

On the First Anniversary of the Martyrdom of Sha'aban Ahmad Al-Dalou (2004–2024)

Brothers and Sisters in Palestine and all who stand with us against tyranny,

today we mark one year since the martyrdom of **Sha'aban Ahmad Al-Dalou**, a son of Gaza, a Hafiz of the Qur'an, a young man of brilliance and kindness. He should have been with us now, turning twenty-one years old. We should have been celebrating his adulthood, his studies, his dreams. Instead, we gather in mourning - because he was forcefully torn from among us, taken from life by the vilest criminal savages who ever walked this earth.

On the night of **October 14, 2024**, the sky above Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital burned red with fire. Tents that sheltered the displaced, families who thought they had found refuge under international law, became a furnace. And inside one of those tents lay Sha'aban, recovering from injuries, hooked to an IV drip, his mother sitting by his side. The strike turned their shelter into a cage of fire. His father rushed into the blaze, dragging children out with his own flesh burning, but could not reach his eldest son. His brother tried to break through the wall of flames, but was pulled back. And as the inferno swallowed him, Sha'aban's final act was not of fear, but of faith: he raised his finger in the Shahada, proclaiming the Oneness of God as he returned to Him. His mother, too, was consumed in the fire as she crawled through the flames, her body breaking. Four days later, his little brother Abdul Rahman followed them in martyrdom.

These were not accidents. These were not tragedies of nature. These were deliberate crimes, committed by an occupation that has bombed homes, schools, mosques, and hospitals, and then dared to call the slaughter of children "self-defense." They murdered Sha'aban while he lay wounded in a hospital courtyard. They stole his life, and with it, the future he dreamed of - of medicine, of engineering, of serving his family and people.

And what a life he lived, even in just nineteen short years. Sha'aban memorized the Qur'an as a boy, illuminating his family with pride. He excelled in school, achieving **98% on his Tawjihi exams**, opening the doors to every path of study. He longed to be a doctor, but when poverty closed that door, he pursued computer engineering with equal devotion. Even during the war, he refused to surrender his education - walking long distances under drones and shells to find internet access, logging into classes in the midst of bombardment.

He was not only a student, but a son of duty. As the eldest child, he carried his family's burdens. He donated blood when Gaza's hospitals ran dry. He recorded appeals in Arabic

and English, calling on the world to see, to listen, to act. He said: *"I used to dream big dreams, but the war destroyed them, making me physically and mentally ill."* Yet even in his despair, he kept dreaming - not for himself, but for his family, for Gaza, for a tomorrow that never came.

His brother Muhammad called him "my supporter, my friend, my companion." His mother called him her exemplary son. To his community, he was an inspiration. And to the world, after his martyrdom, he became a symbol. The viral footage of his final moments - his body burning, his finger raised in the Shahada - shook the conscience of millions. His story was spoken in parliaments, written in newspapers, whispered in prayers across continents. Sha'aban, a boy from Gaza, became a mirror to humanity's silence.

One year has passed, but the grief has not lessened. If anything, the wound has deepened. For every day that we wake without him, we are reminded not only of his absence, but of the cruelty that stole him. We should be seeing him now, twenty-one years old, entering his manhood, perhaps graduating, perhaps engaged, perhaps carrying new hopes. Instead, we see only the grave where he lies beside his mother and little brother.

And yet, Sha'aban is not gone. He is alive with his Lord, sustained in ways we cannot see. His memory lives in every heart that refuses to forget, in every voice that cries for justice, in every child of Gaza who still dreams despite the bombs.

Glory to the Martyrs

May Allah have mercy on Sha'aban's soul, on his mother Alaa, on his little brother Abdul Rahman, and on all who have fallen. May He grant them the highest ranks in *Jannah al-Firdaws*, in the company of the prophets, the truthful, the righteous, and the martyrs. May He heal the hearts of the living, and may He make their sacrifice a light that guides us toward justice and liberation.

"And do not think of those who have been killed in the cause of Allah as dead. Rather, they are alive with their Lord, receiving provision."

- Surah Āl 'Imrān (3:169)*

Sha'aban, we will not forget you. The world may turn its eyes away, but we carry your name, your smile, your dreams. You were torn from us by fire, but your light burns brighter than the darkness that tried to consume you.