

There Were 18 Bullet Wounds on His Body

Narrator: Parimah (mother)

Victim: Qurban Ali Ahmadi

Date of the incident: 23 July 2016

Location of the incident: Dehmazang, Kabul City

I am the mother of the martyr Qurban Ali. He was a hard-working, decent boy who had laboring jobs. He was almost seven when I first sent him to school. After a while, he said: "Mom, I can't continue going to school because I am the son of a poor family, and I have to provide for our living expenses, so our life will get a little better." One day, he didn't come home on time. I looked everywhere but I couldn't find him.

Back then, we lived in Chindawol. I suddenly saw him sweeping in front of a shop near the Behzad cinema. I went to him and asked him what he was doing there. He said: "I have become an apprentice here." He worked at the same shop for nine years. The shop owner was from Sheikh Ali. He was a charming and kind person. For almost nine years, he did metalwork in his shop. He had mastered the job, was working in different places, and kept telling me that I should get him a shop so that he could start his own business. But I told him he couldn't run the business alone because the rent on the property was high, we could not afford the payment, and he could lose money. So he worked with his elder brother.

It had taken us a lot of effort to arrange my eldest son's marriage. Life used to be good at that time, to some extent. Then, after being they had been married two years, my eldest son's wife died. A year later, my husband passed away. After that, the problems followed one after the other.

As my eldest son, Qurban Ali, grew older he became quite successful in his profession. He used to make and sell doors and rails. As a result of all his hard work, our living conditions improved. One day, I told him "Only God knows how long I will live. So let me get you married!" I continued and asked him, "how long do you think you can live in your brother's house? It may not work out for much longer" He didn't say anything. So I decided to mortgage my land in my hometown, cashed in my savings, and borrowed two hundred thousand Afghanis from the bank. With the total amount, I managed to get him married. For a year, we lived with Qurban Ali. Then I made my sons go and live separately. I distributed the debt between them. One of my sons got a house

in Chindawol, and the other lived in a different place. I was living with Qurban Ali. He worked and provided for household expenses and continued paying his debt. He always said, "I wish to pay off my debts and then send my mother to Karbala [pilgrimage] because she has worked hard for me since I was a child. Later I will rent a house so that we can all live comfortably [together]". But now, how sad it is that he has gone before his own mother. He has left me alone. I am grateful to have two more sons, but no one can fill the void he left behind.

On the day of the incident, I wanted to go to my other son Mohammad Ali's house. I told Qurban Ali to go to work, but he said he wanted to go and join the demonstration. I told him, "It is none of your business; go to work." He told me, "I participated in the first demonstration. Last time, they placed containers on our way. I climbed up on top of one of the containers and took photos of people taking part in the demonstration". I said, "Have you gone nuts? Why did you climb up on top of a container? How is all this even your business?". No matter how much I insisted, he would not agree. I asked him to call me and update me as soon as he got there. As I left for Barchi, I noticed the road was closed. I turned around and went to Mohammad Ali's house via another road, Chehl Soton Road. There is a mosque near Mohammad Ali's house, where I performed prayer before having lunch.

Mohammad Ali's wife was cracking almonds, and I helped her by separating out the kernel of the almonds from the cracked shells. We forgot all about the demonstration. Suddenly I remembered that Qurban Ali was supposed to be taking part in the rally, so I picked up the phone and called him. His co-worker, a Sunni man, had named him Hasib. I called and asked him, "Where are you, Hasib, my love?" He said, "I am in Dehmazang, don't worry!" and I continued working. I never imagined a suicide bomber would get into the demonstration and that my son would be killed/martyred. In fact I even asked my eldest son why he was not in the demonstration. He told me, "Mom, the roads are closed, so that's why I am staying home."

I must have gone insane that day! One of my sons is killed, he is martyred, and there I am encouraging the other to go to the same demonstration! The landlord's son told my other son there had been an explosion in Dehmezang. For a moment, I felt as if I had fallen to the ground from high in the sky. It was like my heart was being squeezed. I kept calling Qurban, but he did not pick up his phone. I told my eldest son that Qurban was in Dehmezang, and called him again, but again he did not answer the call. My eldest son said: "Mother, you worry too much. A suicide

attack has happened in Dehmezang. He must be busy helping the wounded and martyrs because many people have died. Qurban Ali will be fine."

When Mohammad Ali and I called again, neither of us received an answer. I was losing my senses, I was so worried. I told Mohammad Ali that I had to go to Dehmazang myself. I left the house and went to Pol-e Khoshk. When I got there, one of my relatives saw me and asked me where I was going. I explained that Hasib had joined in the demonstration and that after the explosion, he wasn't answering our calls.

My relative told me: "Do not worry. Go back home and I'll go get him". He took my phone. I don't know why, maybe he knew that Hasib had been killed. I came out of the house several times between three and six o'clock. I was standing at Pol-e Khoshk bus station and intended to go to the mosque and pray. Up to that moment, I did not remember that I had to perform prayer. I was just wandering around full of anxiety. A mother would prefer to be buried herself than to see her young child die before her.

At that exact moment, I saw another relative, named Ismail, passing by. I ran after him but could not catch up with him. He went into mosque and I entered the mosque but could not see anyone inside. I came out and noticed three relatives approaching me. One of them, named Sarwar, was not feeling well. I asked what had happened to him. He said he had been slightly injured. I asked him if he knew where Hasib was. He said he was coming with Muhammad Ali.

Women have no other resort. That why I started crying. I was slapping myself and crying. They took me home. When I opened the gate of the house. I saw my niece-in-law clapping hands and saying: "What are we going to say to Hasib's mother?" As soon as I heard her saying that, I broke down, slapping my face and pulling my hair, and that's when I noticed Qurban Ali's dead body. I was unable to stand. They took him to the mosque and bathed him. Blood was flowing from the stream in front of the mosque.

My other son sat next to me and said: "Mom, please don't cry, calm down." Eighteen bullet wounds could be seen on Qurban Ali's body. The bone on one side of his head was missing. His hair was stuck to one side of his head, and his leg was broken. It was 10 p.m., and the blood continued flowing from Qurban Ali's body. With all the shops closed, there was no cloth to make a burial shroud. There wasn't even plastic to stop the bleeding. Since the bleeding did not stop, they brought lime from outside and put it on the wounds, but no matter how much lime they put on the wound, the bleeding just would not stop. As an ultimate solution to stop bleeding, they mixed

cotton with lime and placed it on the wounds, and the wounds were then wrapped in a plastic sheet.

There was no cloth to make a shroud. May God bless my cousin; he brought a shroud. It was 11 pm, and the relatives who had gathered in our house said that it was not possible to bury the body at this time; they would take the body home for that night and bury him the next day. When we wanted to take my son's body home, the landlord would not allow us to take the martyr's body into the house. So we had to bury him at 11 p.m. that same night.

We returned home at 2 am. I had nothing at home to feed people with. My son was a decent and virtuous man. May God never make any mother grieve for her young child and, for the sake of Imam Hossein, never let any family be dishonored.

Now that he is dead/martyred, his children are left without a guardian, and his wife has left for her father's house. She was my niece, and her parents took her back to their hometown. The young daughter of my son is now living with me. I am sixty years old, and I take care of his daughter.

I am facing many problems, and I cannot bear the burden alone. I pray for Afghanistan to become peaceful so that I can earn a legitimate income and raise my granddaughter. I raised my son in poverty, but unfortunately he left me alone in my old age and rested in peace himself. One of my sons was martyred /killed at 18 during the war under Baba Mazari's command. I have suffered a lot.

People's young sons and daughters were martyred. Dehmazang had become a battlezone in Karbala. It must have been God's will for my other child to be killed/martyred, once again, God put me to a tough test. I pray to live long enough to witness little Fatima grow up. She is one and a half years old now. I am apprehensive; and believe that if I die, Fatima will be helpless. She will have no one to take care of her. The unknown fate of Fatima is as sad as all the sorrows of my life put together, and so is the grief of losing my son. I am just forever grateful to be alive so I can care for this innocent child. Wherever I go, she comes with me and starts crying when she is away from me. I pray to God to have mercy on us for the sake of this innocent child. Amen.