

Israel's "Operation Cast Lead" 1,400 Palestinians deaths, 5000 wounded

Palestinian Doctor Offers Message of Reconciliation After Loss of Three Daughters

By [Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East](#)

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Toronto — On January 16th 2009, during Israel's 22-day offensive in Gaza, an Israeli tank fired at Dr. Izzeldin Abuelaish's apartment in the Jabalia refugee camp, killing three of his daughters and a niece. Over a year later, a still-grieving Dr. Abuelaish, has embarked on a cross-Canada tour to promote his new autobiography "I Shall Not Hate," and deliver a crucial message to Canadians about peace, tolerance and co-existence in the Middle East.

Israel began "Operation Cast Lead" on December 27th 2008, which left some 1,400 Palestinians - largely civilians - dead, and wounded more than 5,000. The Israeli Army tried to excuse its attack on the Abuelaish household by claiming its soldiers believed militants were operating from the residence. The Israeli government never issued an apology or any of the promised compensation as a result of their mistake.

In spite of his personal loss and suffering, Dr. Abuelaish vowed to use his own calamity as an opportunity to shed the light on Palestinian life under the Israeli occupation. "I believe everything happens for a reason, and that even my family's loss serves a purpose. The deaths of my daughters opened the Israelis' eyes to the suffering on the other side. I believe there is a better future for us because of what this tragedy has taught. The past is only there to learn from," says Abuelaish. "Let my daughters be the last to die," he adds.

Like many Canadians, Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East (CJPME) welcomes Dr. Abuelaish message of dialogue and mutual understanding. "Dr. Abuelaish's story is indeed inspiring. Here is a man who has been through a tragedy like none other, and yet he is using his energy to create a space for a much needed discussion between the Palestinians and the Israelis," says Thomas Woodley, president of CJPME. "Our hope is that Dr. Abuelaish's story will expand Canadian understanding of the Israel/Palestine conflict, and encourage Canadian policymakers to work more assiduously for a just solution to the conflict. In this way, we may be able to prevent others from having to live through misfortunes like those of Dr. Abuelaish," adds Woodley.

Dr. Abuelaish is currently living in Toronto with his five remaining children, where he is an associate professor at the Dalla Lana School of Public Health at the University of Toronto.

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Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East (CJPME) is a non-profit and secular organization bringing together men and women of all backgrounds who labour to see justice and peace take root again in the Middle East. Its mission is to empower decision-makers to view all sides with fairness and to promote the equitable and sustainable development of the region.

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