

## Feature: Shot With My Hands In The Air

Submitted by: Jody.McIntyre

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<http://www.ctrlaltshift.co.uk/article/feature-shot-my-hands-air>

{youtube}vUdhNq2Na1c&feature{/youtube}

Earlier this year, Khamis Fathe Abu Rahmah, aged 27, was shot in the head with a high-velocity tear gas canister whilst participating in a non-violent demonstration at the wall in Bil'in, a Palestinian village. It was the same weapon the Israeli Occupation Forces would use to murder his close friend Bassem Abu Rahme, in the same village, just a few months later. Jody McIntyre spoke to Khamis to hear about his experiences:

Tell me about the time you were injured at the Wall?

On Friday 23rd January 2009, I went to participate in our weekly non-violent demonstration against the Wall. The Israeli soldiers immediately started throwing a huge amount of tear gas, so we were making our way back towards the village. The soldiers followed us in two jeeps, and started to shoot more gas at us. I was standing alone in the field, and my friend Bassem was crouched behind a rock nearby. They shot one tear gas canister at me, so I put my arms in the air to show that I was unarmed and clearly posing no threat. Then the soldiers shot me again – this time, the high-velocity canister hit me directly in the head.

I don't remember anything after that, but later I saw photos and videos of blood pouring from my head, my face in a blank expression... like I was dying, and people rushing to help me. To begin with, only Bassem and his brother Ahmed were there to support me; Ahmed was holding a wrapped up flag against my head, desperately trying to stem the flow of blood, and Bassem was holding my hand and calling for more people to help, shouting that someone had been injured and that it was urgent. I only know all this from the video footage... I can't remember anything after I was shot.

There was no ambulance, so some guys from the village carried me to someone's car. The whole time this was happening the Israeli soldiers, including the one who had shot me, just stood and watched. One Israeli activist went up to the Wall to tell them what had happened, but they didn't seem to care. After I had been driven away, the soldiers proceeded to shoot live ammunition at the villagers who were still out in the fields.

I was in a coma for 12 days, and after that had to go into hospital every day for a month. I had forgotten where I came from, what had happened, or who anyone was... including myself. The tear gas canister had smashed my skull and the blood from the injury had seeped into my brain and clotted, causing a paralysation of my left arm. That needed four months of injury to heal, and still isn't fully mobile.

Did the incident change the way you act at the demonstrations? Will you ever stop going?

No, I will never stop participating in our demonstrations at the Wall. We are non-violent, and it is our right to protest against the illegal confiscation of our land.

How have the recent military night incursions into the village, conducted by the Israeli Occupation Forces, affected your family?

They have invaded our home around six times, sometimes even in the day, when they claimed that they had seen kids coming from our house to damage the Wall. They once told my mother that they wanted to destroy our house because it's where all the problems come from... it's just because we live so close to the Wall.

What do you think about the international volunteers who come to stay in Bil'in?

They are very good people, coming from other countries to help us here in the village. They often stay with me in my house during the night raids, and go to confront the soldiers, often suffering beatings and injuries as a result. We eat and talk together, and often become good friends. Sometimes they are deported from the country, just for helping people...

What is your hope for the future?

I want to be normal, like I was before the injury. Now, my head is always aching and I have to take medicine all the time. I often feel dizzy, I'm always forgetting things, and I have to sleep a lot.

If you saw the soldier who shot you, what would you do?

I really don't know... maybe I'd ask him why he shot me when I had my hands in the air?

Do you think the people of Bil'in will ever get their land back?

Inshallah, God willing, we hope we will return to our land one day.

Words: Jody McIntyre. Ctrl.Alt.Shift writer Jody is reporting directly from Palestine.

Photos: Courtesy of Haitham al Katib, of Khamis, just after he was shot.