

Conjoined Twins With Shared Heart Can't Be Split

Conjoined Palestinian twins with a shared heart and other vital organs returned home to the West Bank Monday after Israeli doctors determined they could not successfully separate them.

The mother, Basma Breiwesh, arrived at a Hebron hospital with her conjoined daughters three days after she gave birth at Hadassah University Hospital in Jerusalem. She said she decided to come home after Israeli specialists told her the twins could not be saved.

Brewesh, 34, said she knew she was carrying conjoined twins from her first trimester but that as a devout Muslim, she refused to abort.

"I am a religious woman and I cannot kill my children in my own hands," she told The Associated Press. "I am happy that I brought them to life, and now it is up to the hands of God to keep them alive."

She said she was treated well in Israel, but she decided to return home to be closer to her four other children.

Roughly one out of every 200,000 live births worldwide results in conjoined twins, according to the University of Maryland Medical Center.

Most are stillborn. About three-quarters of conjoined twins are female and are joined at least partially in the chest, sharing organs. Chances of successful surgery and survival are greater if the twins have separate sets of organs, experts say.

The Israeli hospital said Breiwesh's twins shared a heart, liver and other internal organs and would die if separated. Their overall prospects of survival are slim.

"It's a very sad case," the hospital said in a statement. "A top-notch team of experts delivered the twins by cesarean section ... comprehensive tests revealed that, unfortunately, the twins could not be separated."

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