

It Has Changed My Life Forever



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As a result of confrontations that began in May 2021 on *Jabal Sabih* (Sabih Mountain) in Beita, a village south of Nablus, ten Palestinians have been killed, including two children, and many have been injured or left with disabilities. Amid attempts by Israeli settlers to reestablish an outpost on *Jabal Sabih*, in violation of international law, Palestinian villagers have expressed their opposition in the form of marches and protests, bringing them into confrontation with the Israel Defense Forces (IDF).

Beita is home to 15,000 residents. “Each household has experienced misfortune over the last year. If you enter any house and ask what the family has been through, they will tell you that they have lost a loved one, faced injury, or have a family member who has become disabled or been imprisoned,” explains Saeed Mohammad Ahmad Hamayil, whose 16-year-old son, Mohammad, was killed last June.

These are testimonies from Beita villagers about how their lives have changed since the confrontations started in 2021.

A devastated father – Saeed Mohammad Ahmad Hamayil, 49 years old, whose son was killed two months shy of his seventeenth birthday

We are building a new home because we cannot bear to stay in the house where our son lived. Everywhere I look, I see my son. It’s too painful. With each day that passes it feels as though he is being killed anew, especially now, because he would have been getting ready for his high school exams. Mohammad used to tell me, “I want to build a house and live here one day.” We want to make his wish come true. The new house will be closer to the cemetery, and this will somehow make Mohammad’s mother feel closer to her son.



Saeed Hamayel waters the flowers he planted on top of his son's grave. Photo by Tanya Habjouqa/ICRC

I was an employee in the Palestinian Ministry of Labor. I retired early because I could not go on with my work due to my current circumstances. In 2021, my son was killed. So many children were killed. My son Mohammad was born on August 4, 2004. He was killed two months before turning 17. He was one of the smartest children in his school. He was sociable, loved people, and had a charismatic personality. He would always gather the students and teachers around him. He dreamed of going to college and majoring in law. All his hopes and

dreams are gone. Mohammad was very passionate. He was a writer, he loved to write.

I can't do anything to protect my children, I can't even protect myself. How am I going to protect them? My son's death broke me, his siblings, and his mother. I'm trying to keep it together as I talk, but I can't. I don't want the crimes to be documented anymore; we have enough documents. We want these violent acts to stop. We are fathers; we feel and care for our sons.

He was my love – Um Ali, the widow of Imad Ali Dweikat

My husband was an amazing father. Villagers usually prefer boys, but he loved the girls so much. Of course, he was thrilled when his infant son, Ali, arrived, and delighted in him during the two months before he was killed. But he was always so happy with his girls.

He was a perfect man. He was a friend, brother, and husband, all in one. He was my love. We were married for 11 years. I can't believe I have to live without him. But I have to be strong for my girls, I have no choice. I struggled to find work as a teacher, trying to provide for my children. I was used to being at home with my children. Now, I spend most of my day caring for others. I'm just in survival mode. There is no life without him.

My eldest cannot speak about him. Until now, she hasn't gone to his grave. I try to get the girls to talk about their feelings, but they have trouble expressing themselves.



Alaa and Baylasan, the daughters of Imad Ali Dweikat who was killed in Beita in 2021, enjoy the spring season in Jabal Sabih. Photo by Tanya Habjouqa/ICRC.



He had a nickname for each of his girls. He never got the chance to nickname his infant son. He called Alaa “his first and biggest joy.” He called our second daughter, Baylasan, “my bodyguard, my protector” because she’s strong. Our third we called “*harkoosha*” (gremlin) because she’s a troublemaker. And Roaa was named “a little smurf” because she’s tiny.

His dream was for the girls to graduate from university. He expected Alaa to become a doctor and Baylasan an engineer. He wanted them to achieve big things in life. He cared deeply about their education. His participation in the protest on the mountain that day was also about protecting his family and the girls’ future.

He is worried about protecting his other eye – Rayan, a 12-year-old child who lost his eye

“It happened on a Thursday. We were sitting on the mountain, and suddenly something exploded in my face. I almost passed out, but then someone held me. I was in a lot of pain. I used to be able to see with both of my eyes, now I can only see with one eye. This is our land, and we will not abandon it. But it has changed my life forever,” said Rayan.

Rayan’s father added, “my son is 12 years old. He can’t see through his left eye at all. I was at work, preparing to go back home. My father called me to ask if



Rayan, a 12-year-old child who lost his eye in Beita in 2021. Rayan also suffered multiple injuries to his head, toe, and leg.



I’d gone to the hospital. Rayan was not answering his phone. So, I knew he had been injured. They took him in a civilian car to the hospital. I saw him at the field clinic, then I took him to Rafidia Hospital, then to Al-Najah Hospital in Nablus. I was shocked. These events usually happen on Fridays, not Thursdays.

Rayan suffered multiple injuries to his head, his toe, and his leg. He’s more upset now. He’s angry. Anything that he asks for, I give him. I cannot hurt his feelings or say no to him. He is afraid now. He does not play with anyone at school anymore, he is preoccupied with protecting his other eye.”

We never left the mountain – Abu Jareh

My name is Essa Hamdi Maali. I was born in 1954. I am married and have nine daughters and two sons. I was a construction worker in Israel until the age of 45, when I came to Beita to cultivate my land. I lived a quiet life until the settlers came.

The Beita protests involved the whole village: men, women, the elderly, and youth. We began our “nights of confusion” as a form of protest – playing loud music and car horns over the loudspeakers turned towards our mountain and pointing laser lights at the settlement at night.



Essa Hamdi Maali (Abu Jareh) sits under an old tree in Jabal Sabih. Photo by Tanya Habjouqa/ICRC.



We sat in the tents on winter days and during Ramadan. Our shared demands brought us villagers closer together. For a hundred days, we never left the mountain.

I’m tired. I can’t access my own land which I inherited from my grandfather and father. We are afraid that one day there won’t be any land. We made a promise to protect the mountain. I

have a photo of every tree to make sure it stays in my memory. I have a little album. I know the names of all the plants here in Beita.

SCAN
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