THE JORDAN TIMES | Friday, November 11, 2005

Queen tours city hospitals

By Sheila M. Dabu

AMMAN — Four-year-old Ammar Keilane was laughing and dancing on Wednesday night when an explosion ripped through a wedding party at the Radisson SAS.

When the boy awakened from his coma on Thursday, no one knows if he recognised the visitor holding his hand. Her Majesty Queen Rania stood by Ammar's bedside.

The Queen toured all three hospitals where bombing victims were being treated — Al Khalidi Hospital, Amman Surgical Hospital and Jordan Hospital.

"This is what happened to my family, so there's nowhere else I could be today but be with people and try to console them," Queen Rania said.

The three explosions killed 59 and injured more than 100, many of whom are in critical condition. The blasts struck minutes apart around 9:00pm Wednesday night at the Radisson SAS, the Days Inn and the Grand Hyatt hotels.

"Just looking around today and seeing children and the injured, all innocent lives, this is a really cowardly act for someone to strap a bomb and walk into a wedding ceremony and to kill innocent lives like this; it is completely senseless and trying to see the rationale behind this, there really isn't one," the Queen said.

Ammar is suffering from blood loss and brain hemorrhage due to shrapnel lodged in his brain and abdomen near the vertebrae, his father Abdul Raheem Keilane, told The Jordan Times.

Ammar's father, Abdul Raheem gets out his prayer mat, wipes his tears and closes the curtain to pray. Talking about his son makes him cry.

Abdul Raheem, his wife Rana, and his brother Zeid were on their way to a neighbour's wedding party at the Radisson SAS when they heard the explosion. Abdul Raheem's son was already at the hotel with the bride's mother, a family friend and neighbour.

When they learned that Ammar was lost, the brothers immediately notified the Civil Defence who later informed them that the boy was at the hospital.

According to Dr. Abdullah Bashir, director general of Jordan Hospital, 19 of the dead and 19 injured were at Jordan Hospital, most from the wedding and a few from the Hyatt Hotel. Bashir said that the victims at the hospital include an Indonesian, an Iraqi and a Saudi.

"We were shocked by the event but we were able to manage the casualties," he told The Jordan Times. "Within minutes, all the staff was determined and doing their job."

Just a few metres from Ammar's bed is perhaps the youngest survivor. Like Ammar, three-month-old Tollin was also lost during the explosion at the wedding.

Nurses Bindu Ek and Alphonse Jacob are not sure who brought the baby to the hospital.

Jacob said that Tollin's father was frantically looking for her. Once she was found, he came to visit the baby, who is in a stable condition. When he then went to find his wife, he learned that both she and Tollin's grandmother were killed during the blast. The baby's father was unable to attend the event, the nurses said.

Tollin's fractured forearm is likely due to shrapnel, explained Ek.

When asked if the attacks made her fearful, she replied "This is our profession, not to be afraid."

Amira Abdul Rahman, also at Jordan Hospital, is too distraught to talk about the tragedy.

She lost her two daughters, Reema, 27 and Reham, 14, in the blast. She did not sustain major injuries but her family says that she is in a state of shock and denial.

Amira's niece, Yasmeen Ghanim, explained that while they were waiting for the newlyweds to arrive, her aunt told her that there was a suspicious-looking man who entered the hall. Other family members also noticed.

"They say that they saw a stranger in the room, carrying a heavy bag. They say that he was working on the camera, put something around the camera, like a wire. They asked him if he needed any help and he said 'No.' And then when the father of the bride came, everything exploded."

They were attending the wedding of her cousin, the bridegroom.

Amira had stepped outside of the hotel when the bomb went off. When she went to search inside, Yasmeen says that her aunt could hear the screams of her daughter's and feared the worst.

The family called all the hospitals until they received the news that the girls died in the same hospital where their mother was being treated.

Ghanim says that the bride and groom are in shock, both having lost their fathers and the bride's mother, who accompanied Ammar, recovering in hospital.

"I don't know why they did this. There is no reason for this," Ghanim said.

Blood banks make appeal

AMMAN (JT) — The Amman blood banks have appealed for donors to come forward with type O+ and O- blood. Donors with these blood groups should go to the Blood Bank in Al Bashir Hospital.

Blood Bank officials have urged those wishing to give blood to space their donations over the coming weeks and months.

For more information please call: 475 7459 or 477 5111.