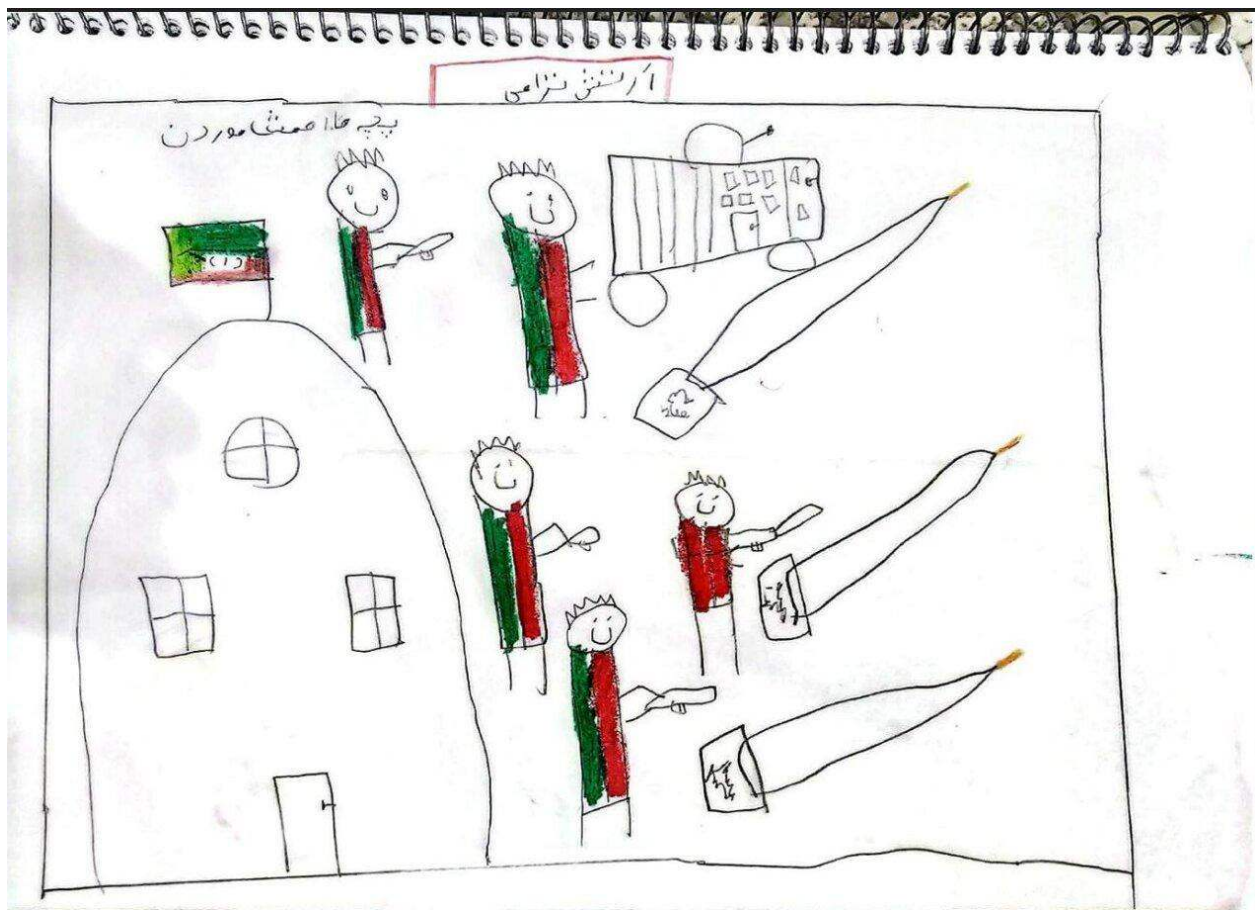


The Children of Minab: Inside the School Bombing That Killed 167 Students



By: Elnaz Mohammadi, Originally published in Sharq Daily

Introductory Note By Femena: This report on the Minab School bombing and the killing of 168 persons, 110 of them students, which occurred on the first day of the war by Israel and the United States on Iran, was written by journalist and women’s rights defender Elnaz Mohammadi and originally published in *Sharq Daily*. It has since been determined that the missiles that struck the school were Tomahawk missiles used by the United States. The devastation and death toll were especially high because the school was hit multiple times in what appears to have been a double- or multi-strike attack.

The pain and suffering of the students, teachers, and their families have consistently been dismissed by those who support this destructive and illegal war. Given the lack of connectivity and the internet shutdown, voices supporting violence and destruction in Iran have often been amplified, with some continuing to manufacture consent for this war by promoting narratives “from the ground” that claim to prefer death by missile over living under the oppression of the Islamic Republic.

As a rights and peace organization, Femena does not believe this represents a genuine or meaningful choice. With extensive contacts on the ground, we also do not believe this reflects the broader sentiment among Iranians. For this reason, we have translated and are publishing this article in an effort to document and reflect the destruction and pain this war is causing, particularly for innocent civilians.

Our aim is to amplify the voices and perspectives of rights defenders in the country and those most impacted by this horrific crisis, who continue to bear the brunt of attacks on civilians and ongoing violations of humanitarian norms. We will continue to publish and document similar perspectives emerging from Iran.

90 Percent of Bodies Identified With Difficulty

By: Elnaz Mohammadi, Originally published in [Sharq Daily](#)

People come out headless, legless, armless, faceless, from buildings torn apart by missiles. Sometimes they are alive but with wounded bodies, sometimes they are dead but their bodies intact, and sometimes only a single piece of a thigh emerges. A place is usually found for the hands and feet and the small left over pieces of bodies, so all can be buried together; similar to what happened three days ago in Minab. Following that large explosion in the city’s well-known

school, some of the body parts were impossible to identify, so all of them were put to rest together, side by side, in a pit in the ground.

From 10:45 a.m. on the 28th of February 2026, and continuing for three days, victims were pulled from the building of the boys' and girls' elementary school "Shajareh Tayyebbeh," which operates under the supervision of the Rahpouyan Shohadaye Khalij Fars Cultural-Educational Institute. The school, located on Resalat Street near the Al-Mahdi Cultural Complex in the city of Minab, a city of about 80,000 residents, became the site of a devastating explosion and subsequent bombardment. Rescue and recovery teams brought out children, teachers, and parents who had gone to the scene, recovering a total of 168 victims, 110 of them students.

According to reports from the scene, some students—particularly boys on the upper floors—were thrown from the building by the force of the blasts, while girls on the lower floors were found huddled together in fear, their last refuge the school's prayer hall and corridors, which offered no real protection. The attack struck the school in three separate rounds of bombardment, leaving both students and staff among the casualties.

The 45 teachers who lost their lives that day were among those recovered from the rubble. Some, such as Razieh Zamani, along with Makan Nasiri and Mohammad Taha Jafari, were never found, and symbolic graves were later established in their memory. Others were recovered with their bodies intact but lifeless, including the school principal, Ms. Gholipour, as well as Mikaeil Mirdoraghi, a third-grade student, Selma and Esra Zakari, first- and fourth-grade students, and Alireza Shahroju, a first-grade student. Several victims were pulled from the debris with severe and fatal injuries, including Zahra Asghari-Far, a second-grade student, whose body was recovered from beneath the rubble.

The long story of Shajareh Tayyebbeh Elementary School—mistakenly described by most media outlets as a girls-only school since the day of the explosion—can be summarized in a few lines. Shajareh Tayyebbeh School, one of the 200 schools in the city of Minab and its surrounding villages, began operating 10 years ago after a change of use in a complex of buildings and sheds belonging to the IRGC Navy. Residents, social activists, and families of martyrs told Shargh that a clinic called Shahid Aabsalan was later built around the school, along with a car wash, a teachers' cooperative, and several shops. Some of the surrounding sheds were also rented to the Ministry of Education.

At the beginning of its operation, the school accepted only students whose parents served in the Navy, but it later became a non-profit school, with this year's latest enrollment tuition reaching 20 million tomans. The school building had two stories, two entrances, and separate courtyards, with the upper floor designated for boys and the lower floor for girls. Classes were not overcrowded, and children from different social backgrounds studied there—some with fathers

who were laborers, some teachers, and some military personnel. Some of the students killed in the attack were Baluch, including Fatemeh Dorazehi and Amir Ghasemzai.

On the 28th of February 2026, Shajareh Tayyebah School was wiped from the face of the earth, leaving 168 victims—students, teachers, parents, and even the service driver. Ninety-six people survived with injuries, and for days no one accepted responsibility for their death. The students and teachers killed in this bombardment are among the 210 teachers and students who, according to the Minister of Education at the time this report was prepared, had been martyred since the beginning of the U.S. and Israeli attack on Iran.

BBC World later reported that at least one American Tomahawk missile had been used in the bombing of the school, while some media outlets presented evidence suggesting that outdated map information had been used in targeting the site. The Chinese Red Cross announced it would send \$200,000 in aid for survivors, and U.S. President Donald Trump, despite initially rejecting any mistake by the country's military, later said he would follow up on the matter.

But the story of three people remained unfinished forever: Razieh Zamani, a teacher, and Makan Nasiri and Mohammad Taha Jafari, students—three persons of Shajareh Tayyebah School in Minab, presumed dead, but whose bodies were not recovered as confirmed in an interview with Shargh by Mr. Karimzadeh, a public relations expert of the Hormozgan Department of Education.

— In the end, what did you do?

“We wrote on her grave: ‘Javid al-Asar’ or eternally missing.”

The voice of Mahmoud Zamani, the brother of Razieh Zamani, the third-grade boys' teacher, over the telephone sounds like that of all those who know they will have a missing person for the rest of their lives: stunned, sorrowful, waiting, and drained of strength.

Razieh Zamani, born in 1991, had started teaching the boy's third grade at this school two years earlier, with a salary of eight million tomans and a one-year contract, teaching a class in which Mikaeil Mirdoraghi also studied. Now both have been killed—with the difference that the student, Mikaeil, lies in the cemetery, while there is no trace of the body of his young teacher, Razieh. A few days ago, the Zamani family were told they must give a DNA test so it could be matched with the remaining body parts, pieces, and remains that had been collected. However, Mahmoud Zamani considers it unlikely that any tests were taken from the remains, because just yesterday (the day before the interview, March 12, 2026) these remains were buried together in nearly 50 covers. As he told Shargh, the remains had been kept for two weeks and were in the process of decomposing, and for that reason they were buried together. Contrary to what forensic officials had said, no tests have yet been taken from the Zamani family. They had

suspected that a remaining piece of a thigh might belong to Razieh; that piece was sent to the Bandar Abbas forensic office, but specialists there said it most likely belonged to a sixth-grade boy and was not Razieh's leg. The family and rescue workers also found no trace of Razieh's watch, bracelets, or necklace, and in the end the search came to a close.

Mahmoud says that apparently the boys' school had not been registered in the Ministry of Education and was known under the name of the same Shajareh Tayyebah girls' school, although most of the dead were from the boys' school. Officials of the Minab Department of Education told the family they had not been aware of the registration of the boys' school and that it had been affiliated with Shiraz. "There was a telecommunications tower on top of the school, and parents had repeatedly asked for this tower to be removed. On that same day, two rockets hit this tower six seconds apart. The school had two sections; part of it remained intact, and two teachers were able to leave from that section and survived."

Mahmoud Zamani was not in Minab on the day of the incident. His family went there as soon as they heard the news and said there was also disorder in the debris removal. At first, most of those working to remove debris were ordinary citizens, and later the Red Crescent joined the search efforts. Family members stood among the crowd and saw that in the very first hours several survivors were pulled out from under the rubble, including two students from Razieh's class who had remained safe because the blast wave had thrown them under a desk. Those two students told the Zamani family that after learning about the start of the war, Razieh had told them to sit in the classroom so she could go to the office and then return. But as soon as she stepped out the door, the first explosion occurred. Now the surviving students and the Zamani family do not know exactly where she was at the moment of the explosion: "Her bag remained completely intact and was handed over to us in the very first hours, but Razieh's body was not never found."

Razieh was seven years old when she lost her father and lived with one of her sisters and her mother. The family is originally from Minab—four brothers and three sisters. After earning a bachelor's degree in rural development engineering and failing to find related work, she studied educational sciences and became a teacher. Until last year, Razieh earned three million tomans, and this year her monthly salary had reached eight million tomans, all without insurance or benefits. Her brother says she was deeply committed to teaching and was a creative and dedicated educator. Parents were very satisfied with her, and her students loved her very much. For two weeks now, Razieh's mother has kept her eyes fixed on the door; she can neither eat nor sleep properly: "We were finally forced to consider a symbolic grave for her next to her colleagues. We also informed the Martyrs Foundation that if they want to write something on her gravestone, they should write 'Javid al-Asar' or eternally missing."

— How did Mikaeil spend his last night?

He drew a picture and wrote on it that all the children had died. The drawing was made eleven hours before the deadly morning of Saturday February 28, 2026. The drawing was on a white sheet of paper from a spiral-bound drawing notebook showing the school building, the Iranian flag above it, five children in the schoolyard, and three missiles descending upon them. Two sentences were written in the sky above the school: “The children died” and “military force.” Mikaeil had misspelled both “children” and “military” on the last night of his life. Had the bombs not struck Shajareh Tayyebah School in Minab at 11:10 a.m. on Saturday, February 28—the first day of a terrifying war—his teacher, Razieh Zamani, whose dismembered body has been searched for in vain ever since, would surely have seen his sentences and gently taught him the correct spelling.

That night, Mikaeil showed the drawing to his brother, Kourosh, and afterward they played “trench war”; Mikaeil was “Iran” and Kourosh was “America.” The trenches were colorful pillows, and the guns were several pencils tied together in a bundle. In the end, Mikaeil told his mother, “Iran won.”

Shakiba Derikvand, the 31-year-old mother of Mikaeil Mirdoraghi, did not see the drawing until the next day; it reached her only after she had identified her son in a refrigerated truck and then lost consciousness. Two weeks later, using the same mobile phone with which she had taken his last photo on the apartment landing—just as she did every day at the request of nine-year-old Mikaeil—she photographed his final drawing and sent it along with several videos, now the only remaining sound and image memories of one of her two sons. The young woman from Andimeshk remembers him as the boy who would tell his teacher he was an angel because his name was the name of a heavenly angel.

Mikaeil was a nine-year-old third-grade student. On the first day of the war, when American missiles struck Shajareh Tayyebah School in Minab, he and 167 other students were killed. Mikaeil’s family, originally from Andimeshk, had moved to Minab for his father’s job.

His mother, Shakiba Derikvand, recalls searching for her son “all alone,” in “strangeness,” and with “no one to hold her hand,” walking the road from home to the school as the city trembled beneath her feet, losing consciousness several times along the way.

“I called his father, who works in Abadan. We were waiting for the school term to end so we could move our home to Khuzestan. I asked him what had happened—had the war begun? While I was talking to him, the first missile struck, and the apartment shook. Then another one. I screamed and said, ‘The children!’ From the balcony, I saw people moving toward Mikaeil’s school. I went too.

There was traffic; I got out of the car and ran the rest of the way. A man came up and said all the children under the rubble were dead. Right there, my legs went numb, and I fell. I was all alone in a strange city. There was no one to take my hand, to lift me up. I was a stranger there.

Then another person said, 'Go—some of them are alive.' I regained my strength, got up, and saw the rubble—it was massive, it was terrifying. Right there, I collapsed again."

That day, people had gathered to help, but around three in the afternoon the third missile struck the sheds around the school—the same three missiles that Mikaeil had drawn in his picture. When the third missile hit, rescuers cleared the area for an hour, but a number of parents who had gone toward the rubble to find their children were killed instantly. Shakiba speaks of that one hour with deep regret: "That means if anyone had still been alive, they died during that one hour."

After that, so many bodies were brought out of the school that Shakiba could no longer bear to look at them, especially their faces, which were mostly unrecognizable. At that moment she remembered her other son, Kouros, who studied at Arman Middle School, and hurried to pick him up. "I thought they were going to strike all the schools." Finally, at seven in the evening, after Shakiba had run frantically all over the city alone, she was told that an acquaintance had seen Mikaeil in the refrigerated truck with his backpack on his chest. Shakiba says that day mothers were not allowed in for identification, but since she had no man with her in the city, she identified Mikaeil herself. Mikaeil was found next to his close friend, Alireza Zare. "I saw him with a bloody face and an intact body, clutching his school backpack, and I lost consciousness."

Alireza Zare was also Mikaeil's friend, but he was in the fourth grade, and no trace of his body was found because the fourth graders were near the prayer hall, which had been completely destroyed. All of them had died. Kamran Mirdoraghi, a local journalist from Andimeshk and a relative of Mikaeil's family, told Shargh that most people in Minab come from weak economic backgrounds. "Many of the children did not have families to search for them. There was a boy who had come looking for his sisters and said, 'We have no father or mother.'"

Mikaeil was buried three days later in the martyrs' section of Behesht Zahra-ye Lur cemetery in Andimeshk, and a strange keepsake remained of him: a drawing in which he had even correctly predicted the number of American bombs that destroyed his school and carried away his classmates and teachers with torn and shattered bodies. For two weeks now, Lur cemetery has been the place Shakiba and Javad Mirdoraghi regularly visit with their older son Kouros, who was deeply attached to Mikaeil—while, as they themselves say, no official, either in Khuzestan or in Minab, has yet come to visit them.

— How many of your children were killed?

— Two; Selma and Esra.

Selma and Esra Zakari were two female students of Shajareh Tayyebah School in Minab. Their parents, Mokhtar Zakari and Razieh Shamsavari, are from Minab; before February 28, 2026, they had two daughters and one son, and their house—located in the Zahuki neighborhood—was five minutes away from the school. Selma was in the first grade and Esra in the fourth grade. Mokhtar Zakari, 39, a faculty member at Farhangian University, was at home that day teaching his students online. Early that morning, before teaching and as part of his daily routine, he had taken Selma and Esra to school and returned home. Around 10:30 a.m., the school called and told them to come pick up the children because “war has arrived.” Mokhtar and Razieh had barely gotten into the car when the ground beneath their feet shook, and as they set off, they heard the second explosion. Following the trail of smoke led directly to the girls’ school.

“They hit the school? No, impossible. Something else must have happened.”

The city was in turmoil—filled with the haste and confusion that missile strikes bring upon people. When the young couple reached the school, they understood that everything was over. They knew that the place had once been a military base, but they had never imagined that the school would no longer be safe for their children. Like other families, Mokhtar Zakari says the girls had all gone to the prayer hall to take shelter, and the missile struck the prayer hall. He believes that if they had stayed in their classrooms, perhaps half of them would have survived. Mokhtar and Razieh learned right there, in front of the school, that Esra’s teacher, Ms. Basarde, had also been killed.

“This went on for three days and nights until the debris was cleared and the bodies were identified. I identified one of the children that same night and the other the next day in the morgue. I identified Esra on the first night, at the hospital. Selma the next day. First they showed their photos on a monitor. They had put the photos together, but Selma’s photo had been taken badly and I could not recognize her, so I identified her in person.”

The girls were lying not far from each other in the morgue—one was number 62 and the other 70. On both of their death certificates, the cause of death was written as “head trauma.” When Mokhtar speaks about the condition of his daughters’ bodies, he says “thank God” that their bodies had not been torn apart. “But 90 percent of the children’s bodies were destroyed.” Mokhtar remembers the last moments like this:

“My younger daughter was jealous of the older one and would get stubborn and, when I took them to school, she would not say goodbye to me. But on the last day, when I dropped her off, for the first and last time she shook my hand and said goodbye.”

Mokhtar and Razieh have another son who is in the sixth grade at Algu-ye Saleh School in Minab. “I wanted to take him to Shajareh Tayyebah School too, but thank God the school principal did not allow it.”

Now the debris removal is finished, and Esra and Selma have been buried in the Islam-Abad Zahuki cemetery in Minab, next to three other martyred students, but Mokhtar still has not been able to return to the school area. In his view, it is a killing ground, and no father can easily go to the killing ground of his children. He now sees Minab as stricken by calamity.

“This place had never seen war. Not even during the eight-year Iran–Iraq war. This is the first time war has come here. Even the Mongols did not attack here. Only before Shah Abbas did the Portuguese attack Minab.”

Most of the killed students were buried in Behesht Zahra of Minab, and some in surrounding villages. Residents say they have never seen Minab so completely covered in mourning and despair. From the entrance of Minab, every alley and neighborhood displays banners and photos of the dead. Each district, village, and neighborhood has one to four victims. Hamid, a resident of Minab, spoke to Shargh about the “catastrophe” of the airstrike on Shajareh Tayyebah School. Several of the killed students were the children of his relatives or friends—children between seven and eleven years old:

“The father of Hananeh Zakarikhah is my friend. In this explosion, his wife, Hananeh, and another relative of his who was seven years old lost their lives. His wife reached the school earlier than he did, and at that moment the second missile struck and she was killed. My friend himself arrived at the school a short time later, witnessed the explosion, and suffered blast-wave symptoms. Another friend of mine also lost two of his children in this incident.”

Hamid says that the parents who were killed in the incident had been present at the elementary school because of the second explosion:

“The first explosion hit near the school at 10 a.m. The teachers, so that nothing would happen to the students, took all the children to the prayer hall and called the families to come pick them up, but the second missile struck exactly the school’s prayer hall. Some parents who had freelance jobs arrived quickly and took their children, but others were killed in the second explosion as soon as they reached the school.”

Nothing remained of the niece of Hamid's friend except a single shoe; no trace of her body was ever found:

"This same friend also lost his niece, Raha Zarei, in this explosion."

**— How did you find them?
— One of them had no leg.**

Yadollah Shahroju, a teacher from Minab who this year was teaching in schools in Bandar Abbas and traveled the hundred-kilometer distance between that city and Minab every day, had not yet fully left his school after the evacuation warning when he heard the horrifying news: "They have hit Minab. They have hit a school." Yadollah had two loved ones at the most well-known school in the city: Alireza Shahroju, a seven-year-old first-grade student who was his nephew, and Zahra Asghari-Far, an eight-year-old second-grade student and the daughter of his niece.

Yadollah heard the news at 10:30 in the morning while leaving the school and being stuck in traffic. At that moment his wife called and said a terrifying sound had come from near their home—from the direction of the school, about one kilometer away from their house in Al-Mahdi township, the teachers' residential complex. When Yadollah called his brother's wife, he heard nothing but crying. Alireza was under the rubble. Relatives and family members had gathered there, hoping they might be able to do something, but they could not. Zahra and Alireza had died there.

"When I entered the city, I saw that it no longer had its normal appearance. There was a strange urgency and haste among the people. It was the same toward the hospital. The entrance to our neighborhood had also been blocked, so I entered through a side road. On the way I could not get any news about my nephew or my niece's daughter, and when I arrived I understood that they too had been there and, unfortunately, neither had come out alive. That day I could not go to the school, because my spirit is fragile. Even now I cannot go there to see it."

Zahra was found earlier that day. At the time of the explosion she had been in the yard, and the blast wave had thrown her and ruptured her ears, but her body was not severely injured and she had only a small scratch above her eyebrow. Those who saw the bodies, however, say that even those whose bodies had not been torn apart had their skin burned by the heat, and those who had been thrown from inside to outside were torn to pieces, with small parts of their bodies scattered around or stuck to the walls—all accompanied by a strange smell that lingered for several days after the incident, a mixture of the smell of blood and bodies left under the rubble.

People in small towns are not like those in big cities, where there is experience with major disasters. Minab had no experience of such an event at all, and for this reason residents say the incident was accompanied by extreme crowding that made rescue and recovery work difficult. That is why Alireza, Yadollah's nephew, was found late. Until Sunday afternoon there was no trace of him, and finally the family chose the difficult path of taking his mother to the morgue to search for her son among the bodies. Minab has only one hospital, Hazrat Abolfazl, with a morgue that can hold at most 30 bodies. For this reason, one of the city's benefactors made available a large refrigerated hall for fish and shrimp that he had recently purchased but had not yet opened, and gave it to the families. There, Alireza's mother searched for him, but after seeing the first two bodies she could not bear it and came out. Sunday turned into Monday, while officials had said the funeral would be held on Tuesday. Finally, among the relatives, someone with a "stronger heart," who also knew Alireza's face, entered the morgue and on Monday at noon said he was unsure between two bodies and could not identify him because the faces were damaged. Once again the difficult task arose; Alireza's mother went in again to find her beloved child between the two bodies. They washed the faces with saline, but since several days had passed, Alireza's face was swollen; in the end, the mother identified him by his sports clothes, socks, and the small signs that mothers recognize, and the forensic doctor confirmed it. Alireza's body was not in good condition; one of his legs was completely gone, and the rest of his body was badly damaged.

Now Yadollah and the people of Minab say that the greatest regret among families—especially mothers—is one: why they did not go sooner to pick up their children; and another: why everywhere it is said that it was a girls' school when the number of boys killed was greater. Alireza's mother has the same regret. She has another son in the sixth grade who had a toothache that day and did not go to school. Alireza also said he did not want to go, but his mother did not allow it, and this is now the greatest regret of her life: "I wish I had listened to him."

From Alireza's class, six students were killed and eleven survived because they had been using virtual classes. One of the mothers told Alireza's mother that on that day she had managed to pick up her child and was apparently the last person to see them; she now says all the children had gathered their bags and water bottles and were standing in front of their classroom while the teacher stood at the door, handing the children over one by one.

Now, apart from those who were transferred to villages or other cities, the rest of the children have been buried together in a section beside Behesht Zahra of Minab, and residents and families say that the aerial photo published in those days from this section—which some had thought was generated by artificial intelligence—is completely real.

Yadollah Shahroju, like other families, says the school began operating in the early 2010s. At that time he was deputy of the Minab Department of Education and was closely familiar with the city's educational developments:

“At that time, some schools in Bandar Abbas were obtaining permits for IRGC Navy schools along the coastal strip from Jask to Minab. Shajareh Tayyebah School was also one of the non-profit schools whose permit was obtained by the IRGC Navy and at first was for IRGC families, but later it became a public school and only a small number of students had military fathers. For more than a decade it has no longer been a military site and has been abandoned. I pass by there every day and had never seen forces going in and out.”

A few days after the attack on Shajareh Tayyebah School, several American media outlets, including The New York Times, wrote that the attack was the result of outdated data provided by the United States Defense Intelligence Agency. Statements from Minab residents in interviews with Shargh also confirm the reports of foreign media.

Residents of Minab, like Yadollah Shahroju, say that students from all social classes studied at Shajareh Tayyebah School—from government employees to laborers and teachers. Yadollah's brother, Alireza's father, is a house painter, and his niece's husband, Zahra's father, has a small shop in Minab—both with low incomes that now, like the rest of the victims' families, will partly be spent forever on memorial ceremonies and charity in their names.