

Newspaper	New Straits Times
Date	21/11/2012

# Witnesses recall gory details of 2009 war

NST - 21/11/12

**KUALA LUMPUR:** The mood was sombre as four of 11 witnesses recounted their torture and suffering at the Kuala Lumpur War Commission hearing on Palestine yesterday.

Addressing lead prosecutor Prof Gurdial Singh Nijar, the first witness, Salah Al-Sammouni, said 21 members of his family were killed in an Israeli airstrike in Gaza in 2009.

"My cousins and I were searching for wood to cook when suddenly I heard someone shouting the word 'R.P.G.' (rocket-propelled grenade). The rocket hit us, killing one of my cousins. I was wounded as a shrapnel hit my forehead and body."

Salah said he rushed to his house to seek help but found that his house was being attacked by an Israeli Apache helicopter. The helicopter was dropping air bombs.

"There was blood everywhere. I found my parents and daughter lying on the ground," he said, adding that the house was hit three times by the Israeli forces.

The 33-year-old said after the bombings stopped, he and several family members headed to the nearest hospital but Israeli soldiers blocked their way. He said the soldiers also did not allow ambulances to enter his village and blocked the road with tanks.

"We walked about 3km before receiving medical aid at the nearest hospital."

Salah, who lost his only daughter in the attack, managed to claim the bodies of his family members two weeks later.

The second witness was his cousin, Mahmoud Al-Sammouni, 15, who lost 29 family members in the Gaza war in 2009.

He said his family were shot at randomly as

Israeli soldiers barged into his house.

"The Israeli soldiers ordered my father to open the door. He was immediately shot dead."

During a demonstration in the West Bank, Nabeel Al-Issawi, 22, the third witness, said he was shot at by an Israeli sniper when he tried to help a child.

Nabeel, a high school student at the time, took part in the demonstration to protest against the Israeli government.

"The soldiers were firing blank bullets and throwing tear gas canisters at the demonstrators. I noticed a little girl suffocating because of the tear gas."

When he tried to help the girl, he said he was shot at by a sniper.

Nabeel underwent three surgeries to remove the bullet.

The fourth witness, Jawwad Issa Musleh, 42, said he was arrested eight times by the Israeli forces.

"The Israeli forces think they can kill our souls and patriotism by sending us to prisons. But the prisons have become universities where the Palestinians taught each other and uplift their spirits to continue fighting for their freedom."

When he was first arrested at the age of 15, Jawwad said he was forced to admit committing an offence.

"I was forced to say that I was a terrorist working for the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. After getting used to the harsh life in the prisons, I soldiered on and am here today. I believe more than 500,000 innocent Palestinians are living in Israeli jails."

The hearing continues today.