



Voices from Gaza: The Experiences of Palestinian Women Amid the Ongoing Genocide

Home \ Advocacy \ International Advocacy \ Gaza

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While across the globe 8 March marks International Women’s Day, for the women of Gaza, it marks five months and one day since the beginning of Israel’s genocidal military campaign. During this time Israel has killed more than 30,800 Palestinians in Gaza, with approximately 9,000 of them being women, as [reported](#) by UN Women. Thousands more remain missing or under the rubble. This

International Women’s Day, it is crucial to elevate the voices and narratives of Palestinian women and particularly women in Gaza. Their stories stand as a testament to their resilience amidst the ongoing genocide. Palestinian women and girls in Gaza are confronted with the alarming risk of being forcibly disappeared or arbitrarily detained by Israeli forces. They frequently endure strip searches, humiliation, and other forms of torture, along with cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment during their arrest and detention. UN experts [expressed](#) grave concerns over reports detailing instances where Palestinian women and girls in Israeli detention have also been subjected to multiple forms of sexual assault, such as being stripped naked and searched by male Israeli army officers.

- [Aisha^{\[1\]}](#), a 20-year-old resident of Jabaliya refugee camp in the North Gaza District, was apprehended by Israeli authorities on 22 November 2023, as she and her family were evacuating towards southern Gaza. She was intercepted at an Israeli checkpoint and separated from her family. Taken from Gaza, she was initially transported to Damon Prison and later transferred to another detention center in

the Naqab. She was finally released on 9 January 2024, and returned to Gaza. Reflecting on her experience, she recalled:

“The soldier then asked me to take off my jilbab (outer garment) and shake it off. After that, he asked me to take off my shirt and trousers. I was wearing more than one pair. Then, the female soldier told me to put them on again. After that, the female soldier grabbed my arm, took me forward, and made me sign a paper with my eyes blindfolded. She then stood up and sat me on a chair. A person who spoke Arabic asked my name and age. Then he told me that my family had been stopped 500 meters away, and that they had been detained. He asked about my university major and which year I was in, as well as my parents’ names and occupations. He then asked if I knew of anyone among my relatives who was affiliated with Hamas, and I replied, ‘I don’t know’. He asked about the location of the Israeli ‘hostages’, and I said, ‘I don’t know’. He inquired how many siblings I had, and I answered. Afterwards, he said he would ask me some questions using a lie detector. At that moment, I was seated on a chair with my eyes blindfolded. He then took me and sat me on the sand. I could see under the blindfold and saw a girl facing me. I later learned that her name was Dima. Then I heard the voices of female soldiers bringing another girl. They led us on foot for about a minute and seated us again on the sand. I was with two other girls, and I could hear their voices. I peeked under the blindfold. They brought in more girls until there were six of us. It was the afternoon, and they brought us only water. The weather was cold, and one of the girls requested a blanket, but they refused to provide one. We also heard the screams of men who were obviously in extreme pain. They placed a plastic tag on my wrist with the number 12 written on it. After nightfall, they forced us to go towards some jeeps. A soldier, I do not know if it was a male or female soldier, pushed me from behind by the shoulders. The jeep drove for approximately half an hour, and there was another vehicle attached to the jeep carrying male prisoners. We learned this after hearing one of them screaming due to pain in his hand. They then unloaded us, and we could hear alarm sirens and clashes. I do not know where we were, but I believe it was near the border of the Gaza Strip. They made us sit on a blanket placed on stony ground. Two girls asked to go to the bathroom, and later we found out they relieved themselves in the open. We requested a blanket, and they gave us a very light one. We asked them for another one, but they refused. We also asked for water, and they provided it. Beside me was a girl named Samar, who was suffering from abdominal pain. They brought her to a doctor, and I translated for the doctor. The girl then told the doctor that she felt as if she was having a miscarriage and that she was

in her second month of pregnancy. We had been told to remove our shoes, we were blindfolded, and our wrists were bound. The doctor just told her to lie on the ground, and we all lay down next to her. They told us to sleep with our wrists tied and our eyes blindfolded. We slept and woke up in the extreme cold on the cold stony ground.” With [nearly 1 million women and girls displaced](#) in Gaza, privacy and access to basic hygiene products has become nearly unattainable for most. It has been widely [reported](#) that women and girls have resorted to using makeshift materials, such as tent pieces and clothing, as sanitary pads. Some have even turned to norethisterone tablets, typically prescribed for menstrual disorders, in hopes of halting their menstrual cycle. Others have experienced disruptions to their menstrual cycles due to the extreme stress, starvation, and trauma they have been enduring on a daily basis for the past five months.

- **Hanadi Al-Daieh**, from Bureij Refugee Camp, [recounted](#) her experience of forced displacement:

“I was living in a rented home. It was bombed while my husband and siblings were in it. The house collapsed on top of them. Thank god, no serious harm had appended to them, only minor injuries. I then moved to my parents’ home, and they [the Israeli army] threatened us with evacuation orders to leave Bureij. We asked where the safe place would be, and we were told to go to a school—the Abu Hmeeseh Bureij school, an UNRWA school. We saw death with our own eyes. Shrapnels were falling on us, and unfire and everything. UNFPA [estimates](#) that there are approximately 50,000 pregnant women in Gaza, with about 180 women giving birth every single day. These expectant mothers face dire circumstances, including famine, with inadequate access to nutritious food and clean water. Forced to consume contaminated water and animal feed-based bread, they endure unimaginable choices to sustain their pregnancies. With the near-total collapse of Gaza’s healthcare system, prenatal care is often unavailable. For the 15% of women likely to experience life-threatening complications during childbirth, hospitals offer little solace, often overcrowded and lacking essential supplies. Postnatal care is virtually nonexistent, leaving mothers without basic necessities for their newborns. Instead of envisioning a hopeful future, these mothers grapple with the grim reality of whether their infants will survive starvation or illness.

- In her poignant testimony, **Tagreed Al-Ashqar** [shared](#) the harrowing experience of giving birth amidst the backdrop of forced displacement. She said:

“I gave birth with a cesarean. On the third day, we left Jabaliya Refugee Camp, while I still had stitches. And she [baby girl] was not doing well. No diapers, no milk, we had

nothing. Since we came here, [she has had] the flu, cold, and coughing. If you need vapor therapy, you find none. Medicines are not available. Her mouth is infected. Even clothes are not available. We scratch to find from here and there, and it's not warm enough for her." The devastation inflicted upon the lives of women and girls in Gaza is immeasurable. Even if the genocide were to end today, they would still be deprived of years of employment and education. The trauma and psychological effects of the past five months and counting will haunt them for a lifetime. Before the ongoing genocide, women and girls in Gaza constituted a minority in the workforce and education system. Yet, they held roles as teachers, journalists, doctors, and promising students with ambitious aspirations for their future and Palestine's. However, today, the prospect of realizing those dreams seems bleak. Since the onset of the genocide, the International Labor Organization [reported](#) that over 66% of employment had been obliterated as of December 2023. Presently, no schools or universities in Gaza are operational, leaving approximately [625,000 students](#) affected.

On International Women's Day, and every day, it remains crucial to acknowledge the resilience of over one million women and girls who persist, holding onto hope and remaining the cornerstone and future of Gaza. With this in mind, we [reiterate our call](#) for women and feminist organizations and movements worldwide to take prompt action and stand in solidarity against the oppression endured by Palestinian women in Gaza, and who deserve to live in freedom and in dignity.

[\[1\]](#) Aisha and all the names mentioned in this testimony are pseudonyms. The actual identities of the victims are known to Al Mezan but are not disclosed in order to protect their anonymity and ensure their safety.