

## II. Interview

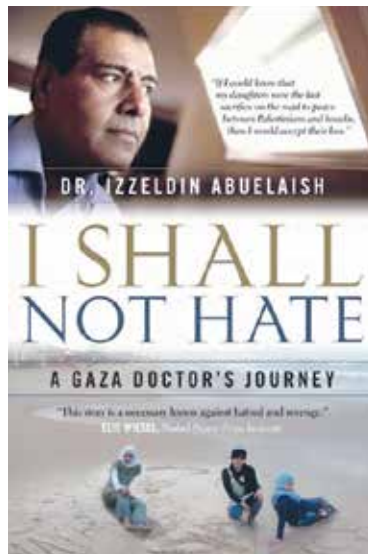
INTERVIEW: *Dr. Izzeldin Abuelaish*

# ‘I Shall Not Hate’: Stop the Violence, Choose Hope and Coexistence

*Dr. Izzeldin Abuelaish is a Palestinian doctor, professor, author, and peace advocate. Although he and his family were long-term advocates of peace and dialogue with the Israelis, three of his children and a niece were killed during the 2008–2009 Gaza war. Afterwards, Dr. Abuelaish resolved, “I shall not hate,” a conviction which then became the title of a book he published in 2010. The book, which became an international best-seller, and was subsequently translated into 23 languages, has recently also been made into a documentary with the same title.*

*An obstetrician-gynecologist, Dr. Abuelaish studied at Cairo University and received his diploma from the University of London. After completing his residency at Soroka University hospital in Beer Sheva, Israel, and subspecialty programs in Italy and Belgium, he received a master’s degree in public health from Harvard University. From his unique position as the first Palestinian doctor to work in an Israeli hospital, he became a proponent of peace between the two nations. Today he lives with his remaining children in Canada and teaches at the University of Toronto. (Read more [here](#).)*

*Dr. Abuelaish has received numerous international prizes and awards for his work and commitment to peace and reconciliation, and has been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize five times. He founded*



*the [Daughters for Life Foundation](#), dedicated to the memory of his daughters who were killed, and to the education of women in the Middle East and North Africa.*

*The video interview is available [here](#) and was conducted on March 18, 2024 by Michelle Rasmussen, the Vice President of the Schiller Institute in Denmark.*

**Michelle Rasmussen:** Thank you very much, Dr. Izzeldin Abuelaish, for granting us this interview. You are here in Copenhagen on the occasion of the premiere of a documentary film based on your book, *I Shall Not Hate*;

*A Gaza Doctor’s Journey on the Road to Peace and Human Dignity.*

You are a Palestinian gynecologist/obstetrician and infertility expert from Gaza, now living in Canada. You chose that field because you want to bring life into the world. You have experienced deep tragedy in the Israel-Hamas war of 2009, and now, also, in 2024. Yet, you are traveling around the world with a message of hope and reconciliation and have even been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize several times.

What is your personal tragedy, and what is the tragedy of the Palestinians?

**Dr. Izzeldin Abuelaish:** Thank you so much. I’m coming to Copenhagen for the premiere of the film, *I*



EIRNS/Michelle Rasmussen  
Dr. Izzeldin Abuelaish

*Shall Not Hate*, which is my life story. The stories are not something to read in a book, the stories are about the living experience, in order for people to learn from it, and to live it. There are lessons behind it, to know: who are the Palestinian people. For me, as a Palestinian and as a Palestinian refugee, that's important; if we want to know, we need to dig deeper and to ask what is going on, what is happening—to learn, to connect, and then to act. Because most of the challenges in our world stem from ignorance, arrogance, and greed. So, as a Palestinian refugee, we need to ask: what is the meaning of being a refugee? Someone who has a home, who has a country, has dignity, and is suddenly kicked out by force, to be naked in the world, deprived of dignity, of privacy. Home is not a place of wars, home is culture, it's life. It means a lot. The only thing I don't want to accept in this world, is to see someone homeless, because when someone is homeless, he becomes disclosed to the world. There is no privacy, there is no life. As Palestinians, we have experienced that; during the Nakba ["The catastrophe": the violent ethnic cleansing of Palestinians in 1948 after Israel declared independence—ed.], and even now the Palestinians are experiencing it in the Gaza Strip. No nation has been tested as we have been tested as Palestinians.

My life was war. We, as Palestinians, are fighting on a daily basis. Not because we want to fight, but in order to survive, to be recognized in this world. We love life, and we want to live and to give life to others, even in times of disaster. During the war, the current war, the Palestinians are smiling. They got married, because they want to continue their lives. This is a message to the world to know who the Palestinians are. That's why I came here, for this message, from where I came as a refugee.

And nothing stopped me from achieving my plans and dreams. From Jabalia refugee camp when I was a child, I dreamed of becoming a medical doctor. But dreams do not just happen. You need to have confidence. You need to have hope. When you speak about hope, hope is not just a word. With hope, you need to believe in it, and you need to work hard to achieve it. Nothing is going to change spontaneously; you need to take action to make the change. So, I dreamed of becoming a medical doctor, and I worked very hard for it.

Life taught me that nothing is impossible—nothing. I don't believe in impossible things. The word impossible is not in my dictionary. The only impossible thing in life I believe in, is to return my daughters back

to life. But they are living with me; they are moving with me everywhere.

I went from Jabalia camp to Cairo University to get my M.D. [degree, and got the certification] to specialize in obstetrics and gynecology at the University of London, in order to come back, and work in Saudi Arabia and in many countries, and to be the first Palestinian doctor to practice medicine in an Israeli hospital. That message is important. When I worked in Israel, I worked there because I believed in the mission I have. Medicine and health are human equalizers, stabilizers, socializers, harmonizers, and sustainers. When I deliver a baby, no one can discriminate or differentiate between the cry of the newborn baby—Palestinian, Israeli, Muslim, Jewish, or Christian. The only cry in life—which exemplifies life—is the cry of the baby; it's a cry of hope, and we are happy when we hear the baby crying. It means the baby is alive and doing well. They are born free and equal. Why don't we take this message to equalize between people outside the borders of the hospitals? Even the woman in labor—no one knows who is in labor from the labor pains, whether she is Palestinian, or Israeli, or Danish, American, or Canadian. That's what I learned, and that's what I continued.

So, I specialized in infertility and IVF [*in vitro* fertilization], and another sub-specialty, in fetal medicine and genetics. I always want to achieve things that match the needs of the people. With genetics, because of consanguinity [blood relationships/relationships between close relatives] among the Palestinian people—I wanted to do something that helps the community. That's medicine; that's academic education. Academic education should have a human, social, healthy, and peaceful impact on the community. It's not just that we teach math and science. We teach people to be human and to behave as human.

The last thing is one which I am proud of, because I wasn't born with a golden spoon. My parents were simple farmers; they were kicked out of their homeland, but they believed that their children are the hope. They invested everything for their education. So, you see the Palestinian people are one of the most literate people in the Middle East, and even in the world. And we are determined, because someone can take anything from you, but no one can take the education away from us, or prevent us from being educated. The last thing is, for a Palestinian refugee, how I went to Harvard. I was lucky to get a scholarship to go to Harvard. The only thing which was consoling me when I graduated—

when I saw my colleagues and their families at the commencement, all of them were there, but my family couldn't join me—but what consoled me was the Palestinian flag, which was raised among other flags. It said, "I am here. I am Izzeldin Abuelaish. I am the Palestinian; proud of being a Palestinian among those who are there."

And what I have achieved now: I am at the University of Toronto, a full professor, teaching graduate students, doing a lot of research, writing, with a mission in life. That is what we need people to have; to ask themselves "Why are we here?" We need to have a sense of purpose. By the end of day, we will leave this world, but we want to leave a legacy behind. That's my main

and noble blood into a vein of hope and humanity in this world, which is corrupt humanely, morally, and ethically.

**Rasmussen:** What happened to your daughters?

**Dr. Abuelaish:** My daughters—it's happening now, for the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip. The same as in 2009, the [Israeli army's] Cast Lead Operation. I don't accept calling it as an "operation," because we use the medical term for surgical operation to heal and to help the patients; not to kill, or destroy, or damage. Operations, ethically and morally in medicine, must be to improve and heal the wounds of the people; not to damage



Daughters For Life Foundation

*The daughters of Dr. Izzeldin Abuelaish who were killed when his home was shelled in 2009, just weeks after this picture was taken. They wrote their names in the sand—Mayar, Aya, and Bessan (left to right)—but Dr. Abuelaish solemnly resolved that their memories would not be washed out: "I am determined to inject their holy souls and noble blood into a vein of hope and humanity in this world."*

goal; to have an impact and do my part as a human to think of others in a positive way. Because I suffered, and I will never accept the suffering of any human being. Humanity should prevail. We should humanize, not politicize. I don't have an agenda; the agenda that I have is a human one, not a political agenda, economic or any personal agenda.

My work is also to send a message to my loved ones, to my daughters, that your holy souls and noble blood wasn't wasted. It made a difference in others' lives, because in my life as a Palestinian, as a faithful person, I am accountable only, and just only, to God and to my daughters, who live with me. As you see, I see them. They ask me all the time, "What did you do for us?" I am determined to inject their holy souls

and destroy. So, on the 16th of January 2009, at 4:45 pm, an Israeli tank shelled my house, and killed three of my daughters and one niece, and severely wounded others. I didn't believe it; they were innocent people. I told them, my daughters, to be peace activists. I sent them to peace camps, to the States, everywhere. And the propaganda and the myth—

**Rasmussen:** They went together with Israeli children?

**Dr. Abuelaish:** With Israelis, Palestinians, Jordanians. I believed in the role of young women and the importance of their efforts and activities. They were not human shields; they were innocent, studying. If I had



Courtesy of Dr. Izzeldin Abuelaish



Courtesy of Dr. Izzeldin Abuelaish



Courtesy of Dr. Izzeldin Abuelaish

*The three daughters, from left to right: Bessan, 21, was studying economics; Mayar, 15, wanted to be a doctor; and Aya, 14, hoped to be a journalist.*

100 daughters like them, I would be proud of all of them. They were focused on their education; the teachers were fighting to have them in their classes. They never succeeded in getting grades of less than 97 percent in their school. They had their plans, they had dreams. They planned and worked hard for them. Bessan, who was 21 years old, was about to graduate from university with her undergraduate degree. I promised to send her to the London School of Economics. Mayar, who was 15, was number one in math in the Gaza Strip, who planned to follow my path to be a medical doctor. Aya, who was 14, who planned to be a journalist; to be the voice of the voiceless, to speak to others. My niece Noor, who was 17, who planned to be a teacher.



Courtesy of Dr. Izzeldin Abuelaish

*Dr. Abuelaish's niece, Noor, 17, who planned to be a teacher.*

I don't want anyone on Earth to see what I saw. I wanted to see Bessan, because I was there with them seconds after I left my daughters' room, the first bomb came. "Where is Bessan, where is Mayar, where is Aya, where is Noor?" They were drowning in their blood. As the scenes you are seeing now, disfigured, their brains spreading everywhere. Mayar was decapitated. I couldn't recognize them.

So, what could I do at that moment? When you see your loved ones killed in front of you? They are the life, they are the hope! I am a family person; I delivered them. I delivered them with my hands. I gave them

names. I always wanted to give them the best names, to be proud of them.

So, at that moment, I lost faith in humanity.

That is what is happening now in the Gaza Strip. The Palestinians, on a daily basis, are killed, starved, deprived of everything. And the world is watching. It's a shame. When, as a medical doctor, when I see a bleeding woman, I rush to stop the bleeding, not to watch what is happening. The world is ashamed of what is happening. If they come to stop the bloodshed, what can they do? Waiting for what? Waiting for what; to have more? Do we bleed as Palestinians? Is our blood different from others? We all bleed the same color; we all love life.

It's time for the world, for *one time*, to stand for humanity, and to zoom in and take positive action. To inspire the world that *there is hope; that we are changing!* We don't discriminate based on color, ethnicity, religion, background, or the color of the eyes, or the color of the skin. *That's* the test for the international community. Gaza Strip is their test. What are they doing? They are watching it in silence. In terms of injustice, it's injustice. This is unjust.

At that moment, I directed my face only, and just only, to God as a faithful person, to God to give me the strength, the wisdom to manage the tragedy. And I am blessed to be a medical doctor, to manage emergency

situations. So, those who were killed, I couldn't do anything for them; so, I focused on managing those who were wounded.

And the first message of support came from my son, Mohammed, who was 12 years old. While he saw me screaming, crying, in pain. He said, "Why are you crying? Why are you screaming? You must be happy." I thought, "What is he talking about? He wants me to be happy? Maybe he doesn't know." I said, "How can you want me to be happy? Bessan, Mayar, Aya and Noor are killed." He said, "I know they are killed, but I know that they are happy there. They are with their mom. She asked for them."

Because their mother passed away exactly four months before they were killed. I said, "If this Palestinian child, who is *12 years old*, believes in that, he can teach these political leaders who are watching what is happening. I don't need to worry about him. I have to continue my life, because life, as Einstein said, "is like riding a bicycle—to keep balance, you must keep moving." I kept moving faster, stronger, more determined not to give up at all, and not to forget my lovely daughters and the oath I gave to them: "I will never rest. I will never relax. I will never give up." That's why I am here, until I meet them one day. To meet them one day with a big gift, that their holy souls and noble blood weren't wasted. It made a difference in others' lives; not with the bullet, not with the missile. It's with wisdom; with courageous, kind words and good deeds. These are the means. Because you, as a journalist, what are you doing? Words are stronger than bullets. The bullet kills once, but words are more influential. That's what I'm doing with my life; that's why I am here.

**Rasmussen:** As you say, the tragic irony is that you had been an agent for peace between Israel and Palestine for many years before your daughters and your niece were killed. As a young man, you worked on an Israeli farm, and you found out that the family was as loving as your own family. Your daughters participated in the peace camps with Israeli children. You were the first Palestinian doctor on staff in an Israeli hospital. You were involved in bringing Israelis to your home in Gaza one weekend a month to break down the prejudices that we have for each other. You even wrote that you hoped that the death of your daughters would be the last. You said "Now I have to choose. Do I choose the path of darkness, or do I choose the path of light? The

darkness is poisonous hate and revenge, or the light of taking care of my other five children and the future?" You hoped that out of this terrible tragedy that there would come a way of bridging the divide to find the light of truth that could enable Palestinians and Israelis to live together.

Can you say more about what your mission is now?

**Dr. Abuelaish:** My mission now, and when I sent my daughters to peace camp, and even when I worked at the age of 14 on the farm, it was the first time—because as I said, my life was the war. War is not the soldier who is going to kill and to be killed. War is far beyond the soldier who is killing or is killed. War is about human beings; about women and children. Women and children pay the major price of any war. War is not what we see on the screen. You see what is happening in Gaza; it's not that that's war. The invisible cost is far beyond what we see. The wounds in the hearts and minds and spirits which will be trans-generational, continuing; it's permanent! I am always thinking, what can we do with the consequence of war that the children will carry with them for their whole lives? Until now, for the latest war, more than 32,000 Palestinians were killed. More than 74,000 are severely wounded. The Gaza Strip is the most beautiful for me; Palestine for me is paradise. The Gaza Strip before the war was a Hell, as described by the international community. Before the war, four out of five children in the Gaza Strip were mentally ill. Now, the Gaza Strip is a ghost town. You cannot recognize the neighborhoods, the streets. The people are not the people that I knew.

A few weeks ago, they sent me a photo of my nephew. He's 24. I was shocked to see him. He looked 45; he looked 45, 50. The Gaza Strip now is hopeless, helpless, lifeless, foodless, waterless, childless, parentless. The most densely populated area in terms of the population, and the most densely populated area with disabled people, with orphans; 17,000 orphans. Families were erased.

What can we say? How can we send a message that we are in the 21st Century? That we live in a human world. That we want the world to be consistent with human values. To prove that they live by these values. But this doesn't prevent me from speaking out. That is what I urge people to do; to speak out—against what is happening in Gaza, and the war there. It's not [only] there; it's across barriers. The war crosses barriers; you see the impact worldwide.

It's not Palestinian-Israeli—it's universal. We need the universal, the international community, to stand, for once, for their own values, that they believe in them—the justice, the equality, the freedom, the dignity, and the human rights. Who wrote the Human Rights Conventions? They were written in Europe. Do they believe in it or not? If they believe in it, they have to live by it—not by selective double standards. What is white is white; what is black is black. And that is what we need. We want to resume trust in our international community. That's the guarantee for a stable, sustainable world.

That's what I am trying to do, and will continue to do. I believe that nothing is permanent in life. Nothing is permanent, and nothing is impossible! Everything is dynamic, and life is a cycle. We go up, and then we go down. It's time for the change.

I urge political leaders who are there representing their people, they are servants and serving the people themselves. They should listen to the people! You see what is happening everywhere in the world? There is a divide between the public opinion and the political leaders. They are there politicizing for their own limited political interests or agenda. So, it's time for them to have the moral courage to be risk takers. To say, "We are joining the public to achieve the goals of the public." Because in this way, they will save the Palestinians, and the Israelis, and their people. They will save the Israelis from their extreme destructive leadership of the Israelis. And, also, because any harm—the extreme political Israeli leadership is destructive to their people, and to us as Palestinians. So, we need someone who can say, "This is not good for anyone. We have to intervene immediately; now, not tomorrow."

**Rasmussen:** You had hoped that the death of your daughters would be the last deaths in this struggle. Now, 15 years later, it continues even on a much larger scale. You said in an interview last month, that 20 members of your extended family had died. What is the cause of this spiral of violence?

**Dr. Abuelaish:** As a medical doctor, of course—and as you mentioned, if I could know that my daughters were the last sacrifice to be killed on the way to peace between Palestinians and Israelis, then I would accept it. But they were not; they were just numbers. And I will *never* accept that any human being is just a number, or what they call "collateral damage." Human beings are humans; they have names, they have plans, they have hopes. They have parents, they have a future, they have lives! It's time to speak about the human as a human. Each human being, for their loved ones, *is the world*—saving one is as if you saved the world, killing one is as if you killed the world. That's why I will *never* accept it, and will continue to advocate strongly for human life, for equality.



EIRNS/Michelle Rasmussen

*"Hate is not a response to war. Rather, communication, understanding, and compassion are the tools needed to bridge the divide between Israelis and Palestinians. All can live in harmony, and reach their full potentials spiritually, emotionally, physically, and intellectually."*  
—from *I Shall Not Hate*, by Dr. Izzeldin Abuelaish

You speak about what the problems are. I learned as a medical doctor, in order to treat a patient, I have to have an accurate diagnosis. The accurate diagnosis is the truth, is the light which guides us in times of darkness. Because once I have the diagnosis, I can set up the right treatment.

So, what do I do in order to have an accurate diagnosis when a patient comes to me? I take the history—not to blame the patient—but take the history to know what happened, and what's going on. Then I will do an examination and some

investigation. Once I have a clear idea about the diagnosis, I can set up the right treatment.

As I said, it's the truth, because Jesus said, "Seek the truth, and the truth will set you free." We want to be free in this world. So, what happened? We, as Palestinian people, we are the Palestinian nation. We are the Palestinian people. Don't deal with it in a fragmented way. When a patient comes to me suffering in his hand, I look at the hand, but this hand is attached to the human body. The failed doctor is treating disease. We don't treat diseases; we treat human beings, the whole human being. So, I don't focus on the hand; the hand is attached. Maybe the symptom is here, but the pain or the disease is in the body itself. So, we need to deal in a collective, comprehensive, holistic approach.

There is a Palestinian nation, and there are Israeli

people there. One is occupier, one is occupied. One is oppressor, the other is oppressed. One has nuclear [weapon] power, and the Palestinians don't have that nuclear power. The Heritage Minister [Amichai Eliyahu, from the Otzma Yehudit party], he raised it, even [Israeli Knesset member for Likud Revital "Tally"] Gotliv said, "Nuking the Palestinians with the nuclear weapon." And the Minister of Defense Yoav Gallant said, "Palestinians are human animals." These are incitements. I encourage people: if they don't have a good word, don't say a bad one. Words hurt; they hurt more than anything else. That's the diagnosis. We want the Palestinians to be free; and the Israelis to be free. Even the occupier is not free.

**Rasmussen:** But you spoke about the need to break the cycle of violence in terms of revenge—

**Dr. Abuelaish:** Revenge will never work.

**Rasmussen:** Counter revenge—

**Dr. Abuelaish:** Action and reaction is not going to help.

**Rasmussen:** And that there is no military solution.

**Dr. Abuelaish:** I said it clearly, and that's what my daughter Bessan, God bless her soul, at the age of 14, said to me, "Answering violence with violence doesn't solve any problem." Action and reaction, this vicious circle, is not going to help at all. We have a negative, we need something positive. We need to equalize between Palestinians and Israelis, not occupier and occupied, but free and free, based on equality, justice, and freedom for all, and dignity for all. I said that clearly. We both, as Palestinians and Israelis, are like conjoined twins. No one can turn his back. Any harm to one will affect the other. We live and ride in one boat, and we must not allow anyone to do harm to another; we have to reach the shore peacefully, equally. So, I said it; the future, the security, the safety, the independence, the freedom, the dignity, the life of the Israelis is linked, intertwined, inseparable, and interdependent with Palestinian safety, security, freedom, rights, dignity, and life. That's the only way, which is a guarantee for a long-lasting, stable, sustainable relationship.

Even the word "peace," we are talking about. Peace is not a word; it's not a word which we are talking

about. We want peace, but no one is asking to dig deeper. What is the peace we are talking about? The people have lost faith in it, because they don't see it. Peace is a relationship. It's a relationship between two parts. I have a peaceful relationship with you based on respect, listening to each other.

We need to have peace between us and the environment. Do we have peace with our environment, with the Earth? We do harm to our Earth, we do harm to our environment. We don't even have peace with the environment in which we live, so we need this peace. There are certain needs. Peace is the goal, but we need the means to achieve this peace.

What are the means? Number one, respect; equality; justice for all; dignity for all; life for all. Once we have these means, peace will be a consequence. And that's what we need to shift the way, not to start from pieces. Start with the basic requirements, the main foundation for peace, then you build. The building will be peace, but you need to set up the means.

**Rasmussen:** Just to follow up on that, you said in your book, "Whereas the international community, I am against rockets and suicide bombs, but also against shutting the door against the people who are suffering. I ask for a decent life for Palestinians. Instead of building a wall, we need to build a bridge."

But as a legacy for your daughters, Bessan, Mayar, and Aya, you founded the Daughters for Life Foundation. And on your home page it states, "Hate is not a response to war. Rather, open communication, understanding, and compassion are the tools needed to bridge the divide between Israeli and Palestinian interests. All can live in harmony, and all can reach their full potentials spiritually, emotionally, physically, and intellectually."

Why did you call your book *I Shall Not Hate*?

**Dr. Abuelaish:** I called my book *I Shall Not Hate*, because after the tragedy, people used to ask me, and they asked my daughter Shatha—Christiane Amanpour, in an interview, asked her—"Do you hate?" My daughter, Shatha, who is 17 years old, who I also sent to peace camp, she said, the answer was, "Who to hate?" The people were asking me, "Do you hate?" I said, "Why do they ask me this question?" So, I started to learn about hatred; to review a lot of literature. I came to the conclusion, based on the definition of hatred by the textbooks, that they considered it an

emotion, or feeling, or a behavior. The reaction to anything, by someone who is exposed to harm, is to hate the perpetrator. So, I said, “As a medical doctor, hate is not a feeling. Hatred is not an emotion or a behavior. Hatred is far deeper than that.” And that is what I published. I did a lot of research about it. Hatred is a self or community contagious destructive disease. It’s the result of exposure. So, I use my medical education, the public health approach, the immunological approach, to implement it about hatred. So, why do people want me to be afflicted or sick with this disease called hatred?

Hatred is a poison; it’s a *poison*, which is toxic to the human body. It’s a fire which burns the body; it’s a cancer inside. If we are sitting here, and someone who did you real harm, an existential threat, passes by, how do you feel? Immediately, you become blind; you can’t function, you don’t see. So, I said, “Hatred disturbs the balance of the human body. You are not functioning well; you are heavy, you can’t move. Your mind is always occupied with that. So instead of that, life is still in front of you.” So, I am a victim of the tragedy, and the killing of my daughters, but I will never accept to be a victim of this disease called hatred.

I say to people, “Don’t accept to be a victim more than once.” Instead of staying being a victim—being a victim is a stigma—bring all of your energy to transform the tragedy, or the challenge you are facing, to an opportunity. To move from being a victim to a survivor; to be a leader in this world. That’s the message you send to the perpetrator, the antidote of revenge and hatred is success and leading, and moving forward. That’s what I am determined to do. Because my daughters—I also believe, my faith taught me that even this tragedy was for the good. I asked myself why my daughters were selected; why was I saved? Because if I had stayed a few seconds longer with them, I would be gone. There is a mission; God knows, and we don’t know.

That’s why on the second day, once it [the tragedy] was [broadcast live](#), the Israeli Prime Minister [Ehud Olmert] announced a unilateral ceasefire. It saved other lives. This helped me; this satisfied me. It symbolized

the war, and that’s the other positive thing that came out of that; the establishment of the Daughters for Life Foundation. Because life is what we make it—always has been, always will be. It’s in our hands. You can shape your life the way you want it. Don’t let others shape it for you. Be yourself; don’t underestimate yourself. Without blaming or shaming, take responsibility and keep moving forward.

So, I established Daughters for Life because in my life as a Palestinian, I am in debt to my mother, my wife, and my daughters. A Palestinian mother is the hero, is the one behind the survival story of the Palestinian nation. Women are the ones who give life; women are the ones who nurture life. Women are the

ones who sacrifice everything for their children. Imagine this world without women. Women are the ones who wage and spread love, compassion, and life. They can breastfeed the children. They have the compassion, the love, the determination, the kindness. That’s why I believe in women. Name me five women in the history of the world who were behind war. You can’t find five, but how many men can you find? We, in this world, women and men; they were created to

complement each other, to support each other. Women are the beauty of the world.

That’s why I established Daughters for Life Foundation, for educating girls and young women from the Middle East and North Africa, without any discrimination. If politics discriminates based on race, ethnicity, color, or religion, Daughters for Life includes all. It’s inclusive for all, without any discrimination based on ethnicity, or religion: Palestinians, Israelis, Jordanians, Syrians, Lebanese, North Africans, Muslims, Jews, and Christians without any discrimination. If politics divides, Daughters for Life brings together. That’s the message we want in this world, because achieving a stable, sustainable world is the function and the duty of women, women’s education, and to give women the opportunity, and the ability to practice the role they deserve. I am sure if they don’t succeed, they will never make it worse as it is now. It’s time to try. The more we see women sitting at the table, this is the hopeful thing.



*Daughters for Life was founded by Dr. Abuellaish in memory of his daughters, and for educating women from the Middle East and North Africa.*



**Rasmussen:** Back to breaking the cycle of violence, your daughter Aya said, “When I grow up and I’m a mother, I want my children to live in a reality where the word ‘rocket’ is just another name for a space shuttle.” And your daughter Bessan said in a documentary about the peace camp, “We think as enemies. We live on opposite sides, and never meet. But I feel that we are all the same, we are all human beings.” You have also stressed that the Palestinians and the Israelis are more similar than different.

Back to this question about hate, a very extraordinary woman, Amelia Boynton Robinson, who was the Vice President of the Schiller Institute for many years, who was in the American civil rights movement, said that “Hate not only destroys the hated, but it destroys the hater.” As you say, this is poison. When you moved to Canada, you spoke in front of a synagogue. You were asked, “OK, Dr. Abuelaish, but what do you teach your children about the Israelis?” Then, what happened?

**Dr. Abuelaish:** Thank you so much for this question, because this is the perception, and the ignorance. When we don’t know people, we have our own ideas. So, after what I faced, I was invited to that synagogue where there were about 1,200 people—Muslims, Jews, Christians, from everywhere. They even moved to another venue because of the numbers; they couldn’t accommodate all. And it was the first time in my life I took my children to an event. During the questions, they asked “What do I teach my children after [this tragedy]?” So, my answer to them—which is on the video—I said, “I practice medicine with evidence, so my children are here.” I called my daughter Raffah who was nine years old. “Habibi Raffah, my darling, come here. Tell them, what did I teach you during the war, when the bombardments were coming from everywhere, the house was shaking, and under fire.” She was shy, and then she started to speak. What she said was, “My dad taught us Hebrew words. The translation for ‘I love you’; ‘How are you?’” That’s the answer.

Why this perception, this prejudice, that the Palestinians teach their children to hate, or to be angry? We don’t hate anyone, even our Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish said, “We don’t hate anyone; we don’t steal anyone; and we don’t want to delete anyone.” We want to be recognized; we want to have our dignity, our freedom. Because the most holy thing in the universe is a human being and freedom, and we are deprived of that freedom.

So, I urge the world—the world is not free, as long as the Palestinians are not. They have to zoom in to understand that the world’s freedom is based on the Palestinians’ freedom.

**Rasmussen:** Our partner, the LaRouche Organization, has recently released a video, “The Oasis Plan: LaRouche’s Solution for the Middle East.” It described what the American economist and statesman Lyndon LaRouche has proposed and developed since 1975. The idea of peace through development between Israel and an independent Palestine, through cooperation to develop water resources, and other infrastructure, because we think that we need to have a vision of a future common interest in mutually beneficial economic development to bridge the divide. A vision where Israelis and Palestinians could live peacefully together, as a way of paving a path to peace. What do you think of this Oasis Plan proposal, and how could a vision of economic development help create peace?

**Dr. Abuelaish:** It’s an important element, because you speak about economics and development. Economic development is one aspect of the needs of a human life. But we need development in the different sectors, and different aspects. Like a building. The building needs a strong foundation, and the economy and the capital is covered. They, [the international investors] are afraid. You need stability and sustainability, safety and security. Anyone who is going to invest in an economy in the Gaza Strip—can anyone now invest in Ukraine? Can anyone invest in Ukraine now? No; no one will invest in Ukraine, because it’s not safe, it’s not secure. If the world were to say, “We will go invest in the Gaza Strip,” what are they going to say? “No, I want safety, I want security.” So, economic development is supportive and strengthens the conditions that we need to prepare. It leads to stability, sustainability, and building trust. Trust is vital in a relationship. So, the first thing you need are the means I was talking about, in order for economic development to thrive. Number one, equality; because if we are not sitting [equally at the same table] at the same time we say development, I am doubting. We need to fill the gap in the equity.

There is a gap; so you need to fill the gap in equity. Then we move together equally towards the goal of economic development that leads to stability, sustainability. To turn the page, the dark page in their

relationship, to turn it into a brighter one with the following values: equal, just, free, dignity, and developing. That is, without leaving anyone behind. And in a collaborative way, and *inclusive*, not exclusive. That is what I believe can lead to a long-lasting [collaborative relationship], and the people will say, that's the right, the shortest path which can help us to move forward, and to turn the page of military means.

As I said many times, military means and wars will never put an end [to violence]; it only leads to more bloodshed, more pain, more suffering, more hatred, more violence, and more *extremism* than any time before. Can we turn the page and understand? Because we say, "Never again, never again, never again." We have to learn, we make mistakes in life, but mistakes are to learn from. A mistake is a mistake if we learn from it and not repeat it. If it's repeated, it's not a mistake. It means we do it deliberately, and we didn't learn the lessons.

I hope October 7th will be the last time we experience this; and that we learn from it and to use it as an opportunity. We have a moral, ethical, and human responsibility; Palestinians and Israelis and the international community. Those who paid the price: the Palestinian children, the women, the wounded, the destruction, and the Israelis. Our moral responsibility is to keep them alive through spreading hope, sending a message to them that you paved the way for this development based on the means that we are talking about, that they shed the light for all of us. They were candles burned for the future generations, not burned for political interests. Because in life we have a priority; the priority in life is not the past. The past is to learn from. The priority in life is the present and the future. Who are the present and the future? Our children and the future generations. We are accountable; what legacy do we want to leave them? If we love them, we have to learn the lessons. To allow them to inherit a safe, secure, healthy, peaceful, free future. That's what we need to work together for. It's not only Palestinians and Israelis. The international community should step in, because it is in the interest of the whole world. Because what is happening there is universal. Solving



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*Dr. Abuelaish: "My dream, and my hope that I am working for, is to see an end to the suffering of the Palestinians, and to be free, side-by-side with the Israelis.... Nothing is impossible. No one was expecting one day [September 13, 1993], to have a positive agreement between Yasser Arafat and Yitzhak Rabin, for them to shake hands."*

it, putting an end to it, gives hope to the world. Trust in the international community and the whole world will benefit from it.

**Rasmussen:** There's also this idea you just spoke of, of having an image of the future. And determining what we do now to reach that future. We have an image—this is our idea of the Oasis Plan—but also, our international chairman Helga Zepp-LaRouche has often used the idea of a Catholic bishop from the Renaissance period, Cardinal Nicholas of Cusa. He called it the Coincidence of Opposites; that you can never solve the conflict on the level of the conflict. That you have to rise above to find that common interest in which then the people can see why they should work together. He even wrote a piece called *De Pace Fidei*, the *Peace of Faith*, to find unity among the multiplicity of religions.

At the end, you spoke about in your book, that just as Martin Luther King did, you have a dream. What is your dream? And do you have any parting words for our viewers? And just before that, you spoke about your mission, also professionally, to bring life into the world. The Jewish people, when they want to say "Cheers!" actually say "*L'chaim!*"—to life. If we could make that into a common principle to bring unity and peace between the Israelis and the Palestinians; to have that as a slogan—"To life!" But what is your dream, and do you have any concluding words for our viewers?

**Dr. Abuelaish:** My dream, and my hope that I am working for, is to see an end to the suffering of the Palestinians and to be free, side-by-side with the Israelis. I see it in a dynamic world, as I said. Nothing is impossible. No one was expecting one day in 1994, to have a positive agreement between Yasser Arafat and Yitzhak Rabin, for them to shake hands. So, nothing is impossible. The world is full of surprises, but surprises are not just words. Surprises and hopes are values that we need to act for; and to see the truth, and to understand without bias. The world will benefit from it.

As I said, we have a lot of commonalities between both. My hope is to see as my next-door neighbor an Israeli Jew; to live side-by-side as equals, as free. To turn the page of anger, of ignorance, of arrogance, occupation, oppression, dehumanization, and to come together jointly. Believe me, I see it, if we put our hands together, Palestinians and Israelis. You see it in Israel, the health system in Israel, it's built on the Palestinian Israelis; 30%, 40% of the nurses, the doctors when I worked there. My dream is to see Palestinian children and Israeli children at the same school, at the same university, as equal as any other nation. Believe me, both nations are waiting for this moment. They are resilient; they can turn the page. I am waiting to see this happen.

And, personally, when people say, "It's complicated," I say, "Nothing is complicated." If there is a good will, there is a way. And we have to find our way with the support of the international community. And because it's the hope and it's the goal, and the dream of the international community: to not be indifferent, biased, selective, or complicit, but to be fair and to work for the rights, equality, and justice for Palestinians and Israelis. I say to you, the Israeli interest is more for and with the Palestinians; they have American Jewish—you are an American Jew—[but] their close neighbor, who is the Palestinian, should be closer to them and more connected to them than the Jews in the States. I live in Canada and my neighbors are Jewish, so when I am in need of help, the first thing I do is call my neighbor. So, they have to build and strengthen their relationship as equal, free, dignified neighbors. That's the guarantee for a good life for all, where I value life, and the Israelis say "*L'chaim!*"

**Rasmussen:** Thank you so much. I encourage our viewers to read Dr. Abuelaish's book, and to see the movie when that is available for you. We will see it this afternoon. I also encourage you to [register](#) for the Schil-

ler Institute's April 13 free online conference, "The Oasis Plan: LaRouche's Solution for Peace through Development between Israel and Palestine, and all of Southwest Asia."

Thank you so much.

**Dr. Abuelaish:** My pleasure, thank you.

**Rasmussen:** Thank you for speaking to us, and we wish you all the best to carry out your mission of peace and reconciliation. We hope that many people will join you in this mission.

**Dr. Abuelaish:** I need your institute to join us.

**Rasmussen:** Yes.

**Dr. Abuelaish:** Thank you so much.

### Epilogue: On Compassion

After this interviewer saw the documentary film, *I Shall Not Hate*, she asked Dr. Abuelaish a question:

**Rasmussen:** The Schiller Institute is named after Friedrich Schiller, the poet of Freedom. He, as well as Mahatma Gandhi, stressed that you need to evoke compassion, in order to open the hearts of the people.

**Dr. Abuelaish:** I agree with you. Compassion means responsibility, being authentic, sincere, and to do it with courage. Don't wait for someone to tell you to be compassionate. Be the initiator. I am on the advisory board of the Global Compassion Coalition. Compassion is vital.

**Rasmussen:** Your story, first in the book, the play about you, and now the film, will open people's hearts. Friedrich Schiller used drama to evoke compassion. Mahatma Gandhi said, "We cannot commit violence against others...."

**Dr. Abuelaish:** Violence against violence.

**Rasmussen:** But your suffering will open the hearts of the people.

**Dr. Abuelaish:** I agree with you, and that's important.

**Rasmussen:** Now, we must act to stop the suffering.