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# The Case That Reminded Me Why I Became a Human Rights Lawyer

Dear Friends,

Two years ago, I received a phone call about six orphaned children trapped in Gaza after their parents and youngest brother were killed in an Israeli airstrike on their home. **After a two-year-long legal battle, I witnessed them make their way to safety.**

Now, as children return to school, four of the siblings will finally be able to go to class regularly for the first time in three years, as every child should.

My name is Maisa Abu Saleh Abu Akar. I have been a human rights lawyer for 17 years and have worked at HaMoked for the past seven years.

I want to tell you about one of the hardest and most rewarding cases of my career.



When I first became involved in the Al-Gharam family's case, six orphaned children were trapped in Gaza, while their eldest sister, Mais, waited anxiously in Israel, unable to bring them to safety.

**On July 10, 2024, at the height of the war in Gaza, an Israeli airstrike struck the Al-Gharam family home.** In terrible shock and confusion, family members rushed to Al Aqsa Hospital in Deir Al-Balah, where the mother, the father, and one of their children were pronounced dead**. Six of the children survived the attack and were left orphaned, four of them minors.**

The mother, who was killed in the bombardment, was an Israeli citizen who had married a Gaza resident and lived permanently in the Strip under renewable military permits.

From that moment on, the six remaining siblings had to rely on themselves for survival and sustenance. **"We were forced—each of us—to take on a role that wasn't ours," 16-year-old Fadi** [**told an AP correspondent**]**.**



Mais Al-Gharam hugs her 8-year-old sister Arjwan in her home in Nazareth (AP Photo/Mahmoud Illean)

Together with the family, we pursued a determined legal campaign to secure the children's right to leave Gaza and reunite with their elder sister in Israel, involving two administrative petitions and dozens of communications with the authorities.

I was in constant contact with Mais, who never stopped asking the same question: **When can they finally come home?**

Meanwhile, the children remained trapped in Gaza. Orphaned, separated from their family in Israel, and living through war, they endured conditions no child should have to face. I helped the family obtain passports and coordinated the siblings' departure from Gaza.

**Then, two years after I began working on the case, the message I had been waiting for finally arrived.** My phone buzzed with a message from Mais and a very special photograph: her brothers and sisters, now Israeli citizens, were finally on their way to meet her at her home in Nazareth after four years apart.

It is difficult to describe what that moment felt like. After countless court filings, letters, phone calls, and months of uncertainty, the legal battle was finally over. But more importantly, six children were finally on their way to safety. **Moments like these remind me why I chose this work.**

**And now, another milestone is approaching: the younger children are preparing to return to school.** For the first time in three years, they will be able to attend classes regularly. The youngest sister, Arjwan, is especially excited. Although she is



Al-Gharam family reunited. (AP Photo/Mahmoud Illean)

The Al-Gharam family's story is extraordinary, but the obstacles they faced are not. **Every year, HaMoked represents hundreds of Palestinian families separated by legal and bureaucratic barriers that threaten their ability to live together.** Behind every successful case are years of litigation, persistence, and the trust of families who refuse to give up.

**With your support, my colleagues at HaMoked and I can continue standing beside these families**, fighting for their rights, and helping more children and parents find their way back to one another. **Thank you for making that work possible.**

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