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NOT A MINUTE TO SPARE: THE STORY OF TALAAT'S BIRTH

03 May 2024



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Baby Talaat and his mother seek shelter. © 2024 UNRWA Photo by Hussein Owda

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History books may not write about Talaat, a Palestine Refugee born in the middle of the war on Gaza. But the story of his birth is certainly worth telling. story of how his mother, Umm Talaat, was unable to find clothing to cover his tender, newborn skin. Having survived such a traumatic delivery, Umm Talaat recounts the tale of her son's birth amid the violence and displacement in Gaza.

"I was terrified that labour would start at night, that I wouldn't find a car to take me to the hospital, and it would be absolutely unsafe at night," said Umm Talaat. "Thank God my labour started in the morning!" Even so, she



was unable to find transportation. "Thankfully, a car full of passengers
 I, and they all got out when they saw me in pain in the middle of the
 she said. "My baby would have been born on this street if not for a
 group of young men who stopped their car and offered her a lift to the
 hospital. They hurried to make her feel comfortable and escort her to the
 hospital. Umm Talaat gave birth just minutes after arriving.

Talaat's family lost their home and have not been able to shelter with
 relatives, as their homes have been destroyed as well. Even in these trying
 circumstances, Umm Talaat and her family are proud to celebrate his birth.
 "I named him Talaat after his grandfather, an UNRWA field engineer who
 participated in designing the Japanese neighbourhood in Khan Younis.
 Maybe he'll be an engineer in the future and contribute to the rebuilding
 Gaza," she said.

Talaat is one of thousands of infants born amid the ongoing war on the Gaza
 Strip, now entering its eighth month. According to the Ministry of Health in
 Gaza, as of 26 April, at least 34,356 Palestinians have been killed since the
 war began on 7 October, 70 per cent of whom are reported to be women
 and children. Over 77,000 people have reportedly been injured.

With five hospitals remaining in northern Gaza, and only six in the south, it
 is estimated that average occupancy is over two and a half times planned
 capacity. Thousands of displaced people are unable to access care at all. In
 response, UNRWA is working to provide health services across Gaza through
 its eight still-operational health centres. Staffed by 820 brave women and
 men who themselves have been displaced, these centres provide outpatient
 services such as non-communicable disease care, medication, vaccination,
 antenatal and postnatal health care. In addition, the Agency has created
 over 100 smaller medical points for increased access for those in need.



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