

THIS WEEK IN
...Palestine



HEROES from **GAZA**

Issue 315 | July 2024



Cover: *Heroes from Gaza*.
Artwork by Sergio Korchof.



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As long as the war on Gaza continues, *This Week in Palestine* remains committed to publishing issues on the topic. *TWiP* welcomes your suggestions for specific themes.

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“We have no food at home,” said one journalist with whom we have cooperated regarding this July 2024 issue of *This Week in Palestine (TWiP)* themed “Heroes from Gaza.” If working in such conditions doesn’t make a person a hero, then who deserves such a title?

This edition of *TWiP* is essentially an acknowledgment of people living in Gaza who have given the world a lesson in how to be human and how to care for others, particularly during dire circumstances. Many of those we feature have passed, but they deserve to be honored for their courage, and their legacy serves as a torch to illuminate our path. They are true heroes. However, we were clearly not able to do justice to all those who are disguised as normal humans but who merit the title of hero; in fact, we barely scratched the surface. Constraints of time, space, and ongoing communication challenges have limited our ability to feature more people. It is also important to realize that our content providers themselves were experiencing the trauma and horrors of daily life in Gaza even as they engaged in working with us. In many ways and for numerous reasons, the July issue has probably been the most difficult edition we have ever worked on. So do accept our apology for the delay in its publication.

We sincerely thank the amazing Sayegh Group from Jordan that has shouldered the gold sponsorship of this issue. May they flourish further and receive abundant blessings. We also profusely thank the people who have helped us with the content of this issue, whether by conducting interviews with our heroes or by searching the internet for information on them. We would like to sincerely thank Aziz Sallam, a bright, multitasking young man from the city of Gaza for his assistance in acquiring most of the content for us. In addition, a huge thank you goes to Ahmed Hosni Dremly who has interviewed several of our heroes and sent us their captivating stories. We also thank our artist and photographer friend Shareef Sarhan for sending us photos of our heroes. Finally, a big thank you to the following amazing people who have added value to the content of this issue: Lesley Boulton, Paula Lacey, Joe Casey, Emma Rubach, Kirsty Wright (Jr.), Darragh Martin, and Maria Dag.

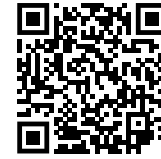
Before you go, make sure to read the amazingly poignant article, “The Right to Be Angry” by Rania Hammad.

We hope our heroes from Gaza will inspire you, warm your heart, and remind you to keep supporting the people of Gaza.

The *TWiP* Collective

THIS WEEK IN Palestine

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The Right to Be Angry

By Rania Hammad

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THIS WEEK IN
Palestine



HEROES from GAZA

The Right to Be Angry



By Rania Hammad

I turned to her, back in October. Brigida. She is a professional, but I talked to her as a friend.

She listened to my expressions of grief and sadness, my outbursts of anger. She acknowledged and validated my emotions and told me that they were normal and human. In fact, she said they were healthy emotions considering the circumstances.

She told me to put my feet on the ground and feel the earth, to breathe deeply and recognize the fact that things were out of my control, our control. She told me that I was doing the most that I could, which helped lighten my sense of guilt.

Survivor's guilt can be brutal, and it emerges as a visceral response to traumatic events. Repeated exposure to brutality and violence can lead individuals to experience emotional and physical exhaustion, which can be identified as "empathic distress," which happens when we care deeply about others and become distressed from witnessing them going through traumatic experiences.

Watching the atrocities while being far away from loved ones, from the other part of us – our people – makes us feel remorseful; as though responsible, not doing enough. The powerlessness and helplessness contribute to making us feel inadequate and ashamed, as though it were in our power and in

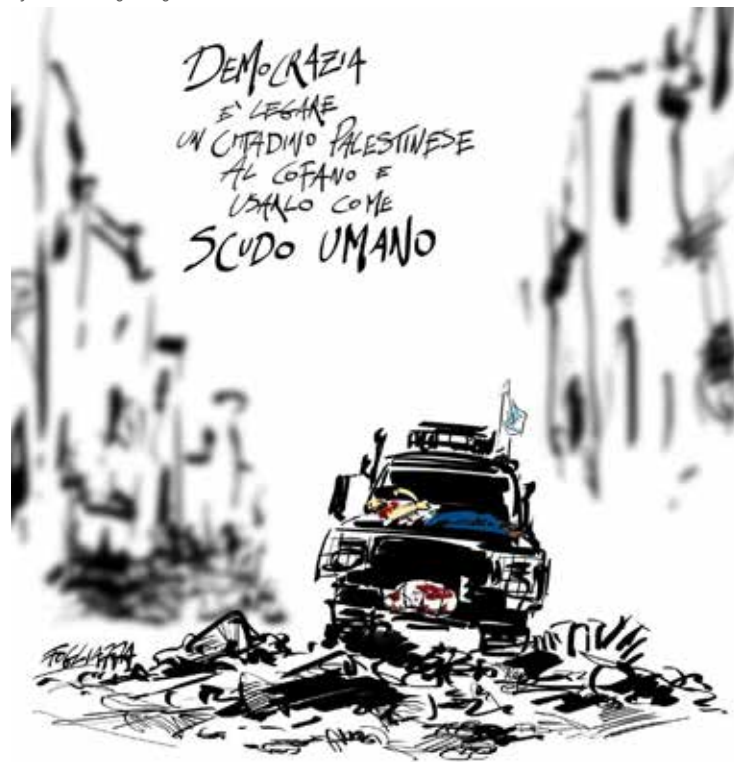
our hands to make things better. When change does not come and progress does not happen, we feel as though we are weak, incapable and guilty for abandoning or betraying our people, whom we are unable to help, protect, and save.

Israel's ongoing genocidal war has inflicted a massive emotional toll not just on Palestinians, but on millions of people worldwide. The unfathomable death and destruction over the last year have instilled a deep sense of guilt in many people, making us question whether we deserve to survive, to live, to inhabit this earth. Do we even deserve to distract ourselves and live our lives in some parallel world to theirs? To live with less pain and less anger? That too causes us to feel uneasy and troubled.

Brigida not only provided me with tools, she also did something more important: she chose not to take a position of neutrality towards my suffering, or our collective suffering and trauma. She did not need to know all our history to comprehend that my rage stemmed from love and my anger from injustice. She heard me, understood me, supported me, and identified me as the victim.

She never misunderstood my fury, despite my enmity caused by my frustration. She in no way misconstrued my words or my emotions, never contributed – as many have during our genocide – to our systematic oppression, adding another layer of grief for the loss of faith in people, politicians, journalists, and human rights. Instead, she

Democracy is to tie a Palestinian citizen to the hood and use him as a human shield,
by Gianluca Foglia Fogliazza.





This is our land,
by Gianluca Foglia Fogliazza.

empathized with me, providing me with the solidarity and affirmation I needed in order to be okay. It was the most valuable support she could offer me, considering the damage caused by all the injustice, distortions, and manipulations we have had to endure at the hardest time in our history. Standing with me, with us, had a therapeutic effect on me as a Palestinian.

Although watching the barbaric atrocities unfold in Gaza on a screen may not appear to directly impact and affect us in ways that are similar to those living it directly, our brain is actually responding to what we see as secondhand trauma, causing us mental and physical “pain,” anxiety, depression, mood swings, irritability, emotional outbursts, reduced productivity, persistent sadness, and anger. Although in no way comparable to the direct, constant traumatic stress our people are living on the ground, it is nonetheless debilitating

and a common characteristic of our collectivity during this tragic time.

We are a people who have endured persistent trauma and stress for generations. We live in a chronic state of trauma due to the political violence that the Palestinians are continuously subjected to. We cannot get past or recover from this trauma because it never ends – it is ongoing.

The massacres have followed us wherever we are: in our land, Palestine, in Lebanon, in Jordan, and later on in Iraq, Syria, and Libya; all the places we had fled to. The hand that perpetrates them, directly or indirectly, is always the same. And when Palestinians cannot be killed through warfare, then starvation, malnutrition, dehydration, exhaustion, and siege are used as instruments of war to kill more of us. Even after the bombings stop, there will be long-term consequences on people’s physical and mental health, including the premature death of many.

By no means are we new to the killing fields.

Israel’s history – as a settler-colonial state – on our national homeland, and in neighboring countries, is filled with events that were genocidal long before South Africa recently filed a case against Israel for this current genocide.

It started with the mass murder and forced displacement of Palestinians in 1948, and with the massacre in Palestine’s Deir Yassin town, near Jerusalem, on April 9, 1948. The carnage was carried out by Irgun and Stern Gang groups, the first Jewish Zionist terrorist groups to exist. They were led by Menachem Begin and Yitzhak Shamir, the first terrorists to operate in Palestine, who both later became prime ministers of Israel.

Like today, the victims were found maimed, raped, and then killed. Entire families were murdered. Men were put on trucks and paraded across Jerusalem before being shot in the head. This major massacre in our history caused a mass exodus of Palestinians from their lands and homes (in and around Jerusalem especially). The Deir Yassin massacre was but the first brutal slaughter of our people perpetrated for the broader campaign of ethnic cleansing and genocide carried out by the newly founded Israeli army.

Many other massacres followed: Abu Shusha (May 1948), Tantura (May 1948), Lydda (July 1948), Saliha (October 1948), Al-Dawayima (October 1948), Qibya (October 1953, under the leadership of Ariel Sharon, also future prime minister), Kafr Qasim (October 1956), Khan Yunis (November 1956), Sabra and Shatila (September 1982, under the responsibility of Israeli Defense Minister Ariel Sharon), Al-Aqsa (October 1990), Ibrahimi Mosque

(February 1994), Jenin Refugee Camp (2002), and then the multiple attacks on Gaza in 2008–2009, 2012, 2014, 2018–2019, and in 2022.

All before October 7, 2023.

Heinous crimes with thousands upon thousands of victims, mostly women and children and the elderly; mass graves and burned bodies, lying right under newly established towns and beach resorts, and all with the same intent. Ethnic cleansing and genocide. For new settlements and villas on the beach. So the establishment of Israel involved the extermination, expulsion, and massacre of Palestinians – this is the context within which to understand the current situation. This is the backdrop to our physical and emotional state.

While the people of Gaza have no time to think of anything but survival, and cannot think beyond the present moment – with no time to grieve their dead or find a burial place for them – those of us outside Gaza feel frustrated, hopeless, and angry. Grief, fury, outrage, and resentment are the most dominant emotions. They are natural emotions, and we must accept them and embrace them, and demand to be understood and empathized with.

We are not the aggressors; we are the victims. Our emotions stem from a comprehensible place, unlike those that are dehumanizing us, brutalizing us, oppressing us, colonizing and killing us.

At a time of ongoing genocide against our own people, what are we expected to feel? We can barely put it into words. And at a time when everything is being taken away from us, nobody can take away our right to be angry.

We know that anger is a secondary emotion: it protects us from the vulnerable emotions like sadness



Those who forget are complicit,
by Gianluca Foglia Fogliazza.

and fear. It helps shield and protect us from trauma. When faced with extreme threat, or when events are unfair and unjust, we react with anger because it is the way we know that an injustice has been done, that something has been taken away from us or that someone has deprived us of something that matters. It's an alarm, an early warning system that is telling us that something is wrong. It's telling us that we have been hurt and that we or someone we care about has been wronged, and justice denied. It shows us what really matters to us. It shows us what we love. Anger serves a purpose, because it connects us with what we love and want to keep safe. For this reason, anger is the most natural response to these circumstances.

The connection between anger and underlying feelings like hurt or fear is fundamental. Anger and hate are responses to violence and harm inflicted on those we love and want to protect, and that is why anger is also a form of love. A form of love that means we stand up for others and for ourselves; we fight for what is right.

Love is an extremely powerful emotion. When you love people so much and you see that they are being harmed and feel the need to protect them, anger is the trauma response that ensues. So love is the dominant emotion; love for our remarkable heroes in Palestine, steadfast and resolute, still teaching life despite the savagery perpetrated against us on our land.

Yes, there is a lot of psychological pain in Palestine and Palestinians, but our psychological pain is not pathological; it is a consequence of our reality and our history.

We will flourish and be an example to the world once we are free from colonization, occupation, and apartheid. Once everyone will have understood that our anger stems from injustice and love.

Rania Hammad is a writer and activist based in Italy. Hammad is also member of the Global Network on the Question of Palestine, part of the Arab Renaissance for Democracy and Development, and national coordinator for Italy of Palestine International Friends Alliance.

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HEROES from GAZA

Samer Abudaqa (1978–2023)

A Journalist Who Brought Joy Everywhere

Samer Abudaqa, a 45-year-old journalist and father of four from Abasan Al-Kabira near Khan Younis, was killed on December 16, 2023 in an Israeli drone attack. Abudaqa was on assignment with his colleague Wael Dahdouh in a school in Khan Younis, a city in the southern area of the Gaza Strip, when they came under fire. Israel had been intensifying its bombardment of the area when an Israeli drone struck the school. Dahdouh later recounted the moments leading up to the incident. He said it took place when they were heading back to an ambulance belonging to the Palestinian Civil Defense after they were done filming in an area of Khan Younis that was hard to reach.



“Suddenly, something happened, a big thing. I couldn’t tell what it was, I only felt that something big had happened and pushed me to the ground. The helmet fell and then the microphone,” Dahdouh told *Al Jazeera* while he was on a hospital bed before being informed that his colleague had lost his life. “I saw that there was intense bleeding from my

shoulder and arm, and I realized that if I stayed, I would keep bleeding there in that location, and no one would reach me,” he added.

Dahdouh said that he could reach Civil Defense staff hundreds of meters away but could not help Abudaqa, fearing they would be targeted. Abudaqa bled to death because a heavy bombardment prevented paramedics from reaching him. The Qatar-based network said that it had referred the case to the International Criminal Court (ICC).

The BBC’s Rushdi Abualouf had worked with Abudaqa for many years and described him as someone who “would bring joy to any place.” His *Al Jazeera* colleagues remember Abudaqa as an exemplary journalist and a caring man, who was beloved by those who worked alongside him.

His family and friends remember a man of love and dedication to his craft. His son, Zain Abudaqa said, “He told me to nurture my talents and never give up on my dreams. ... I cannot believe that he is gone and has left us alone like this.”

The two journalists – Abudaqa and Dahdouh – had worked together with *Al Jazeera* Arabic since before the war. “[Samer] and Wael make up a very professional,



“The Wall,” in *Palestine in White and Black: Political Cartoons from Palestine*, by Mohammad Sabaaneh.

strong team on the ground, documenting everything and bringing all the facts and live pictures of what the Palestinian people have been going through,” said Hani Mahmoud, a fellow *Al Jazeera* journalist. “But particularly with this war, given its intensity in scale and magnitude and the sheer amount of destruction, they have been at the forefront of covering every little detail that one might have forgotten about,” he added.

Al Jazeera’s managing editor, Mohamed Moawad, described Abudaqa as “a skilled professional but a compassionate soul who understood the power of visual storytelling.” On X, formerly known as Twitter, he wrote, “His unwavering commitment to truth and storytelling has left an indelible mark on our team.” Also posting on X, *Al Jazeera* referred to Abudaqa’s death as an “assassination,” and said that its legal filing to the ICC would include the mention of repeated attacks on network crews working in the Palestinian territories.

The network said that Abudaqa was its thirteenth journalist to die on duty since it was created in 1996 but the first to die in the genocide launched on October 7. Abudaqa joined *Al Jazeera* in 2004 as a cameraman and editor.

The Foreign Press Association (FPA), which represents several hundred journalists working for international news organizations, said it grieved the cameraman’s death, noting that he was the first FPA member to be killed in the Israel-Gaza conflict. “We consider this a grave blow to the already limited freedom of the press in Gaza and call on the army for a prompt investigation and explanation.”

Mohammed Abu Selmiya

Sumud Personified

Dr. Mohammed Abu Selmiya is the director of Al-Shifa Medical Hospital in Gaza and a Palestinian pediatrician. Born in 1973, he has held several administrative positions in Gaza's healthcare sector, including serving as the medical director of Al-Nasr Hospital in 2007 and later managing Al-Rantisi Hospital in 2015, before becoming the director of Al-Shifa Medical Hospital.

Abu Selmiya played a vital role as director of Al-Shifa Medical Hospital, the largest hospital in the sector, especially during the first months of the ongoing Israeli aggression on Gaza. Under his leadership, the hospital was able to navigate extremely difficult conditions caused by the Israeli blockade and the immense pressure on medical infrastructure due to the large number of wounded and injured.



He was responsible for organizing and coordinating medical efforts amid continuous bombardment and a lack of medical supplies. He directed medical teams to handle emergency cases and provide necessary care despite the harsh conditions. He played a crucial role in ensuring the safe evacuation of patients and the injured despite the challenges posed by the Israeli blockade and ongoing military operations.

In November 2023, Abu Selmiya and several medical staff and patients were arrested by Israeli forces during forced

evacuations from the hospital. Israel claimed that Hamas was using tunnels under Al-Shifa Hospital for military purposes, allegations denied by both Hamas and hospital officials. The arrests – which took place amid severe human rights violations, with medical teams and patients facing significant difficulties and severe shortages of essential medical supplies – were portrayed as part of a broader strategy to undermine Gaza's medical infrastructure, exacerbating the humanitarian crisis. Given that Abu Selmiya is a prominent figure in Gaza's medical sector, his arrest sparked strong reactions from international and local entities, who demanded his release and that of his colleagues who were detained while performing their humanitarian duties under extremely challenging conditions.

After more than seven months in captivity, Abu Selmiya was released on July 1. During a news conference in Gaza, he described the dreadful experience: Detainees endured "daily physical and psychological humiliation....There was almost daily torture.... Several inmates died in interrogation centres and were deprived of food and medicine."

Dr. Mohammed Abu Selmiya is considered one of the heroes of Gaza. He has provided leadership in horrific circumstances; he has remained steadfast in the face of threats, arrest, imprisonment, and torture; and he has shown a willingness to sacrifice his own well-being and comfort to serve his people and provide necessary medical care. His personal commitment to his community and patients has earned him widespread respect and deep appreciation from Gaza residents and the international community.





HEROES from GAZA

Ghassan Abu Sittah

The Man Who Fixes Broken Faces

Professor Ghassan Abu-Sittah, born and raised in Kuwait in a Palestinian family, is a multi-award-winning plastic and reconstructive surgeon with a reputation as one of the world's leading specialists in craniofacial surgery, facial aesthetics, cleft lip and palate surgery, and trauma-related injuries. He has been very publicly outspoken on the genocide in Gaza since a 43-day stint in hospitals there in October and November 2023. He has enormous influence on public opinion because of his unique background which combines the skills and expertise of a field-leading plastic surgeon with the rigors of academia and the compassion of humanitarianism. As a recognized authority in his field, he has been featured regularly in the press, notably in the BBC, CNN, the *Wall Street Journal*, the *Independent*, the *Telegraph*, and *Le Monde*.



From 2012 until September 2020, he was the director of the Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery Department at the American University of Beirut (AUB), providing remote assistance for surgeons working in the Gaza Strip. In 2015, he co-founded and co-directed the Conflict Medicine Program at AUB's Global Health Institute. In 2021, Abu-Sittah was a lecturer at the Centre for Blast Injury Studies at Imperial College, London.

Abu-Sittah first visited the Gaza Strip as a medical student during the first Intifada in 1989. He was inspired to focus on conflict medicine by Ang Swee Chai, the doctor who founded the British charity Medical Aid for Palestine (MAP) in 1982 after the phalangist-led and Israeli-supported massacres in the Palestinian refugee camps of Sabra and Shatila in Lebanon. Abu-Sittah traveled to Gaza as a member of MAP to provide medical assistance during the second Intifada, the 2008–2009 Gaza war, the 2012 Israeli military operation in the Gaza Strip, the 2014 Gaza war, and the 2018–2019 March of Return protests.

He arrived in Gaza on October 9, 2023 through the Rafah crossing. He worked at Shifa and Al-Ahli hospitals in the northern area until mid-November, while Israeli forces laid siege to the enclave and attacked medical facilities. His harrowing tweets and media appearances gave many an insight into the catastrophic human rights crisis happening in Gaza at a time when journalists and human rights researchers were unable to gain access. He documented the layers of tragedy as all four of Gaza's pediatric facilities collapsed and he was performing eleven

surgeries back to back from eight in the morning until one the next morning.

During his first few weeks in Shifa, where ambulances were arriving every minute, bed capacity was quickly being reached, and there was no antiseptic for injuries. Already, the volume of injured patients was way beyond the capacity of Shifa's facilities, with patients waiting 10 days for urgent surgery. By the end of his second week at Shifa, the sheer ferocity of the Israeli onslaught had already overwhelmed the 2,500 total bed capacity of all Gaza's hospitals combined with 6,500 Palestinians already injured. Thousands of families were seeking refuge in Al-Shifa to escape the bombing, and Abu-Sittah describes the "building shaking as Israeli mortars landed all around the hospital."

He moved farther north to Al-Ahli Hospital with colleagues to help perform triage in a facility with 30 beds, half an operating X-ray machine, and 100 patients needing surgery. After Ahli was bombed, he moved to Al-Awda Hospital in Jabaliya, and when the IDF mandated the evacuation of Al-Awda, Abu-Sittah returned to Shifa with some patients. He moved to the southern Gaza Strip in November and realized that, even though the hospitals in the south were not yet damaged, they had doctors but no resources and could not function properly as hospitals. There was, in fact, a surplus of doctors. At this point, he decided to leave for the UK. He arrived in London on November 18 after 43 days in Gaza. He continued his tweets and social media posts, saying, "I left Gaza yesterday. My heart and my soul are still there with my patients. I remember their names, I remember their wounds. I will fight until they receive the treatment they need and the justice they deserve." He added, "My heart is broken in ways I never knew was possible." And he went on to quote the powerful words of James Baldwin, "This is why one must say Yes to life and embrace it wherever it is found – and it is found in terrible places; nevertheless, there it is. ... For nothing is fixed, forever and forever, it is not fixed; the earth is always shifting, the light is always changing, the sea does not cease to grind down rock. Generations do not cease to be born, and we are responsible to them because we are the only witnesses they have."

On his return to the UK, Abu-Sittah gave a press conference discussing his experience, giving testimony on treating patients who had white phosphorus burns, which the Israeli army denies using. In January 2024, he traveled to The Hague to meet with the ICC investigators. Since his return he has used all public platforms to speak out on the genocide, likening the Israeli leadership to "the psychosis of the Germans in the 30s and the 40s," further characterizing the supporting Western powers, including the US, the UK, Germany, France, Australia, and Canada, as being "the axis of genocide."

Abu-Sittah was elected rector of his alma mater, the University of Glasgow, on March 26 this year, winning 80 percent of the vote. In April, Abu-Sittah was denied entry to Germany for a pro-Palestinian event and, on May 4, was denied entry to France, where he was due to speak to the French Senate on the medical crisis in Gaza. The ICJ subsequently contested this ban. He continues to speak out on the genocide. Abu-Sittah was an editor and co-author of the book *Reconstructing the War Injured Patient* (2017) and *The War Injured Child: From Point of Injury Treatment Through Management and Continuum of Care* (2023). He is a trustee of the Institute for Palestine Studies.

<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61556609071235&mibextid=ZbWKwL>



HEROES from GAZA

Mosab Abu Toha

In Gaza Some of Us Cannot Completely Die, This Is How We Survive

Born in 1992 in Al-Shati refugee camp in Gaza City and the breadwinner for 10, Mosab Abu Toha is, at 32 years of age, already an internationally acclaimed Palestinian poet who writes in both English and Arabic. Abu Toha taught English at UNRWA schools in Gaza from 2016 until 2019, and is the founder of the Edward Said Library in Beit Lahya, the only English-language

library in Gaza. He earned his bachelor's degree in English from the Islamic University of Gaza. His poetry captures the essence of the Palestinian collective experience, contrasting scenes of political violence with natural beauty. He has achieved a global reach and influence with his work in both the US and Europe, and his poetry captures the ongoing struggle of the Palestinian people. In a review of his first book of poetry, *Things You May Find In My Ear*, his poems are described as expressing hope and resilience: "Hope as presented within these words is not a soft thing. It is resilience without any other option. It's finding memory and beauty within



rubble, while fighting for the right to their own lives on their own land.."

On November 19, 2023, Abu Toha was detained by IDF forces while attempting to evacuate Gaza with his wife and children. Two days later, after extensive news coverage and outcry in the international literary community, Abu Toha was released and immediately hospitalized for injuries received while in custody.

His first book of poetry won the 2022 Palestine Book Award and the 2023 American Book Award, an American literary award that annually recognizes a set of books and people for outstanding literary achievement. From 2019 to 2020, he was a visiting poet and librarian-in-residence at Harvard University.

Abu Toha's poems bear witness to a life under siege, first as a child and then as a young father. In his literary debut as a survivor of four brutal military attacks, he writes of cycles of destruction and assault, "and yet," as expressed in one review of the book, "his poetry is inspired by a profound humanity." And in another, ... Like Gaza itself, they [these poems] are filled with rubble and the ever-present menace of surveillance drones policing a people unwelcome in their own land, and they are also suffused with the smell of tea, roses in bloom, and the view of the sea at sunset. Children are born, families continue traditions, students attend university, and libraries rise from the ruins as Palestinians go on about their lives, creating beauty and finding new ways to survive."

His Palestinian and international peers testify to his remarkable lyrical gifts, hailing him as "a vital voice in the global literary community." Naomi Shihab Nye describes Abu Toha as "an astonishingly gifted young poet from Gaza, almost a seer with his eloquent lyrical vernacular ... His poems break my heart and awaken it, at the same time. I feel I have been waiting for his work all my life." The acclaimed American poet and memoirist Mary Karr describes Abu Toha's poems as being "like flowers that grow out of bomb craters," and Kaveh Akbar, the founder of the poetry interview website Divedapper states that his remarkable writing is "poetry of the highest order."

For Palestinians in Gaza, his poetry plays a pivotal role in keeping hope alive. Jehan Bseiso, the Palestinian poet and activist claims that "Mosab's work is not just poetry; it's a lifeline for many in Gaza. His ability to convey our deepest fears and highest hopes through his writing is nothing short of heroic. He gives voice to the voiceless and keeps our stories alive."

<https://www.facebook.com/mosab.abutoha?mibextid=ZbWKwL>



"Freedom of speech," by Mohammad Sabaaneh.

Adnan Al-Bursh

(1974–2024)

Leader of Excellence



Dr. Adnan Al-Bursh devoted his life to working tirelessly in the service of the Palestinian people. When the rockets began to fall on Gaza in October 2023, the orthopedic surgeon left his wife and two little boys and went straight to Al-Shifa Hospital, where he was head of orthopedics, to help tend the wounded. As the bombing intensified, he worked long hours to save trauma victims from life-changing wounds, moving from hospital to hospital as the devastating impact of the war took hold. As the fighting intensified, Dr. Al-Bursh chose to stay in the north and continue treating patients rather than follow Israeli instructions to move south. As the Israeli army approached Al-Shifa

Hospital, he asked his wife Yasmin to leave the area with their children while he stayed behind to treat the injured.

Yasmin Al-Bursh says: “He was besieged in the hospital for a week, then the army ordered him (and the rest of the area’s residents) to move south. Adnan refused to comply, staying instead in the northern sector and heading toward the Indonesian Hospital, which was later targeted by the army. He was in the operating room at the time but survived, while two patients were killed.

His wife adds: “After the Indonesian Hospital was besieged, my husband went to Al-Awda Hospital in northern Gaza and stayed there to serve the patients. However, after some days, the hospital was besieged, and he was arrested on December 17.”

During his detention, Al-Bursh was subjected to torture and beatings and was moved to several prisons. According to the Palestinian Prisoner’s Club, he died in detention on April 19, 2024. He was 50 years old .

A renowned surgeon who was well known for his compassionate leadership and humanitarian approach, Dr. Al-Bursh had a profound impact on the provision of medical services in Gaza during periods of intense conflict, including the genocide and multiple Israeli invasions. His leadership and expertise set him apart, making a significant difference in the healthcare landscape during these crises.

Dr. Al-Bursh played a critical role in assisting trauma victims in every Israeli invasion from 2009 onwards, working in extremely dangerous circumstances to manage the influx of injured patients, coordinate emergency responses, and perform lifesaving surgeries under dire conditions. While his skills were critical in treating individual injuries, he also introduced advanced surgical techniques and protocols that improved patient outcomes across Gaza’s resource-limited and high-pressure environment.

His ability to maintain high standards of care and inspire others during some of the most challenging times had a lasting impact on the provision of medical services in the region, encouraging others in the medical community to pursue excellence and continue their work despite the challenges posed by the ongoing conflict. A prominent advocate for international support and resources, he was acclaimed as an inspiring leader, training and mentoring many young doctors and medical staff, and helping to build a resilient medical community capable of handling future emergencies.

His dedication and calm demeanor under pressure served as a powerful source of inspiration for other doctors and nurses, embodying both the spirit of resilience and commitment to patient care. Khaled Hamouda, one of Dr. Adnan’s colleagues and a well-known member of the community, reflected: “Working alongside Dr. Bursh was a privilege. His dedication to his patients was unmatched. I remember during the 2014 conflict, despite the chaos and limited resources, he remained calm and focused, guiding us through the most challenging of surgeries.” He added: “Dr. Bursh was a beacon of hope in our community. He didn’t just treat patients; he uplifted spirits. I’ll never forget the times he would visit local schools, educating children about health and inspiring them to pursue their dreams. His legacy will live on in the hearts of all who knew him.”

Dr. Al-Bursh completed his surgical training in the United Kingdom, where he gained extensive experience. He went on to publish research in orthopedic surgery, contributing to advancing medical knowledge in specialized medical conferences and seminars at both local and international levels. After graduation, Dr. Al-Bursh chose to stay in his homeland of Gaza to provide his services and contribute to developing the health sector’s infrastructure amid ongoing conflict. He often provided those services for free or at low cost.

Yasmin Al-Bursh, the wife of the Palestinian doctor, told Anadolu Agency: “My husband dedicated himself to serving injured patients, excelling in performing surgeries for them despite the lack of medical resources in Gaza.” She added, “My husband’s concern was to save patients and the injured, and he performed orthopedic surgeries for humanitarian cases for free.”

“Dr. Bursh wasn’t just a doctor; he was an angel in disguise,” recounted one patient. “When my son was injured during the conflict, Dr. Bursh treated him with such care and compassion. He didn’t just heal his body, he healed our spirits too.”

Yasmin Al-Bursh has called on the international community, human rights organizations, and the International Criminal Court to investigate her husband’s killing and the torture endured by Palestinian prisoners inside Israeli prisons.



“First Intifada,” in *Palestine in White and Black: Political Cartoons from Palestine*, by Mohammad Sabaaneh.

Awni Al-Bursh, Adnan Al-Bursh’s brother, said, “My brother was arrested while at work, a respected and trusted doctor. Despite being besieged in many hospitals during the Israeli ground incursion into the sector, Adnan did not stop practicing with utmost professionalism.”

He told Anadolu Agency, “My brother was subjected to severe torture inside Israeli prisons and was cold-bloodedly killed inside a detention center. Everyone was affected by the martyrdom of Dr. Adnan, who treated everyone, rich and poor, healing all members of his people.”

While facing challenges and harsh conditions under the Israeli occupation, Adnan Al-Bursh remained committed to his humanitarian and professional duty, speaking with the voice of conscience and humanity, leaving a lasting legacy in the service of medicine and humanity in and beyond Gaza. His tragic death has underscored the profound impact he had on the community and elevated him to a symbol of hope and resilience in the face of tragedy, exemplifying the extraordinary dedication and resilience of healthcare workers in conflict zones and highlighting their critical role.

At the time of writing, Dr. Al-Bursh’s body still has not been released to his family. Unable to bury him, they cannot say goodbye.

<https://www.facebook.com/adnan.albursh/>



HEROES from GAZA

Mohammed Al-Amarin

The Chef Who Feeds Multitudes Every Day

Mohammed Al-Amarin, 30, a father of four who lives in Gaza City, has worked as a chef in various restaurants in the enclave for ten years. He has also participated in partnerships with international humanitarian associations such as the World Food Programme and Action Against Hunger. During the first months of the Israeli genocide in Gaza, his house, car, and restaurant were bombed in the Al-Zaytoun neighborhood in eastern Gaza City. He and his family evacuated and sought refuge in Khan Younis in southern area of the Strip.



After experiencing difficult situations in tents like hundreds of others, Mohammed decided to take action to help those around him with his talent and experience in cooking. At first, he helped people cook their food. Then, he contacted the World Central Kitchen (WCK) to support him in establishing a simple portable kitchen project to cook for a large number of displaced people in refugee camps.

On the first of January, he launched the project and started to feed hundreds of evacuees with his limited resources but hard work. "Day by day, the number of starving people increased as hundreds of

thousands evacuated Gaza City without taking any belongings," Mohammed told *This Week in Palestine*. "I now cook more than 2,300 meals for over 4,400 people."

Despite the Israeli targeting of members of the WCK and other international organizations, Mohammed continues to cook for displaced people. "I was lucky to survive two bombings near me in the refugee camps, but I'm not sure if I will be as lucky next time," the Gazan chef said. "I hate leaving my family to go cook, but I can't see all these starving people and remain in my tent."

Although it is difficult to cook due to the continuous bombing, lack of supplies and equipment, expensive transportation, the rising numbers of hungry people, and the compulsory evacuation from one place to another because of bombings, helping people remains the talented chef's highest priority during the genocide.

"Our children are dying of starvation while the world is silent," the father of four recounted. "It's heartbreaking that hundreds of people come hours before the food is prepared to have a chance at getting a portion before it's finished."

Mohammed believes that the people of Gaza don't deserve all this pain, loss, grief, and starvation. "People in Gaza have talents and dreams, and they love life despite everything," he said. "I hope this war ends so that we can rebuild our lives before it's too late."

Refaat Alareer

(1979–2023)

If I Must Die...

Sometimes a poet anticipates death in a poetic image that reality later realizes, as happened with Ahmed Shawqi and Federico Garcia Lorca. Following in the footsteps of these poets, who were haunted by the specter of death and foretold their final moments, came the tragic end of Palestinian poet and academic Refaat Alareer (September 1979–December 2023). With the outbreak of the war on Gaza, he sensed the approach of his death and wrote his death-announcement poem in English and pinned it to the top of his X (formerly known as Twitter) account on November 1.



*If I must die,
you must live
to tell my story
to sell my things
to buy a piece of cloth
and some strings,
(make it white with a long tail)
so that a child, somewhere in Gaza
while looking heaven in the eye
awaiting his dad who left in a blaze—
and bid no one farewell
not even to his flesh
not even to himself—
sees the kite, my kite you made, flying up
above
and thinks for a moment an angel is there
bringing back love
If I must die
let it bring hope
let it be a tale*

Dr. Refaat Alareer was martyred on December 6, 2023, during an Israeli airstrike on Gaza, a tragedy that claimed his life and the lives of family members. His death was an irreplaceable loss to the Palestinian academic and cultural community, as he was considered one of the most prominent advocates for the Palestinian cause internationally through his literary and written works.

The news of Refaat's death caused shockwaves across the Arab world and among Arabs of the diaspora. As well as being a much-loved professor of English literature and poet, Refaat was followed on social media by over 100,000 people who were able to appreciate his dark humor while he lived in the grimmest of circumstances.

Since his death in an Israeli airstrike that directly targeted his sister's home, his poem has continued to resonate. The globally celebrated Scottish actor Brian Cox recited Refaat Alareer's final poem in a video that went viral. Demonstrations around the world carried his images, calling for an end to the war on Gaza. The National Book Fair in Rome featured a poignant moment on December 10, 2023 when two supporters of Palestine stood up to recite the poem to the audience. The reading received a standing ovation from the audience, reflecting the widespread global support that Palestine now enjoys. Several online users paid homage to Alareer by translating his poem into their mother tongues, as a nod to his work as a translator.

Alareer was conscious of writing his poem in English to ensure that it would travel and resonate globally. He was dedicated to including his story and the plight of his people, hoping that the souls of the victims would turn into colorful kites that bring joy to Gaza's children. Alareer famously said, "When we write about martyrs, we must mention that the occupation killed them. We must not leave the action to the unknown."

Alareer was a prominent Palestinian academic and poet from the Shuja'iyya neighborhood in Gaza City. He earned a bachelor's degree in English from the Islamic University of Gaza in 2001, a master's degree from University College London, and a PhD in English literature from Universiti Putra Malaysia.



Make it white with a long tail. Digital artwork by Tamer Hasbun.

Alareer worked as a professor of English literature and creative writing at the Islamic University of Gaza, but he stood out from other professors at Gaza universities because of his unique approach to both teaching and poetry. Unlike many academics who focus solely on traditional scholarly work, Alareer actively engaged in creative writing and used it as a powerful tool to convey the Palestinian experience. His work transcended the confines of academia, reaching a broader audience through his visionary leadership in projects like "We Are Not Numbers," which documents stories of Palestinian martyrs and presents them to a global audience in various languages to humanize their experiences beyond mere statistics. This initiative not only highlighted the personal stories of Palestinian martyrs but also trained young writers to share their narratives with the world, thus creating a lasting impact beyond the classroom.

His students testify to his influence on their lives. Leila Abu Shammala remembers: "Dr. Refaat's poetry resonated deeply with us because it came from a place of personal experience and profound empathy. He taught us that our stories matter and that we have the power to share them with the world. His commitment to the We Are Not Numbers project demonstrated his belief in the importance of every individual's narrative." Ahmed Al-Sheikh Khalil adds, "What set Dr. Refaat apart was his unwavering dedication to his students and his cause. He believed in the power of words to effect change and taught us to believe in that power too. His classes were not just about learning English; they were about finding our own voices and using them to tell our stories."

In one of his last public interviews, with Electronic Intifada, Refaat vowed that, if necessary, he would die by the same pen by which he lived: "I'm an academic. Probably the toughest thing I have at home is an Expo marker. But if the Israelis invade, if the paratroopers charge at us, going from door to door, to massacre us, I am going to use that marker to throw it at the Israeli soldiers, even if that is the last thing that I do."

When Laila El-Haddad (see "Food Is a Weapon of Resistance" in this issue) received the horrific news that the co-editor of her anthology *Gaza Unsilenced* was killed along with his family, in what many of his friends believe was a targeted airstrike by the Israeli Army, she reflected on the impact that Alareer had had on Palestinians, and memories of working with him flooded her mind. "Refaat's legacy is that of raising an entire generation, teaching an entire generation of young Palestinians to narrate their own stories to Western audiences, in the language of those responsible for their repression."

"I remember when I first met him," Laila told the New Arab. "He came here in 2014 on a book tour and we stayed in touch. We worked on the anthology, and then I met him again in Gaza in 2019. I remember him introducing me to his students as someone who was the first person to talk ordinarily and tell my story, and by [and] large the Palestinian story in Gaza, to a Western audience, which was very touching to me."

"I always say he equipped the entire generation with the tools of literary resistance. I've rarely come across someone whose life he hasn't touched in some way. The people that he taught in Gaza are now accomplished writers, scholars, and academics in their own right. So that's what I mean by saying he raised an entire generation. And I think his contributions live on through them and his words."

Alareer and his poem have become intertwined icons, with the beauty of the text lying in its lack of melodrama and self-pity, filled instead with a delicate hope for liberation, provided the story reaches everyone. In wars, each side boasts of its bombs, missiles, and aircraft, and the TV audience applauds as the death toll rises. Alareer, however, had no weapons and did not fight a war. He pursued the loftiest idea behind it all: the right of every human being to life and to speak their truth.

<https://x.com/itranslate123>



Amira Al-Assouli

Her Courage Inspires Others to Act

Amira Al-Assouli is a Palestinian physician and obstetrician from Khan Younis in Gaza. She became known for her bravery when she defied Israeli occupation gunfire to rescue a wounded young man in front of the Nasser Medical Hospital gate in Khan Yunis during escalating events in Gaza. Her courage immediately mobilized the stretcher-bearers to join her in the rescue. A video of her running under gunfire to save the injured went viral, earning her widespread praise on social media platforms.

Al-Assouli, who previously worked at the Nasser Medical Hospital before retiring early, now continues her work voluntarily.



At the outbreak of the Israeli war on the Gaza Strip, Dr. Al-Assouli was at a conference in Egypt, returning to Gaza during the first cease-fire. She was besieged in her house, and her family's house was bombed. "Dr. Al-Assouli is a beacon of hope and bravery. Her immediate return to Gaza to help the injured, despite the risks, shows her unparalleled commitment to our community," said Dr. Mohammed Saleh, a fellow physician at Nasser Medical Hospital.

Her actions drew admiration from around the globe. "The international community has lauded Dr. Amira Al-Assouli for her bravery during the recent conflict in Gaza. Her selfless dedication highlights the profound challenges faced by medical professionals in war zones," reported the BBC, and Doctors without Borders stated that "Doctors like Amira Al-Assouli are the true heroes in times of crisis. Her actions under fire reflect the core values of our mission to save lives and alleviate suffering." Her heroism has become an example of steadfastness and courage in the face of adversity, inspiring many, both within and outside Gaza.

<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100089523305194>

Ismail Al-Ghoul

Al Jazeera journalist Ismail Al-Ghoul is looking straight into the camera when the sky explodes with sound. He's in Gaza City on June 4, 2024, to report on the devastation wrought by airstrikes, standing stoically in front of a neighborhood that's more rubble than actual neighborhood. And then the noise splits the sky open. The camera shakes, capturing the chaos before lurching left to show the smoke from a nearby building. This is when Al-Ghoul starts to run. The camera crew follows, making the same decision, not running away from the airstrike, but towards it.

Al-Ghoul's determination to document the extremes of suffering in Gaza is all the more impressive considering the dangers that journalists in Gaza face. Preliminary investigations by the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) show the tragic deaths of at least 108



journalists and media workers since Israel declared war on Hamas, with a further 32 journalists injured, two reported missing, and more investigations ongoing. UN experts have voiced concerns about these deaths, stating that they were "alarmed at the extraordinarily high numbers of journalists and media workers who have been killed, attacked, injured, and detained in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, particularly in Gaza, in recent months blatantly disregarding international law." The CPJ also notes the many other risks

faced by journalists in Gaza, including assault, threat, and the killing of family members.

Al-Ghoul's reporting as *Al Jazeera*'s Gaza correspondent has given him direct experience of such intimidation. When covering the raid of Al-Shifa Hospital in March 2024, Al-Ghoul was beaten and arrested by Israeli occupation forces alongside other journalists. During the 12 hours of detention, Al-Ghoul reported that he and other journalists were subjected to horrific treatment: forced to strip naked and lie on their stomachs for hours, blindfolded, with their hands tied. Any movement from the journalists caused Israeli forces to open fire to scare them. His arrest in 2024 was not an isolated incident, as press offices in Gaza have been repeatedly attacked by Israeli forces. The journalists' tent and their equipment were destroyed during the raid on the hospital, reflecting the significant challenges faced by journalists in the region. Al-Ghoul's detention was wildly condemned, including by PEN America, which issued a statement condemning the arrest and assault and urging that "journalists must not be targeted for doing their jobs."

This commitment to his journalism runs deep for Al-Ghoul. Born in 1997 in Al-Shati refugee camp, north of Gaza City, Al-Ghoul experienced firsthand the hardships faced by Palestinians in Gaza. Despite the adversity, he pursued his passion for reporting and completed a bachelor's degree in journalism. As a reporter for *Al Jazeera*, Al-Ghoul has worked tirelessly to amplify the voices of the most marginalized and shed light on their struggles.

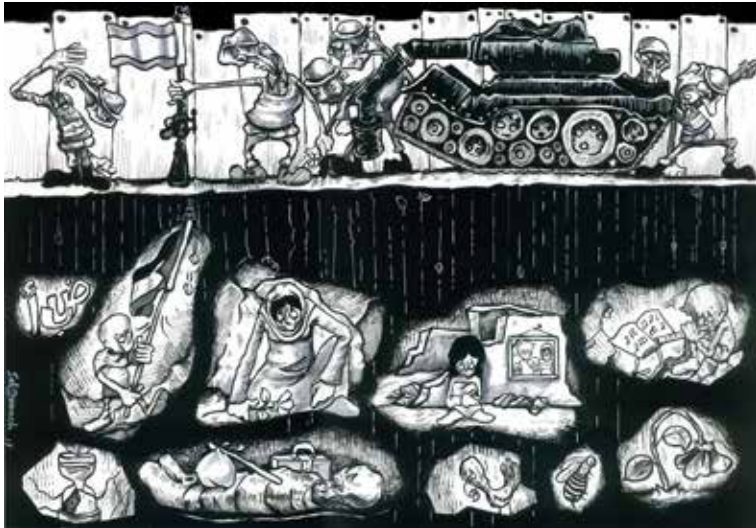
The raid of Al-Shifa Hospital had another tragic personal angle for Al-Ghoul. His brother Khalid was killed in a bombardment near the hospital in March. In the midst of grief, Al-Ghoul retained an unwavering commitment to journalism and the need to forensically document the atrocities in Gaza. In a video for *Al Jazeera*, Al-Ghoul shows the mourning process: praying over his brother's body; helping others carry the stretcher into an ambulance; digging a grave for his sibling.

Typically, Al-Ghoul is not at the center of his stories. He is a familiar presence on *Al Jazeera*, facing the camera in his navy press jacket, standing in front of rubble and ruined buildings and meticulously and thoughtfully reporting on the impact of the conflict on innocent civilians. His comprehensive field reports provide crucial insights into the humanitarian situation in Gaza. Through his journalism, he exposes the devastating impact of conflict, compelling global audiences to confront the harsh realities faced by Palestinians.

Other journalists testify to his courage and professionalism. "Ismail Al-Ghoul is the epitome of bravery in journalism," says local journalist Fatima Hassan. "His willingness to venture into danger zones to report on Israeli aggression in Gaza sets him apart. His courage inspires us all." The Global News Network is similarly complimentary. "Ismail Al-Ghoul's fearless reporting from Gaza has garnered international acclaim. His bravery

in the face of danger serves as a reminder of the vital role journalists play in exposing injustice.” In addition to his fieldwork, Ismail Al-Ghoul participates in numerous media events and seminars discussing journalism issues in troubled areas, highlighting the difficulties journalists face in Gaza and the importance of media in documenting and conveying events to the world.

Despite the inherent dangers of his profession, Al-Ghoul continues to risk everything to ensure that voices in Gaza are heard. He fearlessly ventures into danger zones to capture the reality of Israeli aggression, risking his own safety to ensure that the world hears the stories of the oppressed.



“The Genocide,” by Mohammad Sabaaneh.

As Al-Ghoul runs toward the trouble in Gaza City on June 4, these are the kinds of voices he seeks out. Supported by his equally courageous crew, Al-Ghoul talks to a man who has lost his home and a distressed young boy who describes how the airstrikes came as they were trying to collect tinned food. Al-Ghoul’s question is a simple pillar of journalism – *What happened?* – but it’s an essential one to ask in a place where bombs continue to fall as others run away. Through his meticulous and courageous reporting, Ismail Al-Ghoul provides a nuanced understanding of the multifaceted challenges and realities faced by the people of Gaza, amplifying their voices and advocating for justice and dignity.

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https://www.instagram.com/ismail_gh2/?hl=ar

Laila El-Haddad

Food Is a Tool of Resistance

Born in January 1978 in Kuwait to a Palestinian family and raised mainly in Saudi Arabia, Laila El-Haddad is a Palestinian author, blogger, social activist, and public speaker based in the United States. She fearlessly reports on the Gaza genocide, using her social media platforms to provide real-time coverage and participating in interviews with international media outlets. Her courage in shedding light on the human aspect of the crisis and advocating for international intervention to end the violence and provide urgent humanitarian support is truly inspiring.



Returning to Gaza in 2003 with her son, El-Haddad’s journey as a journalist began after she completed a master’s degree in public policy from the Harvard Kennedy School of Government, where she was awarded the Clinton Scholarship for Palestinian graduate students. Her role as a mother in Gaza provides a unique perspective that she brings to her work, offering much-needed insight into the human experience of the region. In 2014, she featured in the CNN program *Parts Unknown* with celebrity chef and gastronome Anthony Bourdain, in the episode titled “Jerusalem, the West Bank,

and Gaza,” as his guide in the Gaza Strip, marking the first time a mainstream American audience had seen Gaza in this ordinary, humorous, and humane light.

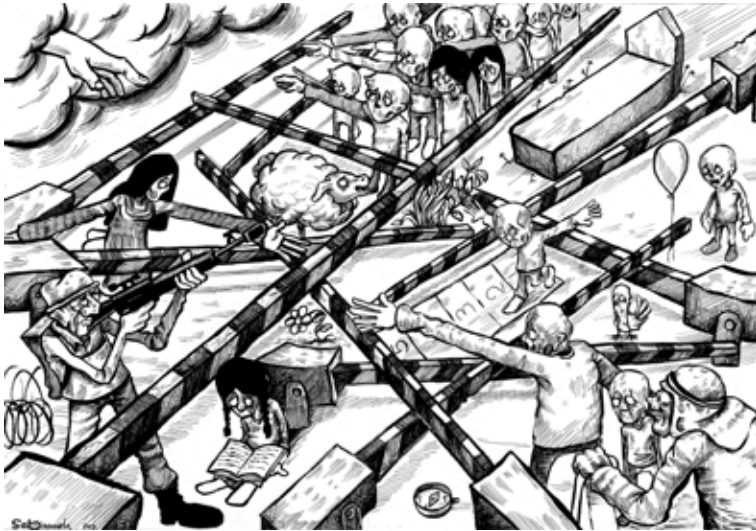
During her time in Gaza, El-Haddad authored the award-winning *Raising Yousef: Diary of a Mother under Occupation*, also known as *Gaza Mom*. Her blog, which she has authored since 2004, has been a significant voice in the online discourse about the Middle East. It won the Brass Crescent Award for “best Mideast blog,” was nominated for the 2007 Bloggies Award, and was selected as Blog of the Day by www.BlogAwards.com. These achievements underscore her influence and recognition in the field of Middle Eastern affairs.

As a public speaker, El-Haddad plays a crucial role in raising awareness about the Gaza crisis and related issues. Her engaging talks not only provide insights into the situation in Gaza but also explore the intersection of food and politics. “It’s all the more important to be able to understand and speak about food not only as a weapon of war but as a tool of resistance, steadfastness, and connection to the land,” she says, “certainly the way that Palestinians have always understood it, and perhaps also other marginalized and even non-marginalized communities.”

Her role as a speaker amplifies her voice and the issues she addresses, making her a powerful advocate for change. She was a contributor to *The Goldstone Report: The Legacy of the Landmark Investigation of the Gaza Conflict* (Nation Books, January 2011) and author of the *The Gaza Kitchen* (Just World Books, 2013). She has been published in the *Washington Post*, the *International Herald Tribune*, the *Baltimore Sun*, the *New Statesman*, and *Le Monde diplomatique*, and has been a guest on WUNC, WBUR, and CNN. She is also a columnist for the *Guardian*’s “Comment Is Free.” In January 2024, she was part of a group of Americans who went to their local court in Maryland to charge Biden and Secretary Blinken with genocide.

When she wrote her book *The Gaza Kitchen*, she had no idea that a decade later her compilation of Gazan recipes and oral family histories handed down the generations would become a written testimony to Gaza's existence in the wake of the systematic murder of more than 35,000 of her people, and the blatant intention of the Israeli government to wipe Palestinians off the map. She tweeted on December 2023: "Many of the women we interviewed have now been killed. But their stories and legacies live on through the book. Everything and everyone is under attack now – our heritage, our farmland, our people." In her interview with the *New Arab*, Laila went on to add "One of the contributors was my aunt, who was killed. A few weeks ago, I was listening to a long interview we did with her and I shared it with her daughter, my cousin, because she was out of Gaza at the time. In just one swoop, my cousin lost her mother, her father, the two aunts who raised her, and her grandmother (my aunt). Another one, who was the oldest one we interviewed in the book and who shared the recipe for *kishik*, is now 103 and she was critically injured in an airstrike that killed several of her grandchildren. I don't know what her situation is now."

In her article *A Cuisine under Siege* in *Saveur*, El-Haddad writes, "Teaching the next generation of Palestinians how to make a celebratory stew may seem trivial, inappropriate even, in light of the deliberate starvation and plausible genocide facing Gazans right now.



"The Siege," by Mohammad Sabaaneh.

But food is integral to our identity and rootedness in the land as our centers of cultural knowledge, such as archives, libraries, theaters, and schools, are also under attack. Israel's assault is eliminating entire bloodlines, and with them, all the memories and knowledge they possessed."

In January 2024, in an interview with the *New Arab*, Leila said "What I keep telling those around me, including my children, is that it's incumbent upon us, we're obligated by the fact that we are funding this ongoing genocide with our tax dollars, to do anything we can to stop it, whether that's by using our voices, attending protests, writing to our representatives or lobbying our congressmen. That's not a choice we have."

<https://www.instagram.com/gazamom/?hl=ar>

Saleh Aljafarawi

The Blogger Who Sings

Saleh Aljafarawi is a Palestinian journalist, activist, and singer from Gaza with a massive following of over 3 million on Instagram, making him a powerful influencer. He also posts his videos on other platforms such as TikTok, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube to document the tragedies and horrors of the genocide.

Twenty-six-year-old Aljafarawi is very active and extremely popular on social media. In an interview with *Al Jazeera* in October, Aljafarawi explained how he received



direct threats from the IDF, with his name being frequently mentioned on the Israeli government's official X (formerly known as Twitter) account. A controversy emerged after a "humorous image," which included a direct threat on Aljafarawi's life, gained traction among users, according to Hebrew reports. This image of him, created by the IDF and shared across various social media platforms, fueled outrage and raised questions about the safety of journalists and content creators in the region. In response to the circulating threat, Aljafarawi stated, "I am Saleh

Aljafarawi, an independent journalist. I hold the international community responsible for my safety." Despite the gravity of the situation, he maintained a resilient spirit, affirming that his morale remains strong.

These threats finally resulted in Aljafarawi being targeted and injured on February 15, 2024 by multiple Israeli drones as he was covering the evacuation of doctors and patients from Al-Nasr Hospital in southern Gaza on a designated safe route. Aljafarawi has featured in BBC coverage of the news and on Facebook posts.

In addition to his media activism, Aljafarawi has produced several songs that speak to the situation in Gaza and Palestinian aspirations, including *Where are You, Humanity?* which he sang amid the destruction in Gaza. The song was well received by his international supporters.

https://www.instagram.com/saleh_aljafarawi/?hl=ar

"The Story," part of the mural taken from in *Palestine in White and Black: Political Cartoons from Palestine*, by Mohammad Sabaaneh.





HEROES from GAZA

Mohammed Al-Hajjar

Capturing the World's Attention through a Lens

Mohammed Al-Hajjar, 38, a father of two who lives in Gaza City, has been working as a freelance photojournalist since 2007. His photos appeared on several international websites such as the New Arab, Middle East Eye, and AP news. Despite his house being bombed and his being forced to evacuate seven times in northern Gaza, Mohammed took the risk of staying on the ground with his camera to cover the genocide in Gaza from the very first



days. He was thus trapped for 52 days in dire conditions at his family's house when Israeli forces invaded their neighborhood. Mohammed resumed the coverage of the genocide in Gaza as soon as the forces withdrew. He was among the few journalists from the enclave who hadn't been evacuated or killed.

"The conditions are unimaginable," Mohammed announced. "I have to move on foot for miles under bombing carrying my heavy cameras because most of the streets are destroyed. Sometimes I hide the cameras in my clothes because of the drones flying close to the ground."

Like many journalists in Gaza, Mohammed has been injured and has survived bombings several times during the genocide. Despite this, he has remained committed to staying in the field to show the world what is happening in the Strip. "We work day and night while we are starving and under immense danger of being killed in northern Gaza. I was always sick with worry that I wasn't with my family during this hard time."

Mohammed's photos have been used in the headlines of international websites and widely spread across social media platforms. He believes that while the psychological impact experienced by a journalist covering war may diminish over time, this situation is different. "It's unbearable to see the present scale of killing and destruction," he said.

He finally decided to move south and to evacuate to Egypt in order to protect his family. The Israeli army detained his wife and seized all their belongings at the Israeli military checkpoint in the Netzarim area of central Gaza. She was released later but ordered to return alone to northern Gaza, while Mohammed, with the kids, moved to the southern part of the Strip. "It was the worst day of my life. I'm now in a tent with my two kids, while my wife is alone in northern Gaza," he confirmed. "I work less now as I have to stay and take care of my children."

Despite the challenges, Mohammed holds on to the hope that one of his photos will become a catalyst to stop the suffering of the voiceless people in Gaza. His story is a testament to the resilience and bravery of the heroes in Gaza, capturing the world's attention through his lens.

<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100084173504497&mibextid=ZbWKwL>



Iyad Al-Rantisi (1971–2024)

First Doctor Killed in Genocide

Dr. Iyad Rantisi, a prominent Palestinian doctor, died on November 17, 2023 during interrogation at an Israeli detention facility. He was arrested in Khan Younis on November 11 at an army checkpoint while attempting to cross from north to south Gaza, following the Israeli military's orders for the civilian population to evacuate at the beginning of the war.



On hearing of Dr. Rantisi's death, Dr. Husam Abu Safia, the manager of Kamal Adwan Hospital, said that Rantisi had been detained by the military and never heard from since, and that the fact that his whereabouts were unknown had made them worry that he had died in custody and his body was being held in Israel. After his arrest, his family had received no information on his condition or whereabouts until the announcement of his death months later. In fact, after Dr. Rantisi died on November 17, the Ashkelon Magistrate's Court issued a six-month gag order prohibiting publication

of all case details, including the gag order's existence. The court order expired in May, and Dr. Rantisi's death became public, six months after he died.

Dr. Rantisi, 53, ran the Kamal Adwan Women's Hospital in Beit Lahiya in northern Gaza. He chose to stay in Gaza and work under conditions of war and aggression instead of seeking safer opportunities elsewhere. In common with other medical practitioners in Gaza, Rantisi faced severe shortages of medical supplies and fuel, having to deal with injuries that quickly overwhelmed the hospital's capacities.

Rantisi is the first Gazan physician known to have died in Israeli custody during the genocide, and hundreds of Palestinian medics remain in Israeli custody. Rantisi's death has drawn widespread criticism from Palestinian and international human rights organizations, including the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights who, along with Rantisi's family, have called for a comprehensive and independent investigation into the torture and death of Dr. Iyad Al-Rantisi.

Anas Al-Sharif

The Risks of Reporting

Anas Al-Sharif lives in Jabaliya refugee camp in the northern Gaza Strip, which has been repeatedly attacked by Israeli tanks, planes, and drones since October 7, 2023. He graduated from the media faculty at Al-Aqsa University in Gaza City, and works for *Al Jazeera*, specializing in radio and television coverage. Anas also uses his social media platforms—Instagram and Twitter—to instantly share reports and videos documenting the genocide in Gaza, allowing an international audience to get a sense of



the unfolding nightmare of the genocide. Al-Sharif received the Best Young Journalist Award in Palestine in 2018 for his reporting on Gaza. He and his family have become targets for repeated Israeli intimidation and threats.

In December 2023, his family's house was bombed, and his 90-year-old father was killed. Tragically, due to his poor health, Al-Sharif's father was unable to accompany the rest of the family, who were evacuated to an UNRWA school. On November 22, Al-Sharif had reported receiving threats from Israeli military officers via phone. The journalist told *Al Jazeera* that he had received multiple phone calls from officers in the Israeli

army instructing him to cease coverage and leave northern Gaza. In addition, he received voice notes on WhatsApp disclosing his location. The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) was already very aware of the pattern of journalists in Gaza reporting that they had received threats and, subsequently, that their family members had been killed. "The killing of the family members of journalists in Gaza is making it almost impossible for the journalists to continue reporting, as the risk now extends beyond them also to include their beloved ones," said CPJ Middle East and North Africa Program Coordinator Sherif Mansour. But journalists like Al-Sharif have continued to put themselves in the eye of the storm and persist in their honorable global advocacy.

<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100086258755906&mbextid=ZbWkwl>

"The Nakba," by Mohammad Sabaaneh.



Motaz Azaiza

The Eyes and Ears of Gaza

Since the war on Gaza started in October 2023, we have gotten used to the faces of Palestinian journalists who have been steadfastly reporting the heinous crimes committed daily by the Israeli forces. Motaz Azaiza is one of the most renowned photojournalists and influencers who has documented Israeli bombings and the daily life in Gaza through his photos and videos.



Born on January 30, 1999, Azaiza began his photography career by capturing everyday scenes in Gaza, gaining widespread recognition during the wars in 2014 and 2021. His social media following surged dramatically during the ongoing assault on Gaza, with his Instagram followers now exceeding 18 million.

Through his daily updates, Azaiza played a pivotal role in documenting and covering the Israeli bombings and the harsh living conditions in the besieged Gaza Strip. His work as a photojournalist made him the

eyes of the world on Gaza, sharing images and videos that depicted the massacres and destruction caused by the Israeli attacks. Azaiza worked under extremely dangerous conditions, armed only with a camera and a bulletproof vest.

Azaiza covered the war on Gaza for 108 consecutive days, becoming a crucial source of information on the crimes committed on the ground. Despite suffering the personal loss of 15 family members in an Israeli airstrike, Azaiza continued his work to document the truth and convey to the world the suffering of Gaza's residents. This commitment and bravery made him a symbol of Palestinian resistance and led to multiple international accolades. Over 100 journalists have been killed during the conflict, often through targeted attacks. For this reason, people are afraid of being with journalists. Azaiza also reported having received death threats and offers to entice him to stop documenting the aggression.

In January 2024, after 108 days of documenting Israeli crimes in Gaza, Azaiza was evacuated to Egypt and then to Qatar due to the escalating violence and severe threats to his life. In an emotional video posted on his social media, he said: "This is the last time you will see me with this heavy, stinky [press] vest. I decided to evacuate today ... Hopefully, I'll soon come back and help build Gaza again."

Azaiza is still alive and continues to document and share the truth about the situation in Gaza from outside the Strip, amplifying the voices of the people and journalists who are still in the besieged enclave.

His tireless work has made him a symbol of courage and persistence in conveying the truth, significantly impacting global public opinion. His daily broadcasting on his social media platforms of events and destruction has made him a reliable source of information on the situation in Gaza. Azaiza's work wasn't limited to photography alone; he documented human stories and the daily suffering of Gaza's residents, helping to humanize his coverage and convey the true dimensions of the catastrophe faced by Palestinians under occupation and importantly fighting the mainstream media biased reporting.

Azaiza has recently been honored with several international awards, including the Freedom Prize in France (May 2024), in recognition of his efforts to document the conflict and his struggle for press freedom. The award organizers praised his efforts in documenting Israeli crimes and sharing them with the world, recognizing him as a symbol of the fight for press freedom. Numerous international media outlets have highlighted his significant role in covering events in Gaza, and he was listed by *Time* magazine as one of the 100 most influential people in 2024, describing him as the “eyes and ears of the world in Gaza” during the conflict.

Many people on social media have called him a “superhero” for his courage in documenting events in Gaza despite the significant dangers he faced, being willing to risk his life to convey the truth.

As the other residents of the Gaza Strip, Azaiza had dreams and aspirations. In an interview with *The Guardian*, the photojournalist said: “I wish people knew me for my art. I wanted to capture the beauty of my people.” His life was instead shuttered by the brutality of Israeli attacks, and he has become a symbol of resistance and a hero, not only for being a brave photographer but also for being a powerful voice in conveying his people’s suffering to the world.

<https://www.facebook.com/motazaizaiaa?mibextid=ZbWKwL>



“Donald Trump,” by Mohammad Sabaaneh.

Abdul Rahman Battah

The Teenage Social Media Sensation

At only 18 years old, Abdul Rahman Battah, known as “Aboud” and nicknamed “the child journalist,” has been at the forefront of a new form of journalism that is rewriting the rules of war reporting. With more than two million Instagram followers, his videos have won over the hearts of people worldwide who want to keep up with the unfolding events in Gaza, as trust in the mainstream media decreases. This new form of reporting has challenged who gets to control the narrative. Blinne Ni Ghralaigh, one of South Africa’s lawyers in the International Court of Justice case, stated: “The horror of the genocide against the Palestinian people is being livestreamed from Gaza to our mobile phones, computers, and television screens – the first genocide in history where its victims are broadcasting their own destruction in real time.” Aboud is one of them. What is unique about Aboud’s reporting, though, is his ability to project

authenticity and even humor in a way that maintains human connection when he reports from within the horror of blockades and bombs.

After October 7, 2023, Aboud’s international fame skyrocketed when he began documenting Israel’s relentless bombing and the resulting destruction of Gaza. Cheekily dubbing himself “the most powerful reporter in the world for 2023,” with a consistently charming smile and light tone even as planes circle overhead, he has created a deep sense of personal connection with a growing group of global followers. His quirky phrases such as “the situation is iced coffee all the way,” bring a realness that breaks through statistics, so many months into the war.



Coming from northern Gaza, Aboud has steadfastly remained there throughout the war, resisting orders to travel south despite having been displaced a number of times. Overcoming unimaginable challenges, with limited access to electricity, internet, and basic supplies, he has relentlessly kept posting on social media with an exceptional ability to depict his daily life in a way that is engaging, even humorous and charming. Months into the war, Aboud’s followers have felt a connection that has prevented them from turning away because they want to check

in and find out if he is okay. As they do, they continue to bear witness to unfolding events in Gaza through Aboud’s eyes and words. Aboud’s brief disappearance a few months ago, due to an internet outage, caused concern among his followers who eventually experienced a sense of relief when he returned to reassure them that he and his family were still alive.

Aboud weaves together updates on the unfolding events of a war whose horrors are beyond comprehension with glimpses into the small details of daily life that we can all relate to, such as how he goes about preparing food using the primitive methods and materials available. The normalness and relatability of sharing these daily tasks bring a realness that viewers in the outside world can understand, even in a context that is beyond our comprehension. And through this, we do comprehend, and we do continue to bear witness. His videos shine a light on the harsh conditions in shelters, and he critiques – in humorous and clever ways – the Israeli bombing of these areas. Seeing how people carry out simple rituals that are as basic and relatable as trying to make a cup of coffee, reminds us, with beautiful simplicity, of the humanity of people in Gaza.

Aboud has broken ground in becoming part of a new generation of citizen journalists who use social media to convey their voices and stories to the world, leveraging technology to transcend geographical and political boundaries so that people around the world can become true witnesses to the reality of people in Gaza. His ability to use humor to challenge difficulties and to remain optimistic and committed to conveying the truth of his experience have earned him widespread respect and appreciation. Aboud symbolizes the incredible and heartbreaking resilience that Gazans have become famous for, and he plays a powerful role in continuing to bring Gaza’s voice to the world.

https://www.instagram.com/abod_bt77/?hl=ar



HEROES from GAZA

Wael Al-Dahdouh

The Mountain among Gaza's Mountains

Journalist Wael Hamdan Ibrahim Al-Dahdouh (Abu Hamza) was born in Gaza on April 30, 1970, and has lived in Gaza City most of his life. He spent seven years in an Israeli jail from 1988, and even received his high school diploma from prison.



Al-Dahdouh began his career in field journalism as a correspondent for the Palestinian newspaper *Al-Quds* in the 1990s, working with several local and Arab media outlets before joining *Al Jazeera* in 2004. He is distinguished by his ability to deliver accurate and objective reports despite the difficult and dangerous conditions in which he works, earning him widespread respect among the public and his colleagues in the media field. He takes significant risks to convey to viewers the accurate picture on the ground, provides live and direct coverage of current events, and

presents analytical and investigative reports on the political and humanitarian conditions in the areas he covers. Having delivered field reports from many important events and conflicts, including the Israeli 2021 military aggressions on Gaza, he is regarded as one of the most well-known faces in journalism in the Arab world. In 2013, he received the Peace through Media Award as part of the International Media Awards.

Al-Dahdouh has played a pivotal role during the repeated wars on Gaza throughout his career, providing direct field reports from the heart of the events, contributing to conveying the true picture of the humanitarian suffering and the significant damage inflicted on civilians and infrastructure. Since October 7, Al-Dahdouh has continued to brave the severe risks faced by journalists in conflict zones, including shelling and armed clashes, to deliver reports that allow viewers worldwide to understand the reality of life under siege and attacks. He has conducted interviews with eyewitnesses and local and international officials, helping to present a comprehensive and reliable picture of the situation in Gaza. His reports focus not only on the military aspect but also on the humanitarian conditions, highlighting the war's impact on civilians, especially women and children.

Like other Gaza residents, he and his family have suffered from the threats of war, experiencing the same harsh conditions and risks faced by all civilians in the region. Due to the ban on foreign media in Gaza, Palestinian journalists are not only the sole sources of on-the-ground reporting, but they also face a high risk of being targeted in Israeli attacks.

The constant threat of violence has not deterred him from continuing his journalistic work; instead, it increased his determination to convey the truth and the voice of the suffering Palestinians to the world.

The Nuseirat massacre of October 2023 claimed the lives of many members of Al-Dahdouh's family, including his wife, two of his sons, and his infant grandson. Although he moved survivors of his family to Gaza City after the massacre, he has revealed that Israeli intelligence continued to contact his sister. In December 2023, Al-Dahdouh and cameraman Samer Abudaqa were hit by a missile when covering the Haifa school airstrike in Khan Younis; while Al-Dahdouh survived with an injury, his colleague died before his eyes. In a final tragic blow, Al-Dahdouh's eldest son Hamza, a journalist, was martyred in an Israeli airstrike on January 7, 2024, in an attack that *Al Jazeera* insists was a systemic targeting of the Al-Dahdouh family. Later that month, Wael Al-Dahdouh was evacuated to Egypt to join four of his children and to recover from his injuries.

He has come to be widely renowned and respected for his strength and courage in the face of personal tragedy and targeting by the Israeli government, with journalists across the world commending his determination to keep reporting despite his grief. In February, after visiting Al-Dahdouh in hospital in Qatar, Jordan's Queen Rania described him as a "mountain among Gaza's mountains." Wael considers what is happening in Gaza to "exceed human capacity to endure," and notes that the residents of the besieged sector are determined to be patient and resilient despite this, "keen to create life as much as they can." "In simple terms," he says, "there is no way to bear all this pain, no explanation, and no logic at all, but perhaps God Almighty is the one who strengthens the hearts." He pointed out that his exit from the Gaza Strip gave him the ability to see the broader picture of the impact of what is happening in Gaza on the world, noting that Israel's image has been shaken even in its main supportive strongholds in the West.

Al-Dahdouh affirms: "Journalistic effort continues regardless of these costs, and what proves this is the continuous flow of sound and image from the Gaza Strip despite all the assaults and crimes." Speaking about the work of Palestinian journalists during the war, he states: "As journalists, we work professionally, and we do our job to the fullest. The journalist is no longer just an employee but a carrier of a noble humanitarian message, and this message deserves every effort and sacrifice from us." He added, "It's true, the costs were much higher than expected, but this is the fate of the Palestinian journalist, and this should be an inspiring model for all journalist colleagues, meaning that this humanitarian message deserves every sacrifice from us."

Through his diligent and courageous work, Wael Al-Dahdouh has become a symbol of perseverance and commitment to the journalistic profession, continuing to cover events despite the risks, the challenges, and the grief, emphasizing the role of journalism in conveying the truth and defending human rights.

<https://www.facebook.com/Wael.ALdahdouh?mibextid=ZbWKwL>

"The Hope," Political Cartoons from Palestine, by Mohammad Sabaaneh.



Sari Mansour (1991–2023)

An Influential Leader in Gaza Media

Sari Mansour, a Palestinian journalist from Bureij refugee camp in Gaza, was martyred on November 18, 2023, in an Israeli airstrike that targeted his home in the camp. His colleague Hassouna Salim, who worked as a freelance photographer, also perished in the same incident. Mansour was known for his active role in media, and his death had a heavy impact, eliciting widespread sympathy, especially with the circulation of a poignant message from his wife sent to him before he was killed.



Mansour was very popular and respected among his journalist colleagues. His role as the general manager of Al-Quds News Agency made him an influential media figure who covered events in the Gaza Strip. Like other journalists and media workers in Gaza who report on the genocide, he became a target for the Israeli military. Audrey Azoulay, Director-General of UNESCO, deplored the deaths of these journalists. In a press release, Azoulay stated, “The protection of

journalists as civilians is a requirement under international law, including UN Security Council Resolution 2222/2015 on the protection of journalists, media professionals and associated personnel in situations of conflict. I call for an independent and transparent investigation to determine the circumstances of this tragedy.”

<https://www.tiktok.com/@sarimansoor?lang=ar>



“Trump and the Middle East,” Political Cartoons from Palestine, by Mohammad Sabaaneh.

Khaled Nabhan

A Grandfather’s Farewell

Khaled Nabhan is the grandfather of the Palestinian child martyr Reem, who was killed by an Israeli airstrike on the Gaza Strip. Nabhan’s story garnered global attention after a video surfaced showing him holding her body tenderly and bidding farewell to his granddaughter with touching words, including “Soul of my soul,”

which has become a slogan of solidarity with the victims of the Israeli aggression in Gaza.

Nabhan, who had just managed to return home during the temporary ceasefire, was with his family in their house in Nuseirat refugee camp when an Israeli air strike hit the house in November. Reem (three years old) and her brother Tareq (five) were killed while sleeping in their bed. Their mother was injured and taken to a hospital.

Nabhan spoke about the incident’s details and how he tried to rescue his family from the rubble after the airstrike. “I couldn’t find anyone, they were buried underneath all this rubble,” he told CNN.



Khaled Nabhan was very attached to his granddaughter Reem, who was born on his birthday, December 23, and he continues to visit the graves of his grandchildren daily. He has shared photos and memories of his beloved grandchildren. He has touchingly recalled Reem’s favorite game, played as she pulled his beard and he her pigtails. “I’ll let go, if you let go,” Reem said, giggling in a video he showed to CNN.

The incident attracted a lot of media attention. Al-Araby TV described Khaled

Nabhan as embodying Palestinian resilience, highlighting his emotional farewell to his granddaughter, resonating deeply with worldwide audiences. In January, Youm7 debunked rumors of Khaled Nabhan’s death, confirming his ongoing involvement in charitable activities in Gaza.

Nabhan has in fact been volunteering at hospitals in the besieged Strip, helping people injured by Israeli attacks and distributing aid in Gaza, demonstrating his resilient and resistant spirit in the face of harsh circumstances. This resilience has made him a role model for many Palestinians living under siege and aggression.

The Palestinian Information Center highlighted Nabhan’s story in its coverage of the Israeli aggression on Gaza, noting the significant global empathy elicited by his heartfelt farewell to his granddaughter. Nabhan’s story has also reached millions on social media as the video of his farewell to Reem went viral, with users expressing their support and solidarity with the Palestinian people.

There are many reasons why Nabhan is considered a symbol and hero, as he displayed genuine parental and grandparental emotions during one of the darkest moments, when he bid farewell to his granddaughter Reem with the touching phrase “Soul of my soul.” This deeply emotional moment highlighted his humanity amid the bombing and suffering, making him a symbol of sacrifice and Palestinian pain.

Khaled Nabhan has become a symbol of Palestinian suffering and humanitarian distress due to the bombing and aggression. His personal story with his granddaughter Reem reflects the experience of thousands of Palestinian families who have lost loved ones due to violence and siege and is a symbol of human endurance and sacrifice in the face of injustice and violence, earning widespread sympathy and respect internationally.



HEROES from GAZA

Bisan Owda

The Female Polymath

Bisan Owda was born in 1999 and currently lives in Beit Hanoun. She is a storyteller and content creator of great ability and imagination and has garnered over 3 million followers on Instagram as of December 2023. Bisan is never silent, knowing that there is no limit to the power that may be released through her blogging, using her considerable influence to advocate for justice and accountability for her community that is confronting genocide. She faces the challenges of intimidation, threats, and cyberbullying common to many of those who take to social media to tell the story



of the genocide, but as a woman, she is particularly vulnerable to blackmail and slander. She perseveres by simply expanding her networks of protection. Since 2023, Bisan has been a proud Goodwill Ambassador for the European Union, which greatly facilitates her role as an influencer, as she interacts with EU ambassadors and officials.

Bisan holds a bachelor's degree in business administration and English, and she is a trainer in advocacy and a skilled basketball player. But it is through her storytelling that her talents shine, bringing

the reality of her community in Gaza to a global audience. Bisan started her social media activity to shed light on daily life in Gaza, quickly gaining fame due to her unique storytelling style. Her favorite narrative creations form the *Hakawati* series, where she adopts the role of a modern storyteller inspired by the ancient Arab tradition of oral storytelling. With each story, Bisan brings her people's history to life, resonating with audiences of all ages, drawing on local history and obscure figures, helping to revive the collective memory of the Palestinian people, preserving cultural heritage, bridging the past and present, and instilling a sense of cultural pride.

Through her videos, she takes her followers on a captivating journey, highlighting her people's struggles, legends, and triumphs, giving a voice to the voiceless. With each video she records and each story she tells, Bisan reminds us that our stories are valuable. In a world where social media can be both a blessing and a curse, Bisan stands tall, honest with herself, and true to her values. She knows that her content will remain a lasting testament to her journey, reflecting her principles and calling for justice and positive change. She continues to ignite transformation wherever her stories are heard.

https://www.instagram.com/wizard_bisan1/?hl=ar

Hind Rajab (2018–2024)

Don't Leave Me Alone, Mama

"The night is approaching, I am scared ... Please come take me." These were among the last words of Hind Rajab, a six-year-old Palestinian girl killed by the Israeli army in Tel al-Hawa neighborhood in Gaza City, where she was from. During her last call with the Palestinian Red Crescent Society (PRCS), Hind pleaded for help as she was trapped in a car with six dead relatives and an Israeli tank approaching.

On January 29, Hind and six other relatives were fleeing their home when the PRCS received a call from Layan Hamada, Hind's 15-year-old cousin, who reported that an Israeli tank had fired at their car near Al-Maliya Roundabout in Tel al-Hawa, southwest



of the city. The PRCS released an audio recording in which Layan is heard telling the emergency services about the situation: "They are shooting at us, the tank is next to us, we are in the car and the tank is beside us." A volley of gunfire was then heard as Layan screamed, and the connection was lost.

For a few hours, Hind was the sole survivor of the Israeli attack. An ambulance crew of two paramedics who tried to reach the scene was also killed by Israeli gunfire, compounding the tragedy.

In her final moments, Hind called her mother for help, underscoring the human and tragic nature of the event. "Don't leave me alone, Mama, I am hungry, I am thirsty and I am wounded," Hind's last words recalled by her mother express the innocence and suffering of children in conflict zones, evoking significant empathy and widespread criticism of Israeli policies.

This month, on June 21, Forensic Architecture, in collaboration with Fault Lines and Earshot, published its investigation. The report notes that "the shooter [IDF soldier from the nearby tank] would have had a clear view of the car and its passengers. In other words, they would have been aware of the presence of two children." After Layan was killed, six-year-old Hind was the sole survivor in the car. Palestinian Red Crescent dispatchers made and maintained intermittent contact with Hind via phone. Permission for an ambulance to proceed to Hind's location arrived at 5:40pm, shortly after sunset. Evidence gathered by Fault Lines shows that paramedics Yusuf al-Zeinou and Ahmed al-Madhoun were dispatched in an ambulance from Al-Ahli Hospital. They reached the site at about 6pm and were shot at upon arrival.

"Control room: *Can you see the car?*
Ambulance: *I can't see a thing here.*
Control room: *Do you have your siren and flashing lights on?*
Ambulance: *Just the lights, not the siren.*
Ambulance: *... oh there it is!*
[explosion]"

Forensic investigation reveals Hind Rajab's car was hit with 355 bullets and find it "not plausible" that the Israeli tank couldn't see children inside the car.

Two weeks later, on February 10, Hind's body was found in the car alongside the bodies of her family members. The bodies of the paramedics, missing since the evening they were dispatched to rescue Hind, were discovered in the ambulance about 50 meters away from the car.

The incident sparked global outrage and Hind became a symbol and heroine as her story embodied the suffering and resilience of children in Gaza, raising global awareness of their harsh realities and calling for intervention to protect their rights and ensure accountability for crimes against civilians. As a sign of solidarity, students at Columbia University occupied the academic building Hamilton Hall and renamed it "Hind's Hall."

Major news outlets like the *Washington Post*, *Al Jazeera*, and *Sky News Arabia* reported extensively on Hind's story, confirming details of her entrapment and the deaths of her family members by Israeli gunfire. The *Washington Post* conducted a detailed investigation using satellite imagery and eyewitness accounts, confirming the presence of Israeli forces in the area during the incident, contrary to initial Israeli army denials. Other media, including the *Times of Israel* and *Declassified UK*, also discussed the investigations and criticized the reticence of some Western media to attribute full responsibility to the Israeli army.

Hind's story represents the ultimate innocence confronted by brutal military violence. Hind became a powerful symbol of the suffering of many Palestinian children living in similar conditions. Israel has killed over 14,000 children in Gaza since October 7.

Raji Sourani

Advocate of International Accountability

As the most prominent human rights lawyer based in the Gaza Strip, Raji Sourani established the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights (PCHR) to document and investigate human rights violations committed under Israeli occupation and has defended countless victims before Israeli courts in the 1980s. He was an Amnesty International prisoner of conscience in 1985 and 1988, a member of the International Commission of Jurists, and vice president of the International Federation of Human Rights. He was a recipient of the Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights Award in 1991, given each year to an individual whose courageous activism is at the heart of the human rights movement and in the spirit of Robert F. Kennedy's vision and legacy. In 1995, he founded the PCHR, which focuses on international legal avenues, providing extensive documentation, crucial evidence, and advocacy at the international level, complementing the efforts of other human rights organizations.



Never hesitant to speak truth to power, Sourani has been imprisoned six times by both Israel and the Palestinian Authority. He was held in detention by the Israelis, which he describes as "seeing the other side of the moon," beaten, and subjected to mental and physical abuse. He was detained by the Palestinian Authority in 1995 following statements critical of the establishment of a state security court. Since the signing of the Declaration of Principles by the Government of Israel and the PLO and the establishment of limited Palestinian self-rule, Sourani has advocated strict adherence to international standards for the Israeli government and the Palestinian Authority. And despite the danger of repercussions, he is an outspoken critic of human rights violations committed by both sides. He says, "Like Martin Luther King Jr., we too have a dream – a dream and a very legitimate agenda, to get rid of the occupation, to determine our own destiny, and to have an independent state – a state where democracy, human rights and the rule of law prevail." In his bold and principled stance, Sourani has won wide respect and has been recognized by numerous international organizations for his courageous work.

In his efforts to pursue justice and accountability and bring high-ranking Israeli officials accused of war crimes, genocide, and crimes against humanity before a court, Sourani has pioneered applying the concept of universal jurisdiction. This legal principle allows states or international courts to claim criminal jurisdiction over someone accused of serious crimes regardless of territory. Seven years after Sourani received the Right Livelihood Award in 2013, and after tireless work for more than a decade together with colleagues from PCHR and other organizations, the International Criminal Court ruled in 2021 that it has jurisdiction over the Palestinian Territories occupied by Israel.

For the past decades, Sourani has actively worked with the United Nations and its various Special Rapporteurs, the European Union, the Quartet on the Middle East, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), and the International Criminal Court (ICC), making oral and written submissions on the human rights situation in Palestine and the commission of possible war crimes during the multiple Israeli military operations in 2008–2009, 2012, and 2014. His efforts have helped to keep the issue of human rights in Palestine on the international agenda, ensuring ongoing attention to the suffering of civilians and working towards achieving justice and peace. All these bodies consider PCHR's material credible and impartial. For many years, PCHR lobbied the Palestinian Authority to sign the Rome Statute of the ICC, which it finally did in January 2015. As a result, it is now possible to bring cases of human rights violations in Palestine before the court. This allowed the ICC to explore the possibility of issuing arrest warrants against Netanyahu and Gallant for war crimes during the genocide in Gaza. PCHR as one of the multiple actors, has provided critical submissions to the ICC on war crimes committed by Israel under Netanyahu's leadership.

On October 7, Sourani was living with his family in the Tel-al Hawa district of Gaza City. On October 22, 2023, he and his family survived bombardments by Israeli airstrikes after his home was destroyed. Among his 65 colleagues from the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights, two young lawyers were killed. Sourani eventually managed to flee to Paris, where he continues his work assessing the role and limits of the international justice system to affect the war devastating Gaza.

Raji Sourani is a long-standing symbol of the struggle for human rights and justice in Palestine, playing a decisive role in highlighting the suffering of the Palestinian people and striving for justice and accountability at both local and international levels.

<https://x.com/rajisourani?lang=ar>



HEROES from GAZA

Sufian Abdul Rahman Othman Tayeh (1971–2023)

Former President of the Islamic University of Gaza

Sufian Abdul Rahman Othman Tayeh was born in Gaza City on August 20, 1971, to a refugee family originally from the depopulated village of Beit Daras in the Gaza District. Throughout his primary education in the UNRWA school in Jabaliya Camp, he showed a natural gift for the sciences, obtaining his high school diploma from Al-Faluja Secondary School for Boys in Gaza in 1988. He went on to thrive in higher education, earning a bachelor's degree in physics from Garyounis University in Libya in 1994, a master's degree in theoretical physics with a focus on electromagnetic theory from the Islamic University of Gaza in 2000, and finally, a PhD in theoretical physics and optoelectronics from Ain Shams University in Egypt in 2007.



From 1994, he worked as a lecturer in the physics department at the Islamic University of Gaza, holding various positions there, and he became a professor in 2018. In 2021, he was a visiting professor at the University of Waterloo in Canada, and he was appointed president of the Islamic University of Gaza in August 2023. In this role, he was at the forefront of providing vital higher education opportunities to Palestinian students in the Gaza Strip.

Tayeh was revered within the scientific community of Palestine, the Middle East, and beyond. He received several scientific and honorary awards for his work and was listed among the top 2 percent of researchers worldwide by Elsevier Publishing in 2021. During his career, he published 150 papers in scientific journals and contributed to two books on optoelectronics published by Taylor and Francis and Elsevier.

These accolades are impressive for any academic, but they are particularly notable given that Tayeh's career flourished under the shadow of occupation. Academic opportunities for researchers in Palestine are often blocked by Israeli repression, and in 2005 Tayeh was detained while traveling through the Rafah crossing to participate in a scientific conference in Pakistan and spent two months in prison. In the Israeli 2014 aggression on the Gaza Strip, his home was destroyed.

Despite these setbacks, Tayeh was steadfast in both his academic career and his dedication to the education of the Palestinian people as a way to elevate the Palestinian cause. His

desire that Palestine be given a place on the international stage reflected the aspirations and authenticity of its people. He took a nonpartisan approach to relations with Israel and supported a self-governing authority in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, but was highly critical of the securitization of occupied areas and the repeated violation of Palestinian rights by settlers. He believed in resistance within the parameters of international laws and conventions as a solution to end the occupation and asserted that Palestinians must ultimately reclaim the entirety of historical Palestine. Above all, he wanted the fate of Palestinians to be free from Israeli control, believing that the only solution to the hardship faced by Palestinian refugees was a return to their homes from which they were displaced.

Tayeh was part of a scholarly community that included several other universities in Gaza, such as the Islamic University of Gaza, Al-Azhar University, Al-Israa University, and Gaza



"Israeli Aggressions," Political Cartoons from Palestine, by Mohammad Sabaaneh.

University. This community promoted and supported academic life in Palestine, even under the extreme threat of violence and repression. Since October 7, Israel has indiscriminately destroyed higher education institutions in Gaza, killing hundreds of academics and thousands of students, as part of a systematic attempt to wipe out the cornerstones of academic research in Palestine. Although Sufian Tayeh was not among the academics lost within the targeted strikes on universities, he and his family were murdered in an Israeli airstrike on the Al-Faluja area in Jabaliya, in a massacre that followed the temporary truce between the Palestinian resistance and the Israeli occupation forces in December 2023. Given that he was only 52, Tayeh's death represents a profound tragedy for the academic community of Palestine. The Palestinian Ministry of Culture and an array of academics and activists have celebrated his scientific contributions and talent as part of their public mourning of his loss. While his martyrdom comes as yet more evidence of the ongoing scholasticide and cultural genocide unfolding in Gaza, he is remembered for his intellect, his bravery, and his commitment to advancing education in Palestine.

<https://www.facebook.com/sofyan.taya.7?mibextid=ZbWKw>

Fadi Thabet

A Photographer of the Everyday

Fadi Thabet, a photographer and human rights activist, was born in the central area of the Gaza Strip in 1978. He believes that any work that does not serve a cause is dull work that cannot cross borders to reach the world. He is an art education teacher who works with children who have lived through the nightmares of war in Gaza, to heal their traumas through artistic expression, supporting them with guidance to overcome the effects of war and living in camps.



During the genocide, in common with his media colleagues, Thabet has faced significant risks while attempting to document events in the areas of the worst bombings and destruction, using his media skills to convey the true picture of what is happening on the ground to civilians and their infrastructure, bringing the voices of violated Palestinians to global attention. He has continued his work despite threats from the Israeli military and the dangers surrounding him.

He has been approached many times to publish his work in the Israeli press, but he has always refused, saying, "I will not search for fame and limelight at the expense of my cause, my homeland, and my Arab nationalism."

He has won several awards for his photographs, including the gold medal in the *Watani al-Akbar* competition and the *Abdul Razzaq Badran Award*,* validating the artistic quality of his production. His work documents daily life in Gaza, the life of ordinary people, highlighting the layers of suffering during the wars and the genocide but also shining a light on moments of hope and beauty. He captures the expressions, dreams, and hopes of both children and adults in Gaza. He believes that a true photographer is one who connects with people and their issues, working to reflect their relationship with the world around them.

*This award is named after Abdul Razzaq Badran who was one of the Arab pioneers in the field of introducing modern photography and early applied arts to Palestine, Kuwait, and Jordan.

<https://www.facebook.com/fadi.athabet.1>

Hamada Shaqoura

A Humanitarian Chef

Hamada Shaqoura is a 32-year-old Palestinian from Gaza, a food blogger on Instagram and Tiktok who uses his platform to illuminate the people of Gaza's struggles but also to brighten their days with his take on culinary creations.

Shaqoura's food blogs take into account the limited range of food available locally in Gaza. He creatively adapts his recipes to use the ingredients that are accessible despite the economic hardships and supply restrictions caused by the genocide. His content often reflects the scarcity of resources and the fluctuating availability of food items.



Before the war, Shaqoura owned a marketing company, and being a food blogger in Gaza was about celebrating culture and promoting local businesses. Today, his role has transformed into something much more urgent: feeding those who have lost everything. "When I started my blog, it was all about showcasing the beauty and flavour of our cuisine," Hamada told NDTV. "I wanted the world to see that Gaza had more to offer than just conflict and hardship." Since October 7, Shaqoura has been creatively utilizing the limited resources available in Gaza to prepare innovative dishes that bring

cheer into the everyday rituals of preparing food. He focuses on ingredients provided as part of humanitarian aid packages and creates simple yet unique meals, thereby improving the quality of food provided to children – crepes and rice pudding – and poor families. His work captures the humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza and invokes global attention in a distinctive and relatable way.

Lists of Ingredients for Two of Hamada's Recipes

Lentil and Rice Pilaf

1 cup lentils
1 cup rice
2 tablespoons olive oil
1 onion, finely chopped
2 cloves garlic, minced
4 cups water or vegetable broth (often provided by aid agencies)
Salt and pepper to taste

Chickpea Stew

2 cups canned chickpeas (often included in aid packages)
1 can diced tomatoes
1 onion, chopped
2 cloves garlic, minced
2 tablespoons olive oil
1 teaspoon ground cumin
1 teaspoon paprika
Salt and pepper to taste

Hamada has been lauded by his blog followers for bringing a sense of joy and happiness into a community layered with tragedy. @foodforpeace: "Hamada, your recipes are not just meals; they are a source of hope for all of us. Thank you for showing the world the strength and resilience of Gaza through your cooking." @chefsunite: "Incredible work, Hamada! Your ability to turn adversity into art with your food is truly inspiring. Keep spreading joy and awareness."

<https://www.facebook.com/sofyan.taya.7?mibextid=ZbWkWL>

Noah Al-Shagh nobi

Searching for Life under the Rubble

Noah Al-Shagh nobi, 24, is a dedicated civil defense member in northern Gaza. When the Israeli government ordered an evacuation, his family fled to the south, but he took the risk and stayed with a few members of the civil defense who are working until today to help people.



He has endured immense personal loss, with many family members killed and his house partially bombed and burned due to Israeli attacks. Despite these hardships, Al-Shagh nobi plays a crucial role in rescuing hundreds of people from under the rubble and documenting Israeli violence against peaceful children, women, and the elderly during the genocide.

Al-Shagh nobi shares short videos on his Instagram account that are used by several international websites and channels, especially because there is

a lack of journalists given that Israel has killed more than 104 media workers. His footage has brought global attention to the atrocities, providing a lifeline of information from within Gaza.

“I haven’t taken a day off since the first day of the genocide, despite the unbearable conditions, lack of equipment, and immense risk of being killed at any moment as they bombed us directly several times,” he told *This Week In Palestine*. “I don’t fear death because it would be for a good reason, which is helping my peaceful people.”

The Israeli forces’ siege, extensive bombing, and destruction of civil defense sites make missions much harder for Al-Shagh nobi and his team. “We dig with our hands and simple hammers through the destroyed layers of rubble to search for survivors,” he said. “I lay my ear on the rubble to listen for the sounds of people beneath, so we know where to dig and search.”

Al-Shagh nobi expresses his deep desire to continue working until the genocide ends, despite suffering from exhaustion, complex trauma, and insomnia due to continuous work. “I remember my little nephews and nieces when I see the carnage and burned children,” he said. “Hundreds of scenes remain in my mind and haunt me in nightmares. No one can normalize this.”

“Nothing in life is better than helping people stay alive,” he affirmed. “I thank God and always ask Him to give me the strength to help my people.”

Al-Shagh nobi hopes to travel after the genocide to rebuild his life and learn more skills so that he can return and continue helping people in Gaza. He dreams of a time when peace will prevail, allowing him to dedicate his skills to rebuilding and healing his beloved community.



SCAN
TO SHARE



Our Staff Are Our Heroes

Mohammed Naji was working with us as a case manager for UPA's groundbreaking program, Healing Through Feeling, which addressed a range of traumas that the children of Gaza have experienced under siege since 2006, enduring three major military assaults, the death of loved ones including neighbors and friends, and the destruction of familiar surroundings. For Mohammed, the last eight-plus months of unprecedented violence, including displacement, has meant that while he remains on UPA staff, he can no longer work in his area of experience, at least under formal conditions. Instead of giving up, Mohammed has risen to this challenge. We asked Mohammed to share his experiences with us.



Mohammed Naji.

From where are you working now?

I live in Deir al-Balah city. I have experienced displacement myself. I went to Rafah city after the Israeli army ordered evacuation. Then I returned to my home and found that Israeli tanks had bombed my house. Nevertheless, I have never hesitated, and will never hesitate, to step up when I feel that the people of my country need me. Most recently, I worked during the blessed month of Ramadan on distributions in all central areas (Deir al-Balah, Nuseirat, Bureij, and Maghazi). These distributions included hot meals, vegetable parcels, and dry food parcels. I felt we were moving toward a more positive direction, under the circumstances, with these distributions, but, given the catastrophic situation for families, there is a deep ongoing need.

What does doing this work during the bombings mean to you?

The situation that the residents of the Gaza Strip are living through in this war requires us to use all available means to alleviate the suffering of these displaced families. All the residents have left their homes, leaving behind everything they own. They do not have the most basic tools to help them continue in this harsh life. We support them because support means strength, and strength means continuity. I cannot deny that working in wars and under bombardment is not an easy task, but the feeling of hope that we instill in the souls of our people through this support is the key to life.

What are you saying through your work?

It is very fulfilling to provide support and assistance to these families who have lost their homes and their wealth, becoming unable to provide the simplest things for the children whom they have not lost. But the most beautiful part is the amount of happiness I feel when this support reaches them. I see joy and tears in their eyes at the same time. One day, while we were distributing meals, I asked someone, "What makes you sad? Why are you crying?" He replied with a smile, "I was discussing with my wife what we would eat for Ramadan breakfast today. She said we only have a little bread and tea. And then, about two hours later, you came to us with meals from God. We were happy and amazed by the Creator's provision."

How do you manage?

It requires a lot of effort, patience, and endurance. All logistical support and aids that were previously available have now disappeared. Means of communication, transportation, and internet access are generally unavailable, and if available, they are extremely scarce. Despite these things, I communicate with partner institutions to coordinate, network, and schedule distributions, and am on hand for the distributions. Sometimes I manage a phone call, sometimes I walk to find the people I need to speak with, at other times I use whatever transport is available. It is all extremely difficult. Still, we distribute aid to displacement camps across all areas in the Central Governorate, with the help of our partners and their teams. Travel takes more time between distribution areas due to congestion and the high number of displaced people in the streets. Still, all these struggles fade away the moment we arrive and start the distribution process, seeing the happiness of the people we help.

What sustains you?

The main source of my strength is that I have a supportive and understanding management team around me. It makes me want to give everything I have. The presence of colleagues who maintain constant communication to ensure our safety is crucial and very important from my perspective. Another aspect is the harsh reality that most of our people are living through. This reality places a great responsibility on me to support and assist every adult or child in need of help. My presence can make a difference in saving someone's life or providing support. I do not deny that the current situation in Gaza is extremely challenging, or that services for all people are reduced compared to what some institutions previously provided. However, continuing to strive to meet needs in whatever way I can, with whatever resources I have, gives me hope.



Dry food parcel distribution as part of UPA's emergency response in Gaza.



HEROES from GAZA

Oh Rascal Children of Gaza

By Khaled Juma

This poem was written during the Israeli bombardment of Gaza in Operation Protective Edge and first published on August 24, 2014.

Oh rascal children of Gaza,
You who constantly disturbed me with your screams under my window,
You who filled every morning with rush and chaos,
You who broke my vase and stole the lonely flower on my balcony,
Come back –
And scream as you want,
And break all the vases,
Steal all the flowers,
Come back,
Just come back...

Born in Rafah, on October 25, 1965, Khaled Juma was raised in Al-Shaboura refugee camp in the Gaza Strip. He is head of the Cultural Department at the Palestine News and Information Agency (WAFA) and was previously editor-in-chief of Roya magazine for seven years. He has a portfolio of over 29 publications in a variety of genres: poetry, prose poetry, short stories, children's stories, TV sketches, plays, and over 100 songs.

SCAN
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HEROES from GAZA

Small Park, Big Run

Through the Rubble of Khan Younis

Courtesy of the Sheffield Palestine Solidarity Campaign



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very year for the past eight years, the Sheffield Palestine Solidarity Campaign in the UK has organized an annual community happening in Sheffield in which people run around a small municipal park over a 24-hour period. The event, supported by the Sheffield municipality, is called “Small Park, Big Run,” and it raises funds to support the work of community-based organizations in Khan Younis City in the Gaza Strip that provide support for traumatized Gazan children. These organizations – Never Stop Dreaming and, more recently, Qayis Centre for Psychological Support – organize parallel events to coincide with the Sheffield event.

This year, three days before the run took place on June 23, the run organizers received a file of 16 photographs showing 100 children from the two centers in Khan Younis running through the rubble. The community workers from the centers had organized the run early, just in case there would be no electricity to send the photos, just in case there would be an Israeli bombardment on the day. Just in case.

Haytham Abu Daqqa describes what he witnessed from his neighborhood in Khan Younis: “They passed in front of my destroyed apartment. I saw them when they were preparing for the event. It is good to understand that this was to send a message to the world.” This resilience is almost too much to grasp. The premises of both these community organizations have been destroyed in the genocide, but the children continue to show the world that, in the words of Mosab Abu Toha, “In Gaza, some of us cannot completely die. This is how we survive.”

SCAN
TO SHARE





HEROES from GAZA

Our Freedom Will Liberate You Too



Courtesy of the Rawa Team

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istory shows us that brutal aggressions against colonized and oppressed peoples are paralleled by equally sinister financial wars that aim to break the will of the people and to set the stage, once the canons of the invading armies fall silent, for reshaping the colonized societies in the image of the colonizer.

In Palestine, we are intimately familiar with this duality of wars and turmoil that we have been subjected to for decades on end. Whenever our people rise to claim their rights and freedom, Israel's allies synchronize their actions with the occupation. They firm up their decades-tested "conditional funding." They weaponize their aid to dictate policies, influence discourse, and target the ideological and intellectual foundations of the aid recipients – the Palestinian official bodies, Palestinian political groups, civil society institutions, NGOs, and cultural institutions.

Over the decades, donors' conditional funding has inflicted layered harm. Except for a very few funding entities, a massive network of nation-states, international organizations, the

World Bank, the IMF, and dozens of "independent" funds in Europe and North America have been – and still are – implicit in funding policies that control every aspect of our lives.

They set themselves up as the overseers of everything we plan or seek to implement, from urban planning to local governance policies, from educational and cultural initiatives to agricultural practices, and all the way down to simple, grassroots community activities.

The deeper harm lies in the structural impacts on our society. After nearly 40 years of this financial intervention in Palestine, the negative effects are starkly visible today, affecting our ways of thinking, our methods of organization, our work culture, and the type of knowledge we possess.

We see how the external control of financial resources has driven our organizations towards competition and rivalry instead of cooperation and partnership. We plan according to donors' desires rather than our people's needs. We have observed the creation of vast socioeconomic disparities among those who purport to be doing community work and outreach. Even our mother tongue is fading in many organizations, and it has been replaced by the English language – the language of choice.

In short, we have witnessed how a rentier economy, one that survives on external funding and guided support, has entrenched our subjugation to an elaborate oppressive system. A cruel system that begins with Israeli colonialism and ends with the dominance of

Studio recording of an educational musical project by the Nagham Wa Qalam initiative.





Rawa's last gathering at The Sea Is Ours venue on Gaza beach.

Western capitalism, an intertwined web that regulates and controls how we think, what we should do, and how to “address” our societal needs.

Over the decades, numerous Palestinian entities and individuals who have pioneered self-reliance and volunteerism have recognized the inherent danger of conditional funding and aid and have been rather vocal about it. They have recognized the urgent need for liberatory

approaches in support of community work and, more importantly, for the building of an independent, productive economy based on the principles of solidarity and resilience. Today, more and more organizations and groups are determined to find and establish new emancipatory possibilities.

Palestinian initiatives – including Rawa, Al-Ouneh Coalition, and many others – are hard at work building

One of many Rawa-supported initiatives that promote Palestinian food sovereignty.



different approaches of support. We firmly believe that resources are to be shared through cooperation and solidarity. Instead of support that seeks to impose its own knowledge on us, we believe in support that develops intellect from within our own grassroots community, from the rich knowledge of our culture, history, and, more importantly, our day-to-day struggles.

We believe that our society across historical Palestine should adhere

between oppressed communities worldwide, which are targeted by similar colonial and oppressive strategies, represents the sole horizon for emancipatory support.

Now more than ever, it is crucial to focus on transferring resources and points of strength to the grassroots Palestinian community. Our friends worldwide are encouraged to share their experiences and knowledge and provide unconditional monetary support when needed. Join us in our



The bee farm of the Women Make a Difference initiative.

to independent decision-making and be allowed and empowered to determine its own needs, aspirations, and strategies. We think of community work support that allows its productivity and resilience to grow and spread naturally.

Amid the ongoing genocide in Gaza and the complicity of many funds and donors with Israeli propaganda, it has become evident that the only genuine international solidarity with Palestine is one of interconnected struggles. Building trust and unity

collaborative efforts to create and expand spaces where Palestinians can freely think and act according to our needs, in alignment with our national aspirations, and towards a future we insist on shaping in our own image.

Article photos courtesy of Ain Media.

SCAN
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The Little King Takes Back His Kingdom

By Nuha Sbeih, color illustrations by Nuha Gmal

Published by Amazon, April 26, 2023, 35 pages, paperback, US\$9.45

This is a child's story of displacement. It's 2018. A young boy named Hashem hobbles along the beach, his prosthetic leg ill-suited for treading on the sand. He sees something wash up on the shores of Gaza and wants to discover what it is. As he approaches, he finds that it's an old chest with the year 1948 stamped on its side. Curious, he pries open the lid, and inside is a book – the story of the Little King. Hashem starts turning the pages to read, and so do we.

This is the opening scene of the children's book *The Little King Takes Back His Kingdom* by Palestinian author Nuha Sbeih. Told through the eyes of a Palestinian child, it recounts the tale of the *Nakba*, exploring themes of displacement, refugees, and the Right of Return. "I am the King, with a kingdom to rule!" narrates the child as he dons his crown and declares himself ruler of what he considers his kingdom: his house, the oak tree, his horse, and other ordinary things. He is content and happy until strangers come and expel him, taking over his land. Displaced yet steadfast, the Little King and his people hold on to hope, dreaming of the day they may return.

This story is highly relevant to what's happening in Gaza today, as thousands of Palestinians are currently being displaced from their homes, many of which have been completely destroyed. "The tragedy continues," Sbeih explains. "When you read the book, it is as if you are seeing the children of Gaza today. The Little King is the Gazan child who now lives in a tent... The story of the Palestinian *Nakba* has been ongoing since 1948."

Although the story was published before the current war on Gaza, it was originally linked to the Great March of Return, a series of protests in 2018 by Palestinians along the Gaza Strip's border with Israel. "These marches were actual attempts to return," says Sbeih. "The people of Gaza, who live under a suffocating siege, were originally displaced from areas within historic Palestine." The narrative weaves together the lives of two Palestinian children – a child in 2018 from Gaza and a child from 1948 – separated by seventy years in time yet united by the dream of return.



The story's illustrations are beautiful and haunting, playing an important role in developing the various stages of the narrative. The shifting colors, from bright to somber, mirror the Little King's journey, effectively conveying his emotions as they shift from joy and freedom to sadness. The artwork also includes many symbolic elements not explicitly mentioned in the text. "The chest carried by the sea represents the preservation of cultural and historical heritage," explains Sbeih. "It implies that the stories and experiences of our ancestors are valuable treasures that offer strength and guidance for future generations."

An animated version of the book was released online in 2024, bringing the characters to life and allowing a wider audience to experience the appeal and depth of the original.

As the situation in Gaza continues to escalate and evolve, *The Little King Takes Back His Kingdom* is a powerful reminder of the enduring spirit of the Palestinian people and the universal desire for home and belonging. The Little King's tale is a testament to the resilience of those who, despite all the odds, continue to strive for the right of self-determination and the right to return home.

Nuha Sbeih is a mother, math teacher, and writer, born and living in Jerusalem. She published her first book, Behind the Wall, in 2018 in Arabic, and her second book, Sallum Is Stronger than Corona, in 2020 in both Arabic and English. Writing for children gives essential meaning to her life. She believes that a child should be strong, confident, aware, empathetic, and protected. That is what her stories, both published and yet to be published, aim to achieve.

SCAN
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From Beneath the Hunter's Rifle

Stories of Jerusalem Children under House Arrest

By Ahlam Bsharat

Tamer Institute for Community Education, June 2024, 108 pages

Text in Arabic: Ahlam Bsharat. Translation into English: Khadir Salameh.

Graphic Design: Nazeema Asmar

Available from the publisher at www.tamerinst.org and in Ramallah from Tamer Institute for Community Education HQ.

“What was the first thing you did when you finished your imprisonment?”

He replied: “I went to see my friend, took his horse, mounted it and rode in Nabi Samuel.”

In this book, Ahlam Bsharat portrays the daily life of Palestinian children and young adults who are or were facing house arrest by the Israeli occupation forces in the city of Jerusalem. The book highlights the stories of seven participants in the neighborhoods of Wadi el-Joz, Sheikh Jarrah, Nabi Samuel, and Al-Khalila. Bsharat contextualizes each story and provides poetic yet informative insight into the multilayered colonial practices affecting concepts of time, space, and home “safety” in the lives of the participants and their families.

“How does this house make A. feel trapped?”

“My son A. spent eight months under house arrest. He doesn't feel safe. He longs to move freely but can't. He wants to leave the house and see his friends. They used to visit and talk to him through the window. They were afraid of being charged with something if they entered the house and sat with him, like what happened with A. The settler threatened them, saying: 'I'll do to you what I did to A. I'll lock you up just like I did with him.' He even stopped them from sitting in the park near the house and constantly tried to provoke them.”

Bsharat visited the houses and schools of the participants under house arrest or who were previously under house arrest in Jerusalem during the year 2023 with the supervision of Tamer Institute's Jerusalem field coordinator. The workshops focused on encouraging the participants to express their ideas and feelings through creative writing and to improve their learning and skills of self-expression. Through the workshops, they analyzed the

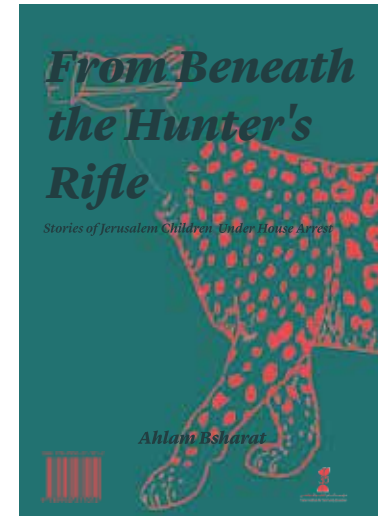
concept of the house, especially after being under house arrest, and reflected on it through writing from all perspectives while validating their stories in a safe, creative environment with Bsharat.

“My aunt's henna party was on October 15, 2021. My family and I got ready, and we got into my uncle's car at exactly 4:00 p.m. On our way to the hall, we were intercepted by the occupation police. They closed the road for no reason and prevented us from moving forward. Suddenly, a group of settlers appeared and blocked our way – they were under police protection. Then a settler pointed at my brother M., saying: ‘This is him. Arrest him, arrest him!’”

The book resulted from a project titled “Where Did Home Go?” which creates a safe and creative learning space for children and young adults under house arrest in Jerusalem, where they can bond together and join a creative writing workshop that speaks to this need. To implement this project, Tamer Institute joined Rights for Time network, organized by Birmingham University, to conduct a range of activities to ensure creative learning for children in conflict zones around the world by establishing safe and creative learning spaces for the children and their families where they can interact and have, as far as possible, a healthy home environment.

This testimonial book gains its importance from the need to highlight the hidden stories of Palestinian children and young adults, especially those living inside Palestine's capital city of Jerusalem, who are under a greater risk, now more than ever, of losing not only their homes and lands but also their individual and collective identity due to the constant violations of – and imprisonment by – the Israeli occupation. From the beginning of 2015 until March 2022, the Israeli occupation forces have detained more than 9,000 Palestinian children.

Bsharat, who has been collaborating with Tamer Institute for more than



fourteen years, has conducted many writing sessions for Palestinian children, youth, parents, librarians, and teachers living in marginalized areas at school and community libraries within Tamer's National Network. In addition, she is the author of many books for children and youth, addressing themes of loss, bullying, identity, memories, creativity, and female empowerment.

Tamer Institute has produced more than 220 publications – books, research, games, applications, electronically animated stories, and music albums. Tamer opens the spaces for children to share their voices, dreams, and thoughts with the entire world through its publications while focusing on preserving cultural heritage and oral history. Tamer disseminates and distributes its publications to its network of community and school libraries, its youth teams, and community-based organizations to be shared and utilized with the children.



SCAN
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The Gaza Declaration

According to Wikileaks, a verified document from the Israeli Ministry of Intelligence in October 2023 suggests that forced displacement of Gaza civilians to Egypt would “yield positive and long term strategic results.” The advisory document envisions a three-stage process that includes the establishment of tent cities in Sinai and the opening of a humanitarian corridor, followed by construction of cities in northern Sinai from which there would be no return.

American journalist, author, commentator, Presbyterian minister, and outspoken critic of Israel’s war on Gaza, Christopher Lynn (Chris) Hedges laid it out clearly. Israel cannot win the war without displacing Gazans into Egypt. This, he adds, explains the huge number of indiscriminate killings and the destruction of life-sustaining facilities, all of which render Gaza unlivable. The fig leaf is off and everything is clear now.

The document from the Israeli Ministry of Intelligence actually explains the inaction of the Israeli security forces upon receiving clear warnings of an imminent operation by Hamas prior to October 7. It appears that someone thought that heaven had smiled on Israel and provided the perfect pretext to launch a major military campaign on Gaza that would result not only in displacing the Palestinians living in the Gaza Strip, but also in the building of Israeli settlements in Gaza, paving the way to gain control of the natural gas fields off the coast of the Strip and to start working on the Ben-Gurion Canal project – an ambitious proposal to construct a massive canal connecting the Red Sea to the Mediterranean Sea.

Little did they know that the Hamas operation would be a flood that would have seismic effects not only locally but around the world as well. It’s one of those minor incidents that effectively change the course of history.

Along with the unimaginable killings and destruction in Gaza, the dreams of expansionist Israel were also crushed on October 7. I also believe that the Zionist project was brought to an end. Respected throughout the Arab World, Omani writer and political commentator Ali Bin Masoud Al-Masshani says that the events of October 7 were in fact the Gaza Declaration that has annulled the British Balfour Declaration of 1917. Now that the Labour Party has won the UK elections, let’s see if it will stick to its pledge to recognize a Palestinian state. The Labour Party’s election manifesto explicitly states: “Palestinian statehood is the inalienable right of the Palestinian people.” Whether or not Labour recognizes Palestine, the flood is on course to change the world.

Long Live Palestine.

Sani Meo
Publisher



THIS WEEK IN
..Palestine

**Proudly
Palestinian**

Remaining faithful to its mandate even during difficult times, *This Week in Palestine* has been, and will continue, documenting the Gaza genocide. All its issues since November have focused on Gaza, covering the human tragedy while remaining resilient. The magazine has covered various dimensions, including personal testimonies, health, women, journalism, and even initial thoughts on rebuilding Gaza.



This Week in Palestine is a monthly English-language print and online magazine with a self-imposed mandate to promote and document Palestine. Its first issue was published in December 1998, and the periodical has not missed a single issue since. *This Week in Palestine*’s narrative is 100 percent Palestinian, and it aims to bring out the best in Palestine.

Individual Users: 112,650 (as of end of 2023)



SAVE GAZA
FREE PALESTINE



www.sayeghgroup.com