to UNRWA schools; the heavy bombing did not stop. Schools were not safe. Some other schools were

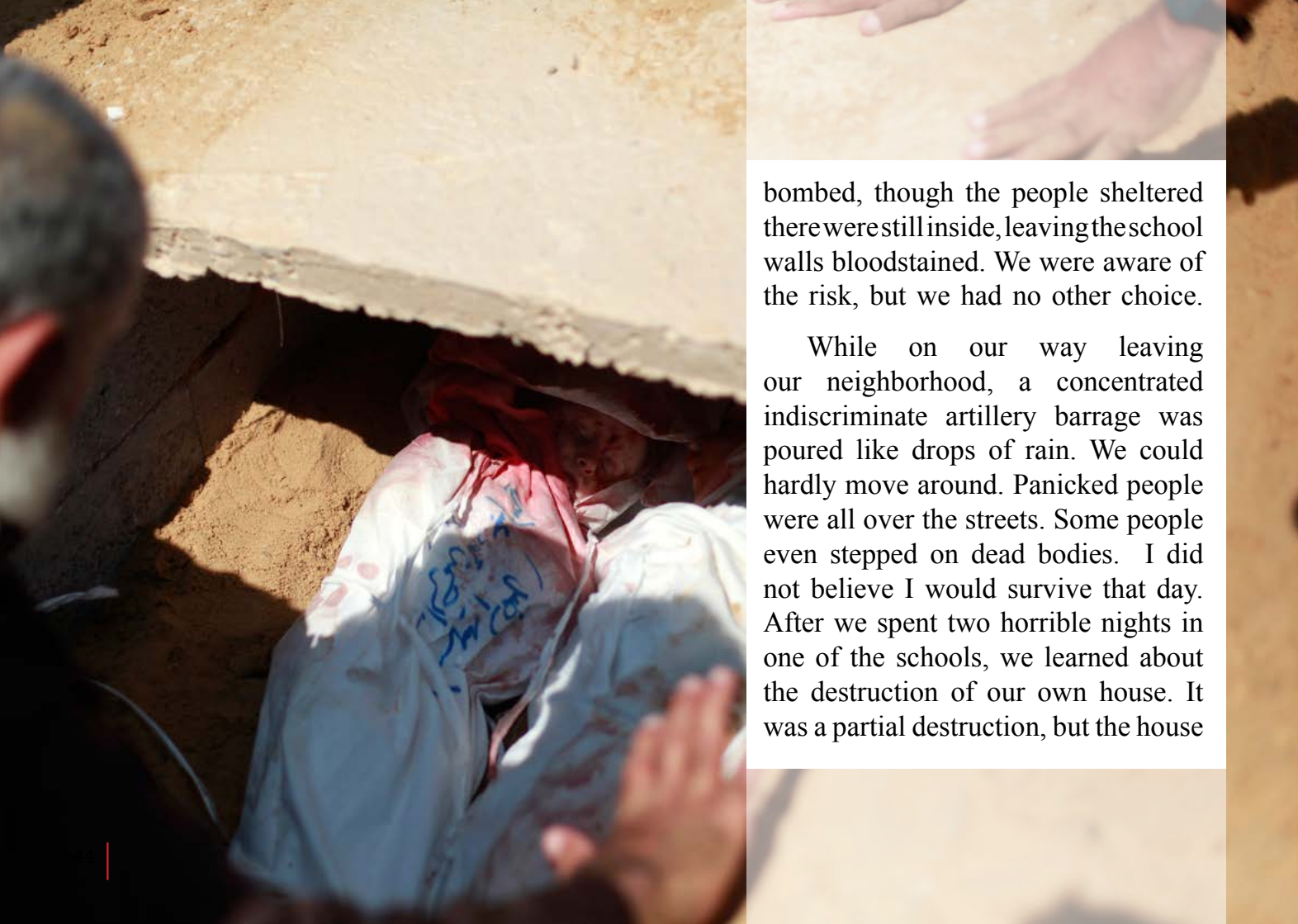
The Israeli occupation indiscriminately bombed our neighborhood. A lot of rockets fell on the area where we live. Why do they bomb us, civilians? We did no harm to them!

Because they could not conquer the spirits of the resistance fighters, they destroyed homes, killed people and filled our hearts with fear and pain. I wonder if there is any child around the whole world who has witnessed the killing of his beloved ones as we did. They ruined our childhood. They killed our dreams. We want to play and enjoy our lives far away from violence and constant fear.

Our neighbors' house was demolished while they were still inside; they were celebrating their daughter's wedding. The occupation simply destroyed

their house over their dancing hearts. I suggest this as a start. Their happiness, their dreams, their futures and their hopes; they were all killed. Their bodies were distorted and their blood was everywhere! Why!

I could not bear watching the news with my family. The news was horrible. Scattered body parts and dead bodies on the ground; destruction of homes and towers; and people bitterly weeping for their beloved ones. It was



bombed, though the people sheltered there were still inside, leaving the school walls bloodstained. We were aware of the risk, but we had no other choice.

While on our way leaving our neighborhood, a concentrated indiscriminate artillery barrage was poured like drops of rain. We could hardly move around. Panicked people were all over the streets. Some people even stepped on dead bodies. I did not believe I would survive that day. After we spent two horrible nights in one of the schools, we learned about the destruction of our own house. It was a partial destruction, but the house

is no longer good for living.

When we were on our way out of our neighborhood, an artillery barrage was poured like running acid rain.

The loss is greater when it comes to family members; when my father went to my sister's house to bring us some blankets, the soldiers fired at him. They want us all dead, but fortunately he was not killed. He was just wounded. They also bombed my brother's house. Everything we witnessed was heart-wrenching.

I do not go to school now because we do not have money

to buy the school uniform. They stole every beautiful detail in our lives. But God is there. He sees everything. And He will punish them.

I hate them. I hate them because they took my uncles' lives. They killed my uncles. They fill us with fear and horror and stress.

All I wish for is a house. A beautiful one. I wish that no aggressions ever happen again.



Bisan Abu Hani**Age: 8 years****Area: Az-Zahra**

I live in az-Zahra neighborhood where not a lot of people do. We spent most of the aggression time at our house because we knew there were no safer places to go to. Dad told us that the shelling was all over the city and even the schools were targeted. Many houses around us were either entirely bombed or partially. However, it made no difference because even partially damaged homes were not good for anyone to live in. On the last two weeks of the offensive, many shells hit our house; therefore, we had to leave and go to my grandparent's house. Their neighborhood was crowded with people which made it less scary than where I live.

I saw many people screaming over the death of their children. I could see in their eyes the unspeakable misery. I saw the rubble of many people's homes. I saw people getting killed. I saw death more often than I heard myself breathe.

It was too frightening for me. I remember I spent most of the time holding my mother unable of moving away from her. She was the only safe place I could resort to.

When it was Eid time, I thought maybe they will stop because it's Eid. They may let us enjoy some rest, some life. But no! They did not even allow us to sense that it was that time of the year; that it was Eid time of the year. They

bombed some kids who were swinging. I do not understand what these kids fault was!

The sound of the shelling was intimidating. I used to close my ears, but the sounds were just too loud. I could not handle turning the TV on. The despondency that would twitch my heart whenever I saw the limbless people or destroyed homes was too devastating. I was afraid that I might be one of those we saw on TV. I was afraid I might lose one of my family members. And it would break my heart

whenever I saw a man carrying his dead child. It was unbearable.

The thing that happened during that aggression and affected me the most was when the Israeli occupation forces targeted our garden. I was playing with my sister when a huge bang deafened us. I ran screaming looking for my mother until I landed in her arms; she hugged me so strongly and calmed me down. “Do not be afraid, deary,” she whispered to me.

I know that God has put some courage in our hearts and

steadfastness. I just hope that He would make homes for those who lost everything; and I hope that these homes turn out to be better than what they had lost.



Bisan Abu Shar

Age: 8 years

Area: Rafah

All I can remember is how scared I was during the aggression. It was so scary. They did not stop the bombing for a single second! They damaged our houses, killed our children and elderlies, and they eradicated entire families. We impatiently waited for the humanitarian ceasefire intervals to enjoy some peace of mind, but the Israeli forces violated them each and every time they were announced.

We needed a pause to remember that we are human beings with other feelings than fear. We used to spend our horrible times

praying and waiting for the end of the offensive.

In my family, we used to comfort ourselves. Everyone tried to comfort the other while waiting to be comforted in return. We were all like decrepit buildings which needed props to stand. We did not leave our house though the bombing was intensive.

My father kept trying to make us forget about the continuous bombing. He told us that God is with the oppressed and the helpless, “He is with us; be patient; we will



survive this.” He asked us all to recite Qur’an and pray for the resistance fighters.

What I will never forget is the news I used to watch when my father turned the TV on. I used to immediately cry whenever I saw the scenes of killing. They were unbearable. Scattered remnants of killed people, killed children, murdered buried under their homes’ rubbles. And blood!

As they bombed the minimarket, blood covered the walls and the ground. And the mosques, where people pray, were bombed too. There was no safe place in the whole Strip. Every area had its share of rockets. That is why we did not leave our home though the shelling reached it. We preferred to die at our home than to be killed outside it.

Some of the guys in my neighborhood were killed. I was affected the most by



seeing the martyrs who had no space in the mortuary refrigerators to preserve them until they were buried. They were all put one on the top of the other.

I saw the children who were stuffed in the ice cream freezers. It was just so sad. Sadder than I could handle.

The idea of hearing the noisy sounds of the soaring warplanes would easily plummet one’s morale. We were so scared. I saw the rockets falling. I saw the children who were interrupted by a missile strike while on their way to the mosque. I saw them with my own eyes. They immediately died. I still see them in my dreams as I still wonder what their guilt was to be coldly killed like that!



I cried a lot. I cried when I saw people’s flesh dispersed on the pavement while running for their lives. I cried when I saw the wounded who were screaming in pain, but no one could reach them. They rested in the same position they were hoping to be carried away from. Nobody could rescue them. How could I not cry!

How can I not cry when I see innocent people agonized. The homeless; the ones who live in schools. May they all have God by their sides. I hope that this never happens again. And I hope to witness the day when Gaza’s problems are all solved and the siege is lifted so we can live like the rest of the world.

Lama Abu Hassira

Age: 9 years

Area: Az-Zaytun

In this offensive, we were like all other people: we stayed at home and strived to stay alive. Only one day I woke up early in the morning and played with my three-year-old sister; then, we went to buy ourselves some sweets from the supermarket next door. I told her to wait for me by the market's door so that I could get inside and buy the stuff we wanted. I suddenly heard a huge explosion. I got out to see if my sister was okay but she was not. She was on the floor covered with blood and then I fell on the floor and woke up later at the hospital. I was wounded and the doctors were trying to remove crochets from my lungs.



I survived; my sister, however, did not. May she rest in peace.

I saw so many buildings, huge towers, becoming mere rocks on the ground. I was at the hospital most of the time even after the offensive. I spent Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha there longing for my sweet little sister whom I miss so much. I wish I could be with her. I wish I could join her. I know I was destined to stay alive, but I hope this never happens again. I hope the heartache and the fear and the worrying; I hope that never happens again. May the martyrs rest in peace and may the injured recover. And I pray for those with no shelter to find better homes soon.

Khawla Fares al-Ashi

Age: 9 years

Area: As-Sabra

It is really saddening and scary to remember the aggression. It was so horrible, and frightening. I never thought I would live through it, or my family. It was during Ramadan and we ate Suhoor and Iftar on the sounds of shelling and bombing. I would always go to sleep one eye open wondering, “What if I do not wake up tomorrow?”

The scariest moment was when a piece of land behind our house was targeted and my sister, Yumna, was transferred to the hospital along with my aunt.



Whenever I turned the TV on, I saw children; no, I saw pieces of children. I saw pieces of people. It was rare to see whole bodies in the morgues. I saw children who wept until they could weep no more. I saw destroyed houses and homeless people. I was deeply saddened when I saw the Shejaiya Neighborhood entirely bombarded. The injured and the martyrs were on the ground without help.

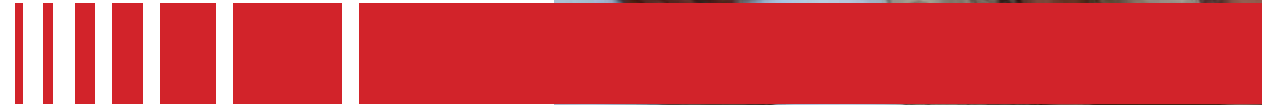
The ambulances could not reach the areas in which the massacres were happening. There was an ambulance that was shelled and two paramedics were martyred.

The rockets and the warplanes and the lanterns; all of these were means to scare us and it worked I was scared.

They spared no lives, they spared no institutions, and they spared no religious places. Many mosques were entirely wiped off earth! There was a tower where a lot of people lived; where would all of these

people go? What would they take with them?

I felt horrible because we kept moving from a place to another with very little personal possessions. I saw children being killed on Eid and that was supposed to be a happy time for us! We really wanted to make it up to ourselves during that time, to ease the pain! But they did not let us do that. They even killed the children.



Hiwaidah Kayed Al-Ghurrah**Age: 9 years****Area: AlSahabah, Gaza City**

I experienced three horrible aggressions in six years. Each one was more barbaric than the preceding one. I always remember the days of the offensive, mostly the latest deadly one. I still remember the moments of anguish and fear. I remember when the fire broke out at my neighbor's house when it was bombed. Nobody could extinguish it. Firefighters took long to reach the place because of the heavy bombing. I was scared then.

I was horrified when our old neighbor placed herself in front of her sons and her grandsons when the shell holed their house. She sacrificed herself to protect them, but her life was not enough to stop the shell. The shell exploded and killed this old lady and all she tried to protect. Until this day, I cry whenever I remember their story.

My psychological health was destroyed because of what I saw during the attack. I hate to remember the children who had their entire family dead. My heart was torn out when I saw the child who witnessed the last breaths of





his mom. I wonder how he felt being a little child. And what pain will remain in his all life.

I love the resistance fighters who defend us. They sacrifice their lives for ours.

I once thought of the medics who left their sons and daughters to rescue the innocent people who were being killed by the Israeli occupation killing machines. Many of them left their families in the morning but never returned again. I think of how their children felt when they learned about their death.

Why should I think about these things?

We did not feel how Ramadan, the Holy month, passed, nor did we enjoy it or enjoy the Eid after it. I wish I could ask every single child around the world if he/she had a single Eid in

which he/she did not enjoy every moment of it. We had 51 consecutive days of killing of civilians. We lived them with fear and worry and terror. I never left my mom's lap during the aggression because I knew that anything could happen any time. I did not want to be left alone.

I used to be frightened the most whenever I heard about the killing of children like those who were playing on the roof of their home and the others who were playing on the beach. I swear by God that this is injustice and a violation of our rights.

Is it a guilt to be born Palestinian?

I hope that the people of the world help us get our freedom and that this offensive never happens again.



I am only eight years old and I bet older people around the world did not half witness what I went through during the offensive. God, I saw the destruction of houses, the widowing of wives, the orphaning of children, and the murdering of babies.

I remember the children who were swinging in one of Gaza's small parks and how they



were killed. I also remember the children who went to the minimarket and were also killed. I remember the mosques which they brought to the ground. I remember how in Eidtime, we thought we might enjoy a little laughter after endless days of sufferance. We were mistaken, of course. They just continued killing us.

They even hit the ambulances and killed the paramedics!

Some people's houses, if not entirely or partially destroyed, were damaged because of nearby strikes. Their windows would break



and leave the families living there freeze at night.

I also remember the massacres they committed in Shejaiya and Khuza'a and BeitHanoon and Rafah! I was so scared during that time, but I tried to be brave, to seem brave. I wanted my siblings to be courageous and not afraid. But I would lie if I said that I was not frightened.

I did not want to die this young. I did not want my mother or father to die. I did not want my siblings to die. I am just a child who wants to live and do so many things. I want to grow up. I want to be a man.

Sajed Sameh Dallol

Age: 10 years

Area: Az-Zaytun

We left our house like thousands of people. We went to my grandparents' home because the heavy bombing had reached our area. I saw rockets falling from the sky. I saw the destroyed homes. I do not know which was worse. The ones whose homes were demolished over their heads and died, or those who survived but had nothing left of their belongings, not even clothes to cover their shivering bodies in winter.

When a rocket is launched, everything vanishes in a blink of an eye: A destroyed home, a burned future, and a killed dream. A lot of homes were damaged and the people inside them were killed. Hajjaj family is one example I know; the whole family were killed except for a young man. What would his feelings be like when he sees the blood



of his family on the ground and on the rubble of his melted home? In 2015 there are people living in tents. Why?

The most painful aspect of the aggression is the innocent children who had no guilt but were eventually the victims. They paid the price of being born. Another painful side is the youths and children who were seriously wounded and will have to live what is left of their lives handicapped. Indeed it is painful. What added insult to injury was the utterly unreasonable targeting of some hospitals and UNRWA schools. As if those who were wounded and those who had lost their homes



posed any sort of danger to the Israeli occupation.

One thinks that it was Tom and Jerry. Victims run and the victimizers chase. What on earth do they want from us! How oppressive this world turned out to be!

The enemies of life bombed gardens. We are being persecuted and other nations are continuously turning a blind eye.

I was saddened the most when they bombed the children who were going to buy some sweets from the minimarket. They killed them. But I was never afraid of the Zionists. I just hope that the free people of the world would stand for our rights and would make the Zionists stop their massacres and oppression towards us. I hope that the siege would be lifted. I hope that the wounded would be healed and the martyrs would rest in peace.

Age: 9 years

Area: As-Saftawi

What have we done to them to deserve this much of pain and suffering? The 'Israelis' destroyed our homes, killed our dreams, took the lives of our families and the fragrant of our memories. I saw, on TV, the children whom they had killed with cold blood. They were abstract

figures with no humane dimensions! Our Holy Mosques were demolished and wiped off earth.

They have done great injustice to the people of Gaza, to us, and the 51 days of aggression stand as a witness



for what happened and for what they had done.

There were massacres and the number of martyrs was in continuous rise; especially the children! They were murdered in the laps of their own mothers. Even that was not a safe place. Even the graveyards were being hit and targeted. Buried corpses, that could do absolutely nothing, were fired at. Also, the fishers' cabins by the shore were burned and their boats, too.

There were some kids who were playing and were brutally bombarded. Those kids were the most influencing incident that I heard of and saw during the aggression. It just broke my heart to pieces. I know that they are dead and cannot play here, but they will enjoy a safer place in Heaven next to God.

When the offensive was over, I did not believe that I actually survived! I thanked God many times for having kept me alive. I am alive, for now.

Age: 13 years
Area: al-Shejaiya



One Sunday evening, we woke up to the sound of our neighbors screaming that Israeli occupation forces had invaded Al Sha'af mountain in Al Shejaiya. There was no electricity, so we could not see anything, and we were terrified since the mountain was so close to us, so we and all our neighbors fled. We ran along a narrow street

as Israeli warplanes roared above us. As we approached Al Wafaa hospital, missiles began falling on the people around us. I saw blood and shreds of flesh everywhere, but I could not help anyone. People were running barefoot, out of their minds with fear, and even some mothers had to leave dying children because the bombing was so intense. We finally reached my grandfather's house, but we were told to leave because it was not safe there, either. Usually I do not feel afraid during bombings—we are used to them in Gaza—but this time the shelling

was so intense and so random that nowhere felt safe.

We were told the UNRWA schools were safe, so we went there; but they were dirty, crowded, and chaotic. Finally there was a ceasefire, and my mother went to the market to buy us clothes since we had left our home without taking any. But she was injured in a bombing and her leg had to be amputated. After everything that happened, we had no choice but to stay in the school until the fighting was truly over. But

soon we realized even schools were not safe as Israeli warplanes were targeting them as well.

When the aggression ended, there was a feeling of relief. But when we tried to return home, we found only ashes, which forced us to stay at my grandfather's home until we would rebuild our house.



17**Taha Samir AlAreer****Age: 8 years****Area: al-Shejaiya**

On the first day of the 2014 attack on Gaza, I was on my way to the supermarket when Israeli warplanes bombed an area near our home. I ran and hid as the rockets were falling like rain. When it felt safe again, I walked back to my grandfather's home and found my aunt lying on the floor and covered in blood. An ambulance came and took her to the hospital, and we decided to stay there as we did not have any safer place to go to. A few days later, Israeli warplanes bombed my uncle's home, so they joined us at my grandfather's house. Later on my aunt's family also had to leave their house by orders of the Red Cross as it was unsafe to stay in, so they joined us as well.



On a Sunday night after Iftar, Israeli artillery began firing continuously, so we all tried to lay low. There was no electricity. Soon my aunt's husband called us asking for help. He had been injured along with his son and brothers from a missile that hit them while they were hiding. We shouted and screamed in fear while our parents tried to quiet us and at the same time kept trying to call an ambulance to save them. Suddenly, a missile hit the room next to ours, and its shrapnel injured my uncle's back. We kept praying to Allah since the ambulance could not reach us. Our neighbors kept calling, and we felt so scared. We could not leave the room, not even to get water to drink, because the missiles continued falling, trapping us. We stayed there for more than eight hours.



The bombing finally stopped in the morning, and still no one could reach us, so we fled. Everyone was running randomly, and I was holding my sister's hand, and we were both so scared. Everyone was shouting and screaming, and some parents were searching for their children. We continued walking until we arrived at our relative's house, and we stayed there until the next ceasefire. After that we returned to our home and found it full of shells with no windows, water, or electricity. We were the only ones in the area, and the sounds of the warplanes

were still very close and loud, so we were afraid. Then the ceasefire ended and the offensive continued and we went back to our relative's place and stayed there. But even there, warplanes bombed towers nearby apartment blocks, and I was scared to death because the sound was so close and so loud.

When the war finally ended, I was so happy, and so were my elder siblings. We returned to our house, fixed it up as well as we could, and we are staying there now. The most important thing is that we survived, and we will still hold up.

The injured kid :Fatma Hamid Sheikh Khalil

Age: 9 years

Area: al-Shejaiya

On Sunday, July 20, 2014, I was sitting with my family feeling tired and afraid of the shelling. After dawn, the shelling decreased, so Maha, Nasiba and I decided to sleep and leave the rest of the family awake. Suddenly, we heard people screaming and saw them running. We asked my father and grandfather to go down but they refused since our house was far from the Israeli tanks. They told us that if the shelling got closer, we would leave.

Suddenly, we heard a strong knocking on the door and got very scared. We thought that they were the Israeli soldiers. My grandfather



went down to see who it was and found it was one of my mother's relatives. He had left his house and did not know where to go. As my grandfather opened the door, the street was bombed and he was injured. We thought his injury was serious because he was bleeding badly. We decided to leave the house immediately but the street was destroyed. People told us to stay downstairs and my dad screamed for a paramedic but no one answered.

A bomb hit us as we were hiding under the stairs. I closed my eyes in fear after



watching the shrapnel hit my body. I was bleeding; especially my teeth and over my shoulders. I was terrified. Then, I opened my eyes and looked around to find my uncle Abdelrahman dead and his wife lying beside him. My grandmother was bleeding next to my mother who tried to stand up but was still not able to. She kept crying “ah” in pain in a low voice.

My father called the ambulance. He did not know what to do as we were dying. He was injured as well. My brother Zeyad was injured too. When my father saw me, he was very worried about my serious injury. I was awake and frightened. Then I heard the sound of ambulance and asked my father to go out and bring the paramedics to save us. I went out with my brother Zeyad and walked along the wall until we reached the ambulance. I suddenly fell down, and they picked me up and put me in the ambulance.

Later, I was not able to speak and went into coma. I woke up at al-Shifa hospital to see my wounded sister Maha next to me. My father; aunts; my sisters Sara and Nasiba; my brother



Zeyad and my grandfather were all there. Only the ones who were killed. I travelled to Egypt to have the needed care after I lost my ability to speak and found no treatment for the shrapnel in my chest. I was to go under surgery but the shrapnel was removed from my stomach when I threw up. It was scary and I lost consciousness. After a while, they woke me up. They examined me a second time and found out that I did not have to undergo the surgery. Later, I returned

to Gaza to live with my family, but my sister Maha is still having treatment in Turkey.

I hope she gets better soon. I would like to undergo some plastic surgeries to fix the effects of injuries. I wish to play happily with my sisters but I lost my mother and my two sisters, Heba and Samia.

The injured kid: Shahed Anwar AlAreer

Age: 9 years
Area: al-Shejaiya

At the beginning of the offensive, I was not so scared, but at the night of the Al Shejaiya massacre, suddenly the missiles were in the house. We gathered into one room, trapped and praying, with no electricity. I was so frightened I did not know what to do. After dawn, I was so tired and finally dropped off to sleep when suddenly a missile hit the room next to us. My mother later told me I was bleeding and unconscious. Shrapnel from the missile penetrated my left ear and settled in my brain. When I regained consciousness I was crying and shouting from the pain and fear. My mother was also crying, and she called an ambulance for help, but they could not come because of the heavy bombing. So my dad carried me, running until he could find an ambulance. I had



been bleeding for four hours and needed to go to the hospital. I woke up in the hospital hearing the yelling and crying of mothers searching for children or finding their children had been killed. My ear was still bleeding and I was terrified. The doctors knew I needed surgery to remove the fragment, but since it was in a very dangerous position and I was in bad condition, they feared it might only make me worse.

The Eid came and I was still in the hospital, and it made me feel very sad that we were in a state of war during what should have been a holiday. All the other children of the world were enjoying it while the children of Gaza were screaming with pain and fear because of the missiles. Then I got a transfer to Jordan for the surgery, and I was very happy thinking the pain would finally be gone. Unfortunately the surgery failed. They did not get the fragment. The pain did not go away. They told me later that the surgery only had a 5% success rate.



I returned to Gaza after the aggression ended, with fragments still in my head, but I was so happy because I would not have to hear the sounds of bombings and missiles anymore. When I was crossing the border, I had a toy that made noise, and an Israeli soldier standing nearby heard it and looked jumpy and scared. I laughed because I realized they are cowards. I returned to my house and found it bombed,

but I thanked God it was only partially destroyed and not completely. We fixed it and stayed in it. There will be a day when the occupation will be gone and I will have justice from being injured despite the fact that my only fault is being Palestinian.

Muhammed Imad Eddin Qanou'**Age: 13 years****Area: al-Shejaiya**

On Sunday, July 20, 2014, after Al-Maghreb prayer, and while we were having iftar, the artillery started bombing heavily. My older siblings were terrified and started crying. As for me, I was scared to death. We stayed in one room with my parents and did not sleep all night. I was so scared that I had to leave our home with my family as well as our neighbors, taking nothing with us.

While we were running, we saw many people covered in their blood and many human body shreds on the streets so much that I could not walk

anymore. My uncle came and carried me till we passed the shredded bodies.

Then he left me and I continued walking as the bombing continued all around us. We proceeded until we reached our relative's house in Tal El-Hawa. I felt so sad for leaving our house, properties, neighbors, and our relatives behind. During the three-day truce, we returned to our house. We were stunned to find my cousin's body lying there. Then we returned back to our relative's house while the war continued. We were scared, especially when the





Israeli warplanes started bombing towers like Al-Zafer Tower as well as the schools near us. Rocks were falling on the house like rain. I felt as if we were being massacred.

We could not sleep until the aggression ended and the soldiers withdrew from Gaza. At that moment, I was overwhelmed. We fired fireworks to express our celebration. Fireworks

made us happier as they were not rockets that kill or destroy. Simultaneously, we returned to our house. We found it was completely destroyed as a result of the shelling. I felt so sad to know that some of my friends and neighbors' children were killed, like Shadi and Fadi Eslime, as well as the entire families who were killed.

Ghada Atef Jendia

Age: 14 years
Area: al-Shejaiya

We panicked as the intensive artillery barrage started falling on our neighborhood like rain on that night. It was a hysterical fear that I could not handle, so my father started praying and tried to comfort us. But we kept telling him that we should leave. I saw fear in the eyes of each one of my family.

We went to the ground floor because we thought it was the safest place in the house though we knew there was anything but safety



on that night. We heard the shelling coming from all directions, so we assumed that all our neighbors left the area. We decided to stay home, but as fear reached its peak, we knew we must leave. The shelling did not stop, so we held white flags and started running. There were a lot of children with us. The street was full of people. Some were running; others were killed or wounded. It was like 1948 Nakba “catastrophe”, a compulsory migration. It was a sheer misery. Some moms were feebly looking around for their children. It was just scary.

As soon as we left the house they hit our neighbors’ house. We kept running in fear. I did not know where my family were while running. I forgot about everything. My aunt

was crying, “My sons! My sons!”

We spent much time running. There were bodies and scattered parts everywhere. Whenever we saw bodies or something awful while running, we closed our eyes. We stumbled on killed people’s heads several times. I knew later on that some of my relatives were among them. There was a lot of blood on the streets.

When we got to the schools, I felt that I was a stranger. It is not easy to leave a place you spent your whole life living in. In the ceasefire, my relatives went to our neighborhood to check on the houses to find them completely destroyed. For our house, everything was ruined except the salon.

When the offensive was over, we



got back and lived in the remaining part of our home. I was happy in the end of the aggression in spite of the destruction and the loss of dear people. I was happy to get back home.

My message to all children in the world is to resist if someone tried to frighten them. I would advise them to see the steadfastness of the children of Gaza and how they lived through this pain. I would ask their parents to teach them to be strong as my father did. When I told my father that we would die, he told me that we would go to heaven if we die. But here we are having more patience and strength than we did, and clinging to our land more and more.

Tasnim Nael As-Silk

Age: 13 years

Area: al-Shejaiya

Children spend the summer enjoying their vacation. My summer, however, was anything but a vacation. The Israeli occupation offensive that happened created an aura of fear and panic that lasted for a long time. We slept and woke at the sound of huge explosions.

On the 30th of July of the year 2014, I was sitting inside our house but my grandfather, my nephews, and my cousins were all on the roof playing around. Suddenly, we heard a huge bang that got us off our chairs; smoke wrapped



us and the fumes suffocated us.

I ran so quickly upstairs to check on my family but when I got there, I found everyone on the floor dead. Layan, my sister, Ola and Malak, my cousins, Abdul-Aziz and Abdul-Halim and Omneya, my cousins, and my uncle Alaa and my grandfather; they were all dead.

It was so shocking that I fell to the floor and fainted. I soon recovered and ran to carry my sister, Layan, and took the stairs downward. But her head was open and she had no nose. My uncle took her from my arms and ran to the streets as we looked for an ambulance to pick us to the hospital. We only found my neighbor's car, but there was so much blood. Too much blood.

I could not even say farewell to my family.

I was taken to our neighbor's house because of the excessive bombardment. Then another house next door was bombed and we panicked around crying and were taken to my uncle's house in Tal el-Hawa.

My sister died. Layan died and left me alone. I spend every day crying over her and all of my family. I miss her and I miss them. The other day, I had a dream. I saw her, Layan, in a very beautiful place. I asked her about where she was; she told me she was with our loved ones and I asked her, "Who?" She told me with those who were martyred with her too. I woke up crying so hard because she left me here alone.

They took my grandpa. They took my uncle and my cousins. They took my sister. They took Layan.

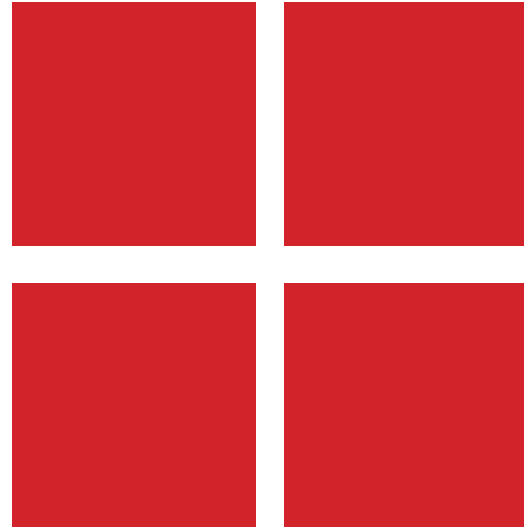
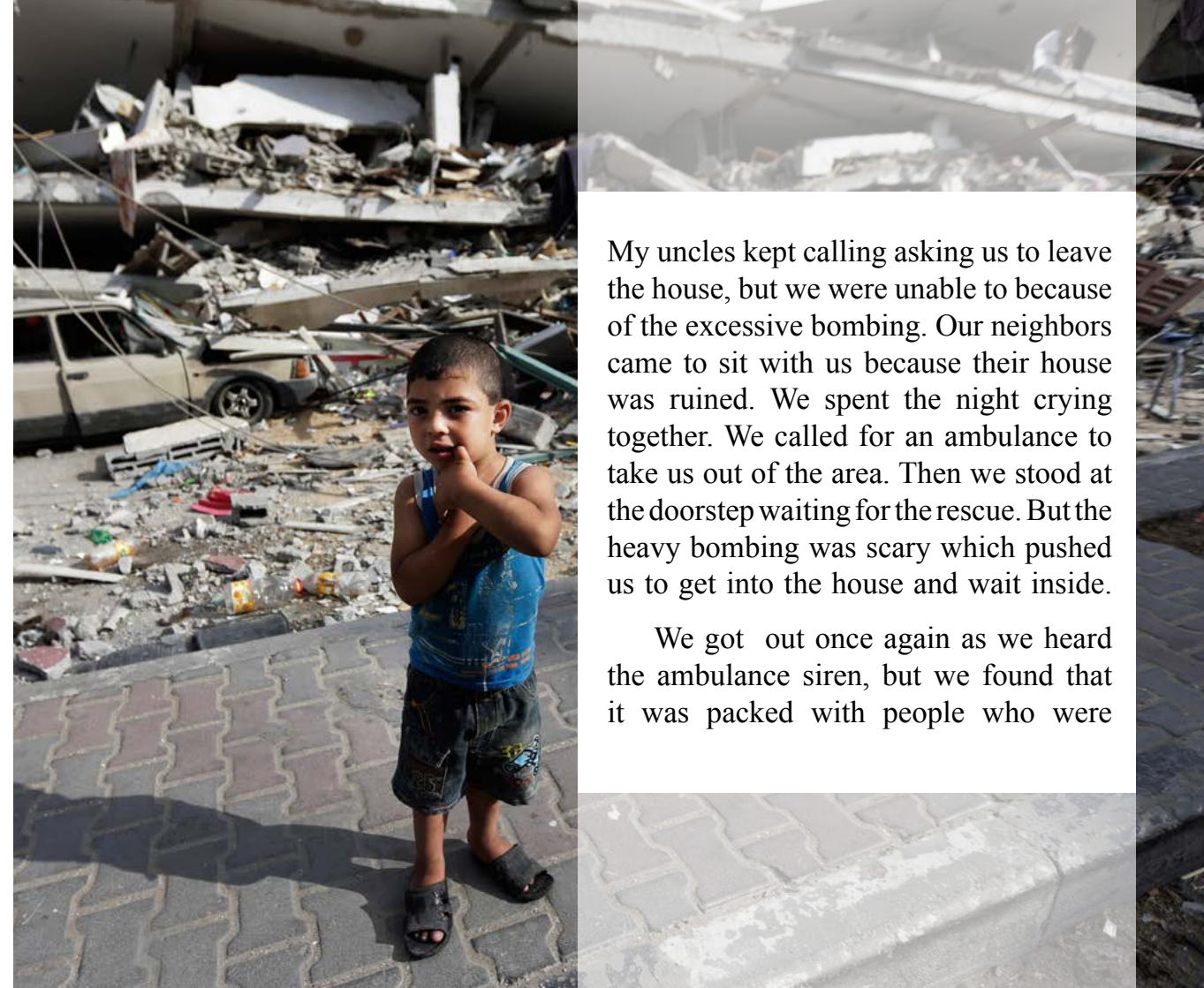


photo by: Hosam Salem


Age: 12 years**Area: al-Shejaiya**

It was Ramadan when we were sitting at home unaware of where the shells were falling. The sound of explosions was really loud. It almost deafened my ears. Some of the shells fell in front of our house. Our kitchen was filled with shrapnel as they bombarded a small garden near our home. We did not have our Suhoor then because we were frightened from getting into the kitchen. We spent that scary night until the dawn broke. We were hungry, hungry and frightened.



My uncles kept calling asking us to leave the house, but we were unable to because of the excessive bombing. Our neighbors came to sit with us because their house was ruined. We spent the night crying together. We called for an ambulance to take us out of the area. Then we stood at the doorstep waiting for the rescue. But the heavy bombing was scary which pushed us to get into the house and wait inside.

We got out once again as we heard the ambulance siren, but we found that it was packed with people who were



waiting like us. So we started running with the others who could not find a seat in the ambulance. We saw death with our eyes. The warplanes were bombing everywhere. Dead bodies were on the streets. Nobody could stop and take them. I was scared.

We got to our relatives' home in the outskirt of Shejaiya, closer to the center of the city. However, the shelling was intensive there too, so we evacuated to our aunt's home, where a man who had an empty house saw us and allowed us to take shelter there until the end of the aggression.

I spent the whole time scared of thoughts I had

of finding our home destroyed when we return, because I had heard some people say that all of Shejaiya homes were destroyed. Fortunately, we found a part of our house still not damaged. But for my uncles' homes, they were all destroyed.

I am still afraid that the Israeli occupation forces might launch a similar attack. I do not want what happened to us to happen again.

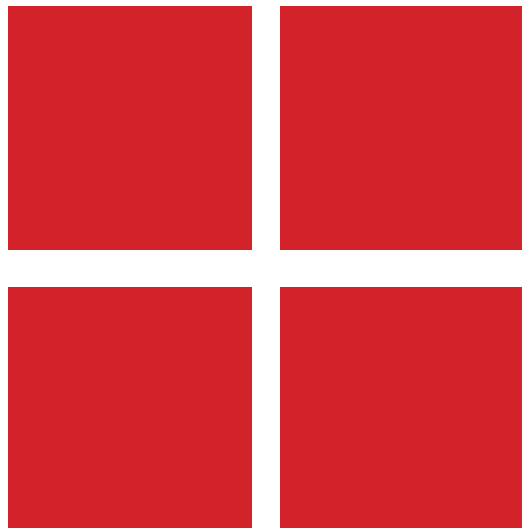


Age: 11 years**Area: al-Shejaiya**

Remembering the offensive, I can only say that the carpet-bombing airstrikes were too spine-chilling for everyone. That is why our neighbors left their houses and ran around our house, and why we hysterically fled with them. There was an ambulance that was targeted and the paramedic, along with a little child, was injured. The child was bleeding, but another man took him to the hospital in another car.

We went to the house of my mother's friend and stayed there for three days. Then we went to a school, Ad-Daraj school; however, there was no room for us there, so we had to go to Az-Zaytun school where we made a small tent of bed sheets. I felt so lonely there: I had no friends and could not sleep well. It was so horrifying.





After the aggression was over, my aunt called us to tell us that our house was entirely wiped off and so were all of our neighbors’.

Our life is so difficult. We cannot differentiate between joyous and miserable days. Every year during Eid time, we would be enjoying our time and visiting our family members. But this year it was different. Some people came to cheer us up at schools, but it did not feel the same. We were not home. We had no home.

I, now, live at a school. I go to study at another one. I wish I could live in a safe house where I feel happy and safe and home. I want to be away from this place, this school. Everyone is sick because of the huge numbers. Everyone wants to go home.

I want to go home.



Marah Zoghbur

Age: 11 years
Area: Sheikh Radwan

We saw nothing but pain and sorrow during the offensive. It was a very tough time: Demolished homes, fragmented children, and mothers mourning their dead children. Seeing all of these things racked my heart. They even blew up towers leaving their residents homeless. All we want is to live peacefully without being killed for no reason. I was saddened a lot for seeing the Baker children who were playing football at the beach. Why did they fire a rocket at them? They just wanted to find a place where they could have some fun after what they had witnessed



of fear. They did not pose a threat to “Israel’s” security. They did not fire rockets at “Israel”. Did not the “Israelis” have mercy that could deter them from killing children!

What about Shuhaibar family? And the massacres in Khuza’a, az-Zanna and Shejaiya? I won’t forget the scenes of people who were running at midnight. They did not let us enjoy the summer vacation, nor did they let us feel the spirituality of Ramadan, Eid al-Fitr or Eid al-Adha. To them,



there was no difference between a child, a woman, or an elderly. They ruined trees and shops and mosques and homes and people's hearts. Nothing was remained the same. It was hard for me to know that there were people who compulsorily left their destroyed homes and looked for a shelter in schools.

I know why they torture us. It is because they want us to get out of Gaza so they would build their settlements here too. But we will never leave. We will rebuild it and make it more beautiful than it was. They want us to hate the resistance fighters and put blame on them, but we won't hate those who protect us from the Zionists' cruelties.

We would rather pray for them, especially at night.

I had the fear of losing my family and staying alone. I had the fear of losing a part of my body as well.

I would never forget that day when we evacuated our house after the warning missile had fallen on it. I had the same feeling that the homeless who were sheltered at the schools had.

I hope that this aggression will never return and the siege on Gaza will be lifted. And I hope that we will liberate Palestine, whole Palestine, and to visit Jerusalem and pray at al-Aqsa Mosque.

Age: 11 years
Area: Aljala'

It breaks my heart to speak of what had happened during the aggression. The children I saw with their hands or legs having been cut. Those little infants who were distorted; one could not tell whether the killed was a boy or a girl. They were figures, distorted figures. I saw the families of the injured and the martyrs, and I saw from beneath their eyelids what pain had inflicted upon their souls. I felt sorry for those who were going to live handicapped whether physically or mentally. I felt sorry for those who were going to live what was left of their lives – alone.



They hit the mosques so we would not learn about our religion; they hit the houses so the people would leave their homes; so they would take control over the city; so the people would travel away from this destroyed city. But, nay! We will never leave this place, our country, our home.

The Israeli occupation destroyed huge towers; they killed whole neighborhoods. I saw the people of Shejaiya fleeing from their houses in the middle of the night, and walking for long distances to get to a safe place. They were carrying their children and running unaware of what awaits them. Some lost their families on



the way: their wives, their children, their husbands. And those who survived were put at the risk of schools being bombed, too.

I saw the wreck of our neighbor's home. I saw the family martyred; I remember it was two or three o'clock. Five rockets hit another house; ar-Ramlawi family's house. I saw rockets' fragments and how sharp and big they were. I can only imagine the pain those who were injured went through.

Whatever I say or describe can hardly truly state what happened. Women were widowed, and children were orphaned, and people were displaced. But we will never leave behind this place no matter how suffocating life gets.

I just have one wish; that is my people to live in peace and happiness.



Sarah Musa Ata-Allah**Age: 9 years****Area: al-Yarmouk'**

The aggression was the worst thing to ever happened to my people. It made us all soak in fear and sadness. The “Israelis” bombed our houses, our children, our mosques, our towers, our schools, and the list goes on and on. Whole neighborhoods’ residents were displaced. I felt so sad for the kids who were martyred at the beach and the children who were martyred while playing on a swing. What was their fault? What is our fault?





The lanterns they threw were so horrifying because they would light up the whole area when it is after midnight! We were also without electricity and water for a long time.

Our cousins, who live next to us, had their house bombarded. There was also a land for Ata Allah, our relatives, that was hit. I saw the ambulances which were targeted.

We spent Ramadan and Eid lamenting those we lost; those we loved.

There were many people who took the schools as their refuge, and had no other place to go to.

Many children died and many places were

completely destroyed. What was our fault as children? As a people? Now the aggression is over, but our memories of grief are still green.

Marah Mohammed Lubbad

Age: 10 years
Area: Aljala'



Did I witness the offensive? Of course I did! I saw things; horrible things. I saw people who lost their houses and their children and their memories and their lives. I saw people who slept on the remains of their homes. They did not have any clothes because their houses were buried, along with all other precious things. Some had to ask their cousins for clothes and daily life necessities.

Those who had no families had to go to the schools.

I know a family that used to live in a house and owned another one. They left the one they were living in when it was bombed and headed to the other one; the shocking news was that their second house was bombed, too! No one's home was safe. Even empty landscapes were bombed. The "Israelis" wanted us to leave our homes, to leave our country so that they would come and live in our homes and take our land. But no! We will not leave our homes. In fact, with every single day that passes, we love our country even more.



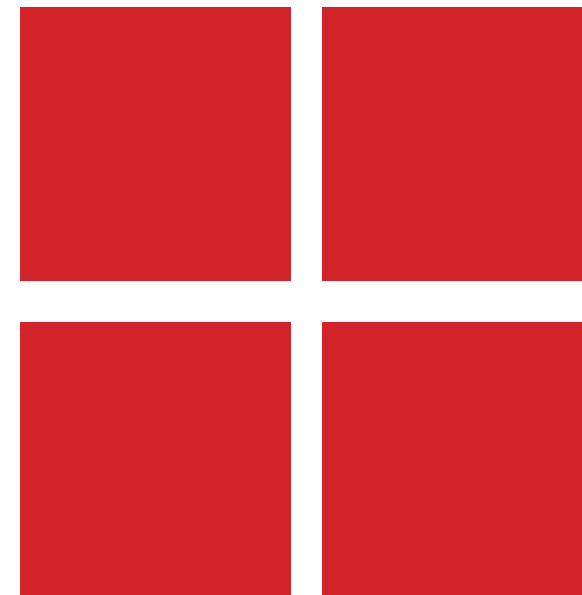
I saw many children whose families were entirely murdered. It broke my heart to see the children crying with great pain. They were left alone to see life going on as if nothing had happened. Those who lost their houses did not have enough food or milk for the children. The blood, the people, the injured, the dead, the handicapped: all of these images were all over Gaza. I saw many people running and the “Israelis” targeting them as they fled. The “Israelis” did not care whether the killed was a child, a young man, a young woman, or an elderly. They bombed to kill.



I saw many people going back to their houses' ruins searching, desperately, for anything to be used: sheets, food, drinks, or clothes. They would almost always not find anything. They would go home and not be able to locate where their homes were.

I was always afraid of my family dying and leaving me behind, so young and so alone. I did not want to lose them.

I just want to be happy. I just want my people to be happy. I want our Gaza to be as beautiful as it was. I want my land, Palestine, to be free.



Mariam Ameen Abdul-Al**Age: 11 years****Area: an-Nafaq**

Like all places in Gaza, our neighborhood had its share of missile strikes. They bombed our neighbor's house, Muhanna family house. They blew up their shoe store. As if the store hurt them or the shoes were rockets.

The walls of our house were cracked when the "Israeli" warplanes targeted Atallah's house. The windows were all smashed. My father feared that the house might collapse on our heads, so we left the house



and sought refuge in our relative's home.

Homes, stores and towers were not the only places which were damaged. They targeted a lot of mosques and factories and vacant lands. Areas were displaced and ambulances were bombed while they were en route to rescue the wounded and to collect the shattered bodies on the streets.

I saw the burned cars which had people inside them when they were bombarded. They do not want us to live freely. Fishermen's equipment along with their rooms at the seaport were ruined. Factories were demolished. They do not want us to have our own dependence and development. They want us to depend on them so that they can control us.

The most inhumane deeds they treated Gazans with were in Shejaiya and Khuza'a, where they executed unarmed civilians while their hands were up. Others were forced to leave their houses and were used as human shields by the coward Zionists. They are coward because they killed the innocent elderly and

women. Even the trees were uprooted. They hate to see us living our life as much as they love to have a life of their own. They want to destruct Gaza and force us to leave it like in 1948. They do not know that we become even stronger when they treat us brutally. And we become even more clinging to our homeland.



I hate that they ruined the gardens and the small parks in Gaza. We are children and we need to play like other children.

I was scared to the extent that I could not sleep for nights when I saw the little child of our neighbor who was killed because of bombing their house. The child was months old.

I hope that the homes and mosques and gardens and everything in Gaza will be rebuilt soon. As I also hope that the mercy of Gad to be with us all the time and that the Israeli occupation would stop their aggressions against us.

Ayat Abdul-Razzaq Alareer**Age: 8 years****Area: al-Shejaiya**

I was playing with my friends in front of my house. Suddenly, there were huge blasts nearby. I felt so scared. The place was covered with dust and smoke. I rushed home and stayed close to my mom while the bombing continued. The sounds of the explosions were really scary, as if they were in my ears. My uncles and my aunt came to our house because their houses were shelled.

During the night, the barrage was concentrated on our areas, becoming even heavier and coming closer to us. We started crying and hugging ourselves in fear. I clung to my mother and my siblings, and I started counting the hours

and the minutes. I wanted the night to end, but the time was slower than the turtle then.

The electricity was off and it was dark and gloomy. The blazing lanterns lit the whole sky. The room was lit as if it was at midday, which made us feel that the light was spotted particularly on us, unaware that the whole area had the same horrible feeling. We froze

in place and couldn't do anything. We were actually waiting for our deaths.

We kept calling my sister throughout the night to make sure she was OK. She was stranded in her house and couldn't come to our home. This made me feel worse. I couldn't decide whether to



pity us for the horrible situation we were through, or to worry about her because she wasn't with us. Some hours later, I couldn't help kkkdrowsiness. My little brother and I slept, but the rest of my family stayed awake.

After a while, my mom tried to wake me up. She looked pale. I still remember her face. I refused to wake up because I was afraid of the bombing and the shelling. I was drained. All of a sudden, my uncle lifted me and hurried to the street. It was at dawn. I was barely conscious of what was going on. I saw all people from all around the area evacuating their houses and escaping. I rubbed my eyes and looked around searching for my mom as my uncle was running carrying me. I didn't find my mom, and I saw my sisters running far from each other. I didn't recognize the street. Homes were



dismantled into raw materials, rubble. Old women were running. And some people were lifting dead bodies and the wounded.

I asked my uncle to put me down. I wasn't wearing my shoes. I stepped on the shrapnel and the rubble, which hurt my feet. We eventually reached the outskirts of Shejaiya where I found my brother who took me to my uncle's home. I cried a lot because I didn't find my mom and my sisters. I almost thought they got killed, but after some hours we gathered. Then we started the struggle of looking for shelter until we found a house to rent till the end of the assault. They were very hard days of my life.

I was super happy when the offensive ended. I distributed sweets to my relatives because of my happiness. And I thanked

God, for I wasn't killed like many other children who were.

When the offensive ended, we went home. We found that it was totally damaged. The whole neighborhood actually was destroyed. We found a small room that can be used as a shelter. But we will stay in it and will never leave our land.

What I hope is that the Zionist forces leave us alone and stop ruining our lives. And I hope that our home returns to the way it was so we can live peacefully in it.

Wafa' Adel Mushtaha

Age: 11 years
Area: al-Shejaiya

What I felt throughout the offensive can only be translated into words of insecurity and discomfort. Everything around me was falling apart. The sounds of shelling and bombing invaded my soul with horror. Whenever I saw pictures of martyrs and injured, my heart would twist and fill with concern. What if something wrong happens to us?

I was reading about the 1948 Catastrophe and I was destined to experience it myself.

When we left our home at five in the morning, against our will, we saw all kinds of terror. Bodies were thrown everywhere and the bombing never stopped. We had to leave our neighborhood because it was too dangerous. I left everything behind: my



house, my bed, and my toys. We went to my sister's place thinking it will be safer. We were wrong. There was another woman taking my sister's house as a shelter; she was old. When a house next door was hit, this woman, who was very old, couldn't leave which made her daughter cry for her, "Mom, mom, I want my mom." But everyone held her back because it was too risky to go back inside.

I burst out in tears. I could not stop.

We would sleep in the same room and pray with the same breath that we either live together or die together. It was impossible to imagine the agony of losing a sibling or a parent. Whenever I watched the news and saw how distorted the

bodies of martyrs were or how deeply injured my people were, I would go into severe shock with pain and sorrow. It was like I was waiting my turn. I kept telling myself that justice must be served for those helpless people!

Meanwhile, my sister volunteered to be part of a campaign for psychological support for children. I insisted that I go with her, and after a long time, she agreed. First, we went to al-Shifa hospital where I met Lama and Eman. I found the true meaning of patience and steadfastness in their eyes. Lama, who lost her sister Nour, was so beautifully patient about it. I thanked God for I had not lost anyone and wished them both a speedy recovery.

Then, we went to the schools where I saw the marks of woe and grief on the



faces of the children. I saw exhaustion, fear, and displacement with my own eyes. I met a handicapped girl called Zina. She was wishing for the offensive to be over, and so was I. I waved at her and left. Eventually the offensive was over too.

Perhaps it is over now, but the effects it left will never fade away. I still psychologically suffer from what happened. The houses are still destroyed;

the people are still injured. Everything reminds me of what happened; but I am alright. I will always be alright. I will never give up on my land.

It is my right to play in my country the way I want, whenever I want. Oh, world! Give us our rights back.



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Ali Abdul-Nasser Bakroun

Age: 10 years

Area: al-Shejaiya

On the first day of the aggression, an ambulance came and took us out of our home because it is very close to the buffer zone, which was more dangerous than any other place, although there were no safe places in the whole Strip. We went to my uncle's house on al-Beltaji Street to spend the days of the offensive there.

On Sunday, the day of the massacre, the tanks started shelling the houses and the warplanes were bombing everywhere. I felt so scared that I couldn't say a single word. Then they blew

up my uncle's neighbor's house over the heads of the people inside it. At that point my fear reached its peak. We couldn't live with this fear and cruelty, so we evacuate Shejaiya neighborhood with the others. We found that the whole area was damaged.

Our house was a pile of rubble. We were all shocked. We couldn't even recognize where the exact location of our house was because of the destruction.

Now, we are living in a house my father rented in Tal el-Hawa. I miss my big house. I miss playing with my relatives and my neighbors.

I miss the feeling of happiness and peace.

Nothing was left. I just hope that we would rebuild our home to get back to my beloved neighborhood.

Nirmeen Sharif Hillis

Age: 10 years
Area: al-Shejaiya

When the airstrikes started hitting the Montar Hill, we became very afraid because it is so close to where we live. The sound was too loud and deafening. My father took us to a friend's house where we stayed until it was okay to go home. But after we came back on Sunday evening we heard tanks moving around shelling the houses indifferently.

We were all petrified but it was impossible to leave as the

shelling was still in process. At the same time, it was too scary to stay inside. That's what made everyone leave their houses screaming and running. We couldn't stay home either, so we ran along until dawn. My sister, Jenin, was injured and she kept bleeding which made my heartbeats race incredibly fast. I was too afraid of thinking of what might happen to her.

We got to al-Shejaiya parking lot and

that's where my father's friend picked us up. We stayed at his house and only returned home during the ceasefires.

When the aggression was over, I was glad. However, it still saddened me to see all these homeless people. All these families that lost many of their members. And my friends who lost their parents.



Age: 11 years**Area: al-Shejaiya**

When the aggression first began, the sound of bombings, though all around us, was to some extent a bit far. But then it came really close to my house, and that's when I became very frightened. There was some sort of an arrangement between Red Cross ambulances and the Israelis so that they would allow them to get us out of our houses.

At midnight, my mother woke me up to leave the house. We went to my maternal grandfather's home because my paternal grandfather's was full of my uncles and aunts who were displaced, too. We stayed there for two days until we had to leave

again. The Israelis launched a land invasion on 20th of July 2014; and that was the darkest, scariest, most horrific night I went through.

We were surrounded by all kinds of tanks and shelling. It was a slow death for everyone. What made my heart ache the most was when my cousin Fat'hi called my big brother asking for help. Fat'hi was injured and bleeding, but no one could do go and help him. No

one could do anything. I prayed he would be rescued. But he bled to death. He could not be saved. There were tanks everywhere.

Spending 11 hours under such circumstances of murder and screaming was too tiring. At 7 in the morning, we held hands as we ran out of the area, shouting and



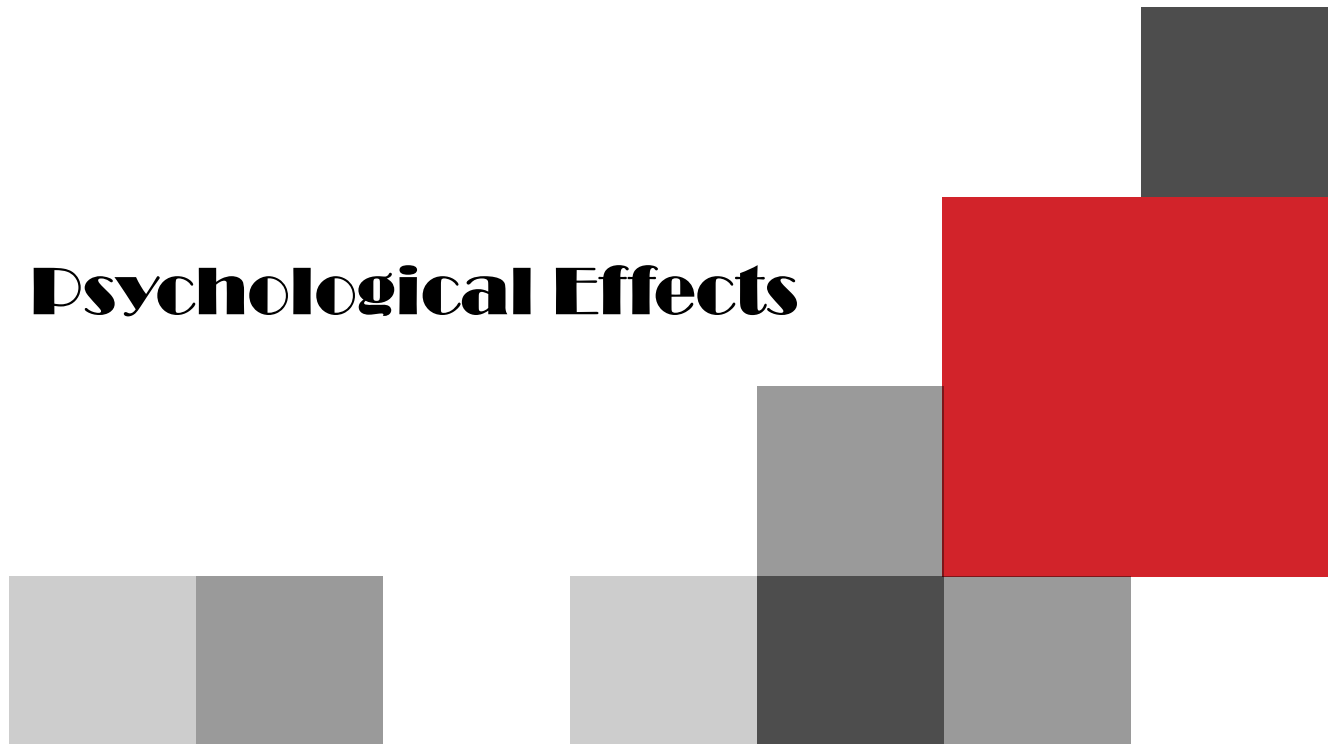


crying. Everywhere we looked, there were dead bodies. We went to a relative's house in Gaza where we stayed for a couple of days until we rented an apartment. Our house was completely destroyed. One would not even recognize that a house ever stood there. Everything we ever had was destroyed by the airstrikes. Everything.





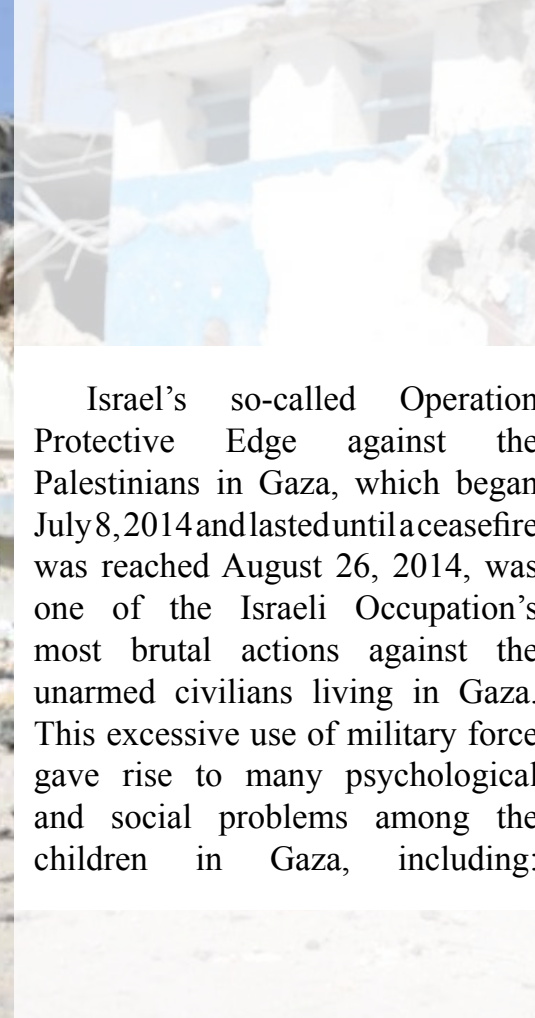
Psychological Effects



Psychological Effects of Israeli Zionist Aggression in 2014 on Children in the Gaza Strip

Written by: Dr. Jawad Al-shikh khalil

The Palestinian people suffer in many different ways from the harsh conditions resulting from the Israeli Occupation. Israel subjugates and humiliates Palestinians using various techniques, including high-tech munitions, economic stagnation, political pressure, as well as social and psychological pressures.



Israel's so-called Operation Protective Edge against the Palestinians in Gaza, which began July 8, 2014 and lasted until a ceasefire was reached August 26, 2014, was one of the Israeli Occupation's most brutal actions against the unarmed civilians living in Gaza. This excessive use of military force gave rise to many psychological and social problems among the children in Gaza, including:

1 Direct Psychological Effects:

The direct effects take the form of psychological shocks which produce difficulty in speaking, bedwetting, fear of loneliness, excessive attachment to parents, difficulties in sleeping, poor appetite, a fear of strange places, instability, difficulties in focusing and understanding, as well as lack of self-confidence.



2 Indirect Psychological Effects:

The Israeli aggression and its accompanying stress and tension cause an ambiguity about the child's future and may create life crises within the family. The characteristics may resemble dullness, depression, and strictness within the home. Due to the stress on

the parents, there may be bickering and fighting in the home which impacts the children who witness this increased parental tension, causing a feeling of helplessness and worrying about their future.

Evacuating their homes and moving into temporary shelters during wartime may also result in bad psychological and social effects on children as they feel uprooted and vulnerable after losing



their home, which represented a vitally important and safe sphere in their lives. Temporary shelters, on the other hand, lack the elements of security and a real life, which may lead to a disturbance of social mores and a deterioration of morals, as well as an increase in delinquent practices and socially mal-adapted actions. Some of these psychological effects include:

a) Fear, Extreme Horror and Crying

Children are afraid of death because they may have witnessed the death of a close relative, neighbor, or school friend. Death destabilizes the children's self-esteem and trust in their environment, and they fear their surroundings are unsafe, especially at night when they



are sleeping and the airstrikes increase.

b) Worrying

Children's feelings of a lack of security frequently leads to increased worrying, resulting in a loss of self-confidence, lying, domestic violence, bedwetting, stuttering, tantrums and the tendency to sabotage and behave rambunctiously.

c) Aggressive behavior

Naturally, the daily activities and circumstances during wartime create severe anxiety and depression in children, leading to aggressive behaviors. The loss of a parent, especially the father, has an important role in developing aggressive behaviors in children. The aggressive behavior appears as a reaction to these wartime experiences that the child is exposed to and so he tries to



search for stability and safety. The aggressive behavior may create an obstacle to his/her educational achievement and may affect the child's relationships with others negatively. Since society frowns on the aggressive child, this may lead to trouble and his inability to form social relations with others. The aggressive behavior is abnormal because the child may harm others or himself. The aggressive behavior differs from child to child, but may include negative emotions, convulsion, shouting, crying, and continuous movement. It can also be seen in attacking people, hitting things, spitting and pulling hair. Not only that, aggression can affect children by either eating greedily, or suffering from regression which is common in thumb sucking, nail or pen biting or even bedwetting.



d) Excessive movement and attention deficit

The bad experiences children go through can lead to the inability to concentrate; for example, children may find some difficulties when sitting; they may forget information quickly; and they may feel exhausted after reading only one page because they are unable to sustain their attention on that subject. In addition to the physiological stress caused by feeling weak and depressed, the child sometimes starts feeling that his daily activities are meaningless, or even silly.



Bedwetting is a normal stage of child development, and most children stop wetting their beds nightly over three years of age. However, the repeated aggressions launched by the Israeli occupation forces on Gaza have affected children's physiological well-being, and some children are still urinating during sleep even after they've learned to control their bladders.

e) Thumb-sucking and nail-biting

Children frequently suck their thumbs and bite their nails when they are angry or nervous. Parents and others around the child should ignore this habit completely. If not, this bad habit could become ingrained in the child and he will continue doing it.

f) Pronunciation difficulties

Pronunciation plays a big role in the child's life since it is the process that enables him to communicate with others. Solving pronunciation problems depends primarily on achieving safety and security, as well as building self-confidence in children.



g) Feeling of insecurity and the inability to protect

Shelling Palestinian homes randomly and killing men, women and children has caused a sense of insecurity among many people of all ages. Parents, who are held responsible for protecting their children, feel a sense of failure because they aren't able to protect them.

h) Anger, outburst and irritability

Excessive anger has become a prominent parental characteristic when dealing with their children. Not only do some parents scream at their children, whether for important or simple reasons, but they also

sometimes use physical violence against their children. Moreover, children can feel anger from adults in schools, the market and other places. Finally, committing abusive crimes against children, who have the right to celebrate on Eid, may also scar them for life.



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