



On a cool but sunny December day in Gaza, Dr Izzeldin Abuelaish took his eight children to the beach for the simple pleasures of paddling in the Mediterranean and playing in the sand.

Two months earlier, the children's mother had died from acute leukaemia, and Abuelaish was comforted to see his older daughters laughing and chatting as they wrote their names in the damp grains close to the water's edge: Bessan, Maya, Aya. "It was as close to heaven and as far from hell as I could get that day," he later wrote.

But within five weeks the Abuelaishs were to suffer a second tragedy: those three girls, aged 13, 15 and 21, were killed, and another daughter, Noor, 17, seriously injured, when an Israeli shell was fired at the family home during the brief but bloody war in Gaza in 2008-9. One of Abuelaish's nieces also died; a fifth girl, another niece, suffered terrible injuries.

Many in his situation would have descended into a dark, lonely pit of grief and bitterness. But Abuelaish not only rebuilt a life for himself and his surviving five children, he has written a moving and powerful book about his experiences with a central message of hope and reconciliation.

*I Shall Not Hate* – published in Canada in April, and out in Britain in January – has had an extraordinary impact. Sitting in the home of his extended family in Jabalia, northern Gaza, Abuelaish – back on a month-long visit from Canada where he now lives and works – reads out emails on his BlackBerry from strangers expressing their sympathy, gratitude and support.

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