

A Wound That Will Never Heal

Author: [Sonia al-Ali](#)

Some injuries are emotional as well as physical.

With anguish in her eyes and sighing deeply, Asma al-Aahi recalls the first few years of the war in her city of Maarat al-Numan.

“Despite the conflict, I had a happy life with my husband and four children. Life was hard, but I was always grateful to God for the wellbeing of my family,” the 33 year-old said.

“My torment really began on March 5, 2014.

“I woke up early and saw my husband off to work, and my three eldest children, Fatima, Marah, and Khalil off to school. My youngest son, three-year-old Haitham, stayed at home with me.

“All of a sudden, I heard the thundering sound of an aircraft. Moments later the ceiling of my house collapsed on top of us.

In the aftermath of the explosion, she had crawled towards Haitham and tried to pull him from underneath the rubble. Her foot was badly injured, but she hadn't felt the pain.

All she could think of was rescuing her son, but she passed out before she could reach him.

“I watched my youngest child die. It was a nightmare,” she said, breaking down in tears and weeping bitterly.

When she regained consciousness, Asma was in hospital. She was told that her son had died, and that her foot had been so badly injured that doctors had had to amputate.

“I left the hospital a few days later in a wheelchair. My remaining three children were at home waiting for me. I had always cared for them, but now I was the one who needed their care.

“I fell into a depression and barely spoke to anyone, even my children. I felt that my life was over and nothing in this world would ever make me happy,” she said.

Asma slowly began to walk again on crutches, and her husband and children took turns in helping her with household chores.

They were also careful to never to hurt her feelings or make her feel she was less capable of doing something due to her disability.

Asma's mother also provided her daughter with all the support she could.

“My daughter used to be full of life and energy, but the loss of her youngest son and her disability changed her,” she told Damascus Bureau.

“She became withdrawn and stopped going out, she didn't want people to pity her. I kept reminding her that there were people who had suffered worse losses than she had, and that life must go on no matter how hard it gets”.

A year after her injury, Asma visited a centre for artificial limbs. There, she was told that another part of her leg needed to be amputated if an artificial leg was to be fitted.

Not ready for another operation and more pain, Asma initially rejected the idea.

“I was distraught at the idea of the amputation, but when I went back home and thought about how I could no longer care properly for my children, I decided to go through with it for their sake,” she said. “Perhaps I would be able to bring some happiness back into their lives.”

Asma underwent the operation on September 19, 2015. After she had recovered she was fitted with an artificial leg and received extensive physiotherapy until she learnt how to walk again.

Asma kept these rehabilitation sessions secret from her children, and when she was finally capable of walking properly, she decided to surprise them.

Accompanied by her husband, she went to collect them from school. When they walked out and saw her

standing on two feet again, they ran to her crying tears of joy.

Asma hugged them, promising that from now on she would go back to looking after them.

“With a strong will, I was able to overcome my disability,” she said.

“My physical wounds have healed, but the wound in my heart caused by the death of my dear child Haitham will never heal.”

Sonia al-Ali is the pseudonym of a Damascus Bureau contributor from Maarat al-Numan. The 33 year-old holds a BA in Arabic Literature and works as a teacher. She is married with four children.

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