

Ali Baba and the war on Gaza

By Jawad Harb

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Jawad Harb is a Palestinian living in Rafah, Gaza, with his wife and six children. Harb has worked with CARE since 2002, managing a program supporting women's centres in Gaza. Since the conflict began Dec. 27, Harb's program has stopped operating because of the constant bombing.

This is the 14th day of the attack. It is 4 a.m.

My six children are so worried, restless and unable to close their eyes. With each airstrike, the house shakes right and left, and the children grab one another like cold rabbits seeking warmth. We feel helpless and victimized. There is nothing worse than being unable to protect your children.

Airstrikes are becoming more violent and more horrible. They sound like they are very close to us, chasing us wherever we try to hide. The kind of psychological trauma Gaza's children have been exposed to is unbearable and incurable.

My sole objective and mission impossible as a father are to put my kids to sleep. During the past 13 days, I finished all the children's stories my mother used to tell me as a child.

The only story left untold is "Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves". My children seem interested to listen.

I reached the part: "Then Ali Baba climbed down and went to the door concealed among the bushes, and said, 'Open, Sesame!' and the door flew open."

Suddenly my six-year-old son opened his eyes, and asked me: "Dad, why can't Ali Baba appear in Gaza and say 'End the war, end the war!' – and then the war would be over?"
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