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BY JAMAL KANJ

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## *Rafah, Between Netanyahu's Metaphysical Power and Western's Reality Disconnect*



Youtube screengrab.

Allow me to begin this piece by sharing the story of a child from Gaza. Unlike your child, sister, or niece, Hind Rajab didn't live to see her 6th birthday. Children her age typically have grand plans, eagerly anticipating to start schooling and perhaps grappling with the challenge of completing a Lego game. As a six-year-old child, Hind, however, stared death in the eye through the gaping black barrel of an Israeli machine gun.

Hind's uncle, Bashar Hamada, drove a black Kia Picanto along with his wife and their children: 4-year-old Sarah, Mohammed, 11, Raghad, 12, Sana, 13, Layan 15, and their 6-year-old cousin, Hind. Bashar heeded Israeli orders seeking a "safe zone" for his family

and niece in Gaza. No room left in the crowded small car, Hind's mother and elder siblings fled on foot.

On January 29, it was a little after one in the afternoon when an Israeli tank blocked the road ahead of the car. Bashar frantically waved a white flag. The machine gun on the turret pointed at the car. The maze of the machine gun's sight spider web shielded the gunner's face. The tank swung its heavy gun swiftly in the direction of the car. The ominous 120 mm black hole glared at them. The children cried out in terror. Suddenly, a blazing flare, and a ball of fire flickered from the machine gun. Burst of bullets shattered the windshield, bullets ricocheted on the body of the car.

Hind dropped between the backseat and her aunt in the front seat. Layan on the other side of the backseat, wedged herself behind her father in the driver's seat. Sana and Raghad's bodies bounced back and forth as bullets found their mark. Warm blood splattered their faces, Layan began to bleed, and Hind trembled in terror, sheltered beneath the lifeless body of her cousin, Raghad.

At 2:28 pm, Omar from Palestine Red Crescent Society (PRCS) main dispatch center in Ramallah was connected with 15-year-old Layan.

"They are firing at us," her screams, deafening. "The tank is next to me," she says in horror.

"Are you hiding?" Omar asks.

Gunfire reverberated in the background; Layan screeched. Then, abruptly, the line went dead.

In shock and traumatized, Omar went looking for his colleague, Rana Faqih, in another room. He told her what he heard. Her heart pounding in her chest, Rana guided him back to the dispatch room and asked him to call the number. His fingers quivered over the dial pad as he dialed the phone number, desperate for any sign of life on the other end.

This time, Hind answers the phone. Her voice unsteady.

"Are you in the car now?" he asked her.

"Yes," came the small voice on the other end.

Omar passes the phone to Rana, who gently assures Hind that she will stay on the line with her until help arrives.

Hind's voice crackled with static, Rana unable to understand.

"Who are you with?" Rana asked.

"With my family," Hind's voice trembling.

Rana asked Hind about the other occupants of the car.

“They’re dead,” a shrill voice came from the other side.

“How was the car hit?” Rana inquires.

“A tank.” Hind breathing heavily. “The tank is next to me ... it’s coming towards me ... it’s very, very close,” she cries out in despair.

Attempting to conceal the fear in her voice, Rana continues to reassure Hind, promising that she will arrange for help as quickly as possible.

“Don’t be scared,” she told Hind. “They’re not going to hurt you. ... Don’t leave the car.” Rana doubted her own words.

Silence ensued for long seconds. Rana wasn’t certain if her panic was as apparent as Omar’s who was sweating.

“If I could get you out I would.” Rana sought to re-engage Hind. “We’re trying our very best.” She cried silently, fighting back her tears as she struggled to maintain a steady voice.

“Please come get me,” Hind said. Again, and again: “Come get me.” A distant rumble of fire in the background. “Come get me,” Hind pleaded desperately.

Around 3 pm, Rana’s colleagues in Gaza pinpointed the car’s location near Al-Azhar University. However, accessing an ambulance in a closed military zone required clearance from the Israeli military. Rana immediately contacted a Palestinian Ministry of Health (PMH) official, providing Hind’s location and requesting permission from the Israeli army to dispatch an ambulance. The PMH official, Fathi Abu Warda, then reached out to the Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT) to secure safe passage for the paramedics.

Waiting anxiously for a response, Rana remained on the call with Hind. Hours dragged on since Abu Warda’s contact with COGAT, cold and darkness followed the menacing sunset.

“I’m afraid of the dark,” Hind shivered.

“Is there gunfire around you?” Rana asked.

“Yes. Come get me,” Hind pleaded over again. “I’m so scared, please come.” Rana was powerless.

Around 6 pm, COGAT gave the PMH official the clearance to send an ambulance. With the green light finally granted, PCRS deemed it safe enough to dispatch a two-person crew consisting of Youssef Zeino and Ahmed Al-Madhoon.

The ambulance drew near, just a few meters from the Kia. Rana felt a surge of relief, confident that Hind would soon be rescued. But then the paramedics’ report to the

dispatcher shattered her hopes: an Israeli tank had targeted them with a laser beam. Soon it followed with gunshots and a loud explosion. Then, an eerie silence enveloped the scene. Contact was lost with the ambulance team and Hind, plunging Rana into a state of agonizing uncertainty.

For 12 agonizing days, Hind's mother endured the torment of not knowing the fate of her 6-year-old child and the two brave men who were cleared by the Israeli military to rescue her. Against all odds, she clung to hope, praying that they had been detained by the Israeli army. Each time she heard the wail of an ambulance siren or caught sight of flashing strobe lights, her heart raced with anticipation, thinking that perhaps it could be Hind at last.

On the 13<sup>th</sup> day, and after the Israeli tanks had finally cleared the area, the Kia was discovered, bearing the grim remnants of tragedy. Among the decayed bodies of two adults and six children, Hind's small, decomposed form was found behind the front passenger seat. A few meters away, amidst the ruins of the burned ambulance, lay the charred remains of the two paramedics, their bodies intertwined in the mingled wreckage.

If Hind were Kateryna from Ukraine or an Israeli girl, her face would have been plastered across Western television screens. The managed "free" media would have clamored to interview her mother and every surviving member of her family. Yet, unlike a privileged Israeli child who may have lived in Hind's parent's original home, Hind, born to two displaced parents endured a life of destitution, and was ultimately murdered by an Israeli tank gunner. Her memory was further silenced by a managed "free" Western media, daunted by "professional victims" and cowed so not to be labeled as "antisemite" should they expose Israeli atrocities and injustices.

Hind, along with her family and the paramedics were not an exception in Israel's war against civilians. They were murdered per the same self-inflicted Israeli rules of engagement that killed the three escaping Israeli captives waving a white flag in the streets of Gaza. After all, the Israeli army is the product of a culture manifested by statements like those by the Israeli president who declared that the "entire nation out there that is responsible..."

Hind was just one of the more than 12,000 children, whom Netanyahu vowed, on October 28, 2023, would face impending vengeance: "remember what Amalek has done to you... we do remember..." His reference harks back to a verse from his holy Bible advocating to "slay both man and woman, infant and suckling."

The mainstream Western media, alongside governments, have been directly complicit in enabling Netanyahu's crime war diplomatically, financially, and militarily in the contemporary "biblical" genocide. Additionally, the media has become an Israeli PR accessory tool, complying with directives not to send correspondents to cover the conflict from inside Gaza, instead embedding their reporters with the Israeli army and reporting only what Israel permits them to see.

All this has reinforced the apparent cognitive bias of the American president, Joe Biden, and Western leaders in general. For their interpretation of reality in Gaza, and Palestine at large, is predisposed by preconceived beliefs regardless of evidence to the contrary. Likewise, the managed Western "free" media carries on marketing Israeli outright lies, not disinformation, thus creating a reality disconnect by shaping individuals' perspectives and perceptions in ways that diverge from objective reality.

For instance, and lacking fixed military targets in a guerilla warfare, Western media uncritically echoed Israeli lies, portraying medical centers as alleged command centers, thereby justifying Israeli actions to disable vital medical facilities, arresting medical staff under false pretexts in clear violation of international law. This resulted in the deaths of infants in incubators and injured deprived of oxygen and life support. This pattern continued as Israeli forces advanced from one major hospital (supposed military objective) to the next, ultimately reaching Rafah at the southern borders of Gaza.

Rafah, originally designated by Israel as a "safe zone," is a 23-square-mile area and currently home for 1.4 million people, or approximately 61,000 individuals per square mile. Of these, 71% were forcibly displaced by Israel from central and northern Gaza. The Israeli strategy of assigning a border region as a "safe zone," over-populating it with displaced people, and then unilaterally changing the designation to a war theater is part of Israel's ultimate objective to ethnically cleanse Palestinians across the Sinai desert.

Despite all this, the distorted reality, perpetuated by deeply rooted innate Western racism, obscures the West's ability to recognize the conspicuous link driving modern Israeli atrocities and the 3000-year-old metaphysical conviction to bring about total destruction and "... put to death men and women, children and infants, cattle and sheep, camels and donkeys." And push who survive from their homes in a repeat of the 1948 "Nakba" into foreign lands.

With America's enabling of the new Israeli false "prophet," European dilly-dallying and the impotent international community, more specifically Arab and Muslim nations, Rafah

may indeed serve as the last stand resisting Netanyahu's intractable "heavenly" crusade in the final phase of the Israeli biblical genocide against the new "Amalek" in Gaza.

Jamal Kanj is the author of *Children of Catastrophe: Journey from a Palestinian Refugee Camp to America*, and other books. He writes frequently on Arab world issues for various national and international commentaries.

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