

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Your Majesty King Abdullah II,
Your Majesty Queen Rania Al-Abdullah,
Your Royal Highnesses,
Your Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen

السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته،

It is a great honour for me to be standing here in front of you today and to address such a distinguished audience. It is hard for me...believe me...to take off my armor and to stand in front of you with nothing to hide behind.

My name is Sulaiman Ghneimat, and I am a landmine survivor. My story started when I was 19 years old. I was a young man with a big dream of becoming an Air Force pilot. Being the son of a simple farmer...for me it was a huge dream. But as you know, when you dream the sky can be the limit. When I succeeded in joining the college of aviation, my dream was just about to come true.

However, one day I went with my friends on a picnic in the Jordan Valley, to one of the most beautiful areas in Jordan. As I was walking I saw a small strange object that attracted my attention. Unfortunately I touched it with my bare hands. I don't know why, but it happened, and that was my destiny. Ten days later I woke up. I didn't know what happened until I needed my hands, but they were gone. I hope that none of you will ever have to know how that feels. My journey of suffering started then. If I could have chosen, I would have rather chosen death rather than to live with no hands. However, I was very fortunate to have received very good medical care and rehabilitation. His Late Majesty King Hussein, God Bless His Soul, personally intervened and ordered that I receive the most advanced medical treatment in the world.

If it wasn't for the support of my dear family, my lovely caring wife, my dear children, I wouldn't have survived this tragedy. Yes, I was lucky. I had the support of the royal family and my family. It gave me hope and strength to endure all the suffering and to go on with my life. I know that not all landmine survivors are as lucky as I am.

Hundreds of thousands of human beings, just like me, have lost arms, eyes or legs because of landmines.

Many still carry pieces of shrapnel in their bodies and have suffered for years and years. Others carry the emotional scars, the memory of loved ones killed. Some have endured and have led productive lives. But sadly many are confined to beds or mats, unable to move; others are unemployed, begging in market places all around the world, feeling cheated, abandoned, and helpless. The Mine Ban Convention has of course done a lot to support landmine survivors and we survivors are thankful, however I hope a lot more to be done.

I have dedicated my life to helping other victims pass their tragedy, through my work at the Hashemite Charitable Society for Soldiers with Special Needs. I visit disabled soldiers in their homes. I try to give them hope and strength. I show them that their life has just started and didn't end because of loosing a limb.

I want to pass on from this podium on behalf of all landmine survivors: “We all want peace and a better future for the next generation. It is time to turn words into deeds!

All countries must sign the Mine Ban Convention, also the needs of landmine survivors and people with disabilities should be addressed.

We are not asking for charity...it is our right! In that way we all will become landmine survivors with peace and compassion as our banner!”

I would just like to end by saying:

Yes, I am a landmine survivor,

Yes, I am an amputee,

Yes, I am a person with a disability...

Yes, I am a productive person in my community...

Thank you and May God Bless You all

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Sulieman Ghneimat- Jordanian Land Mine Survivor

Email: Sulieman13865@yahoo.com

Phone: 00962795598506