

DISPLACED IN GAZA

STORIES FROM
THE GAZA GENOCIDE



42

EDITED BY
YOUSEF M. ALJAMAL, NORMA HASHIM, NOOR NABULSI & ZOE JANNUZ





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Displaced in Gaza

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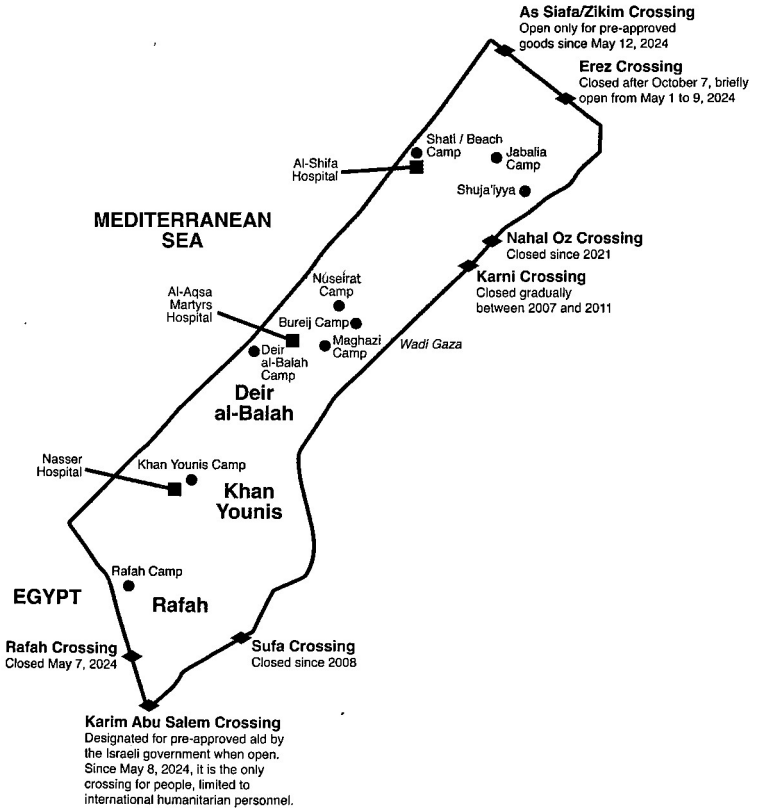
When Palestine is finally free
the Palestinians will always
remember you were one of their
greatest supporters.

*Dedicated to all who have
endured displacement
in Gaza,
past and present.*

*Nore
Jan 2025*



Map of Gaza 2024



Map by the American Friends Service Committee

Displaced in Gaza is a collection of personal testimonies from Palestinians in Gaza who have been repeatedly displaced within their homeland since 7 October 2023. These testimonies were collected in May 2024, commissioned by the Hashim Sani Center for Palestine Studies at Universiti Malaya. *Displaced in Gaza* aims to raise global awareness about the violent and forced displacement inflicted upon Palestinians in Gaza by the Israeli military and the impact that this displacement has had on every aspect of their lives. Each story is unique, yet the endurance of the Palestinian people remains a common thread, linking together these stories of hope and loss.



The testimonials in *Displaced in Gaza* are a record of choices that no human should be forced to make: to flee or to remain and die; to stay with loved ones or to bid them farewell. The narratives of these survivors of genocide are an affirmation of their humanity, an ode to loved martyrs, and a record with which to fight for future accountability and justice. It is an archive of enormous importance, yet one that is also lacking: there should be a testimony to each and every victim of Israeli apartheid. Every person in this collection is fighting back against the effort to make our loved ones nameless and silent, to leave their bodies unidentified beneath rubble. They are forcing us to witness, to hold their stories as a living archive against this latest act of extermination, as well as the years upon years of Nakba, of the dispossession and murder that preceded it.

~ **Tareq Baconi**

*President of the board of Al-Shabaka,
the Palestinian Policy Network*

There will come a day, after this genocide, when Palestine is free, when many will claim they were unaware of the crimes that Israel, with the full backing of the United States, was perpetrating with the Palestinian people. These testimonies, given by Palestinians, in the midst of unimaginable atrocities and losses, bear witness in real time to what Israel has done. No one can ever claim they did not know.

~ **Ali Abunimah**

*Co-founder of The Electronic Intifada and
author of The Battle for Justice in Palestine*

Displaced in Gaza presents an essential collection of real-life testimonies that challenge the narratives justifying the current erasure of Gaza and its people. In the Gaza Strip, where 9 in ten Palestinians have been displaced since the events of 7 October – some as many as ten times – these personal accounts humanize the staggering numbers. These stories remind us of our shared

responsibility to ensure that the lessons of history and the pledge of 'never again for anyone' apply to Palestinians as well.

~ **Laila Mokhiber**

Senior Director of Communications at UNRWA USA

Despite the immense anguish, pain and suffering every author shares, they pale in comparison to the resilience and strength of every Palestinian who continues to pursue freedom and autonomy from their cruel oppressors. Hope and faith have become so deeply embedded within the Palestinian psyche that it is now part of their DNA. But, will children robbed of their childhood, and youths who know only fear and anger, be able to live well-adjusted lives in adulthood? The answer is clear - No. *Displaced in Gaza* serves as a document to remind the world not to forget or become immune to this insane and senseless war, and lend whatever assistance possible to help the country heal.

~ **Musa Mohd Nordin**

Viva Palestina Malaysia

Displaced in Gaza is a must-read for those who want to understand the immense sufferings of the Palestinians as a result of the failure of the international community to stop the ongoing Zionist crime of ethnic cleansing in Palestine.

~ **Prof Nazari Ismail**

Chairman of BDS Malaysia





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Foreword

The displacement of the Palestinians is not a new phenomenon. It did not come about recently due to the ongoing genocide in Gaza; it has been the defining feature of the Palestinian struggle and existence. It's been more than 76 years since the Nakba, and the Palestinian people are still living in exile and displacement, both inside and outside their homeland. The 700,000 Palestinians who were forced to flee their homes and lands due to the ethnic cleansing enforced by Israel in 1948 now constitute the majority of the residents of the Gaza Strip and refugee camps in Lebanon, Jordan, Syria, and elsewhere. But the displacement of Palestinians didn't end in 1948; it has continued and is still ongoing.

From the crowded refugee camps of Lebanon, to the Yarmouk camp in Syria, to Jordan, the Gaza Strip, and the West Bank, displaced Palestinians have been at the forefront of the liberation movement of Palestine. They have led the way with courage, resilience, and an unwavering commitment to justice.

Within the confines of refugee camps and amidst displacement, the powerful works of Palestinian authors and intellectuals have reflected the endurance and steadfastness of the Palestinian people and their devotion to their homeland. Legendary Palestinian author Ghassan Kanafani, born in Acre and displaced to Lebanon, is immortalized in his works like *Men in the Sun* and *Returning to Haifa*. Written during his exile; these works explore themes of identity, loss, and the might of the Palestinian people. Mahmoud Darwish, another noted Palestinian poet of exile and resistance, was born in al-Birwa and gained international acclaim with collections such as *Why Did You Leave the Horse Alone?* Samih al-Qasim, a native of Zarqa and a resident of Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories, wrote poignant poetry about resistance and identity in his book *Sadder Than Water* among other works. Fadwa Tuqan, the “poet

of Palestine” from Nablus, captured the pain of exile in her collection *Alone With the Days*. Ibrahim Nasrallah, born in the Wihdat refugee camp in Jordan, chronicled Palestinian history and struggles in his novel *The Time of White Horses*.

Despite the hardships of displacement, these intellectuals have kept the flame of Palestinian identity alive. They not only inspired future generations, but also inked the history of Palestinians in exile and paved the way for this generation to follow suit.

Now, Gaza, my home, finds itself at the epicentre of genocide again – facing ethnic cleansing by means of the same practices that claimed the lives and properties of our grandparents in 1948, but with far more abhorrent crimes. During this genocide, I’ve lost most of my immediate family members – my father, two brothers, three sisters, and my 14 nieces and nephews, all children. As I write this, the *Lancet* medical journal has estimated that the death toll could exceed 186,000 Palestinians, all having lost their lives directly and indirectly from the merciless machinery of Israeli barbarism. Palestinians in Gaza find themselves once again forced to live displaced within the world’s largest open-air prison. More than 90% of Gaza’s population have been forced to evacuate from their homes and lands.

During the ethnic cleansing of the Nakba 76 years ago, Palestinians took it upon themselves to immortalize their stories, documenting these massacres in writing. But, the old did not die, and the young did not forget, as Zionist leaders wrongly assumed they would. Palestinians, within the confines of their prison in Gaza, are once again writing their stories and recording history. The importance of Palestinians writing their own stories cannot be overstated. In a world where our voices are too often marginalized or misrepresented, storytelling becomes an act of resistance, a declaration of our humanity. Through our words, we reclaim our narrative, ensuring that our experiences are not only heard, but felt by those who might never understand the true cost of dispossession.



For more than ten months of this genocide, Palestinians in Gaza have spoken out from the crowded alleyways of makeshift refugee camps and the hospitals and schools used as shelters. Palestinians are writing their stories, documenting both the horror of the war and the resilience of the people. Everyone in Gaza is now a citizen journalist, determined more than ever to confront and challenge the western media narrative – the demonizing and dehumanizing of the Palestinians, the lack of agency recognized, and the distortion of truth. Young people and Gaza elders are recording testimonies – narrating their stories for the world to read.

In the face of such overwhelming adversity, the act of storytelling becomes a lifeline, a means of asserting our humanity and preserving our narrative. It is through the power of writing that we can transcend the constraints of our circumstances and connect with others on a profound level. The stories in this collection are not merely accounts of suffering; they are expressions of resilience, hope, and the unbreakable bond that ties us to our homeland. The process of writing and sharing these stories has been a deeply cathartic experience for the authors. It has allowed them to confront their pain, find solace in the practice of writing, and contribute to a collective memory that will endure for generations. Each story is a testament to the indomitable spirit of the Palestinian people. They are a declaration that we will not be defined by our suffering, but by our strength, our creativity, and our commitment to resist the occupation by every means possible.

In 2015, I co-founded We Are Not Numbers (WANN) on the belief that every Palestinian has a story worth telling. Our mission is to provide a platform for these stories, to amplify the voices of those who have been silenced, and to challenge the dominant narratives that seek to dehumanize us. Through the work of WANN, other writers, and multiple Palestinian-led platforms, Palestinians strive to create a more just and equitable world, one where the rights and dignity of all people are respected and upheld. Palestinians are now writing stories that reflect a range of experiences, from



the everyday struggles of life under occupation, starvation, and genocide to the moments of joy and hope that sustain us and make us feel alive. They are stories of loss and longing, of courage and resilience, of dreams deferred but never abandoned.

Palestinians now understand the power of narrative in challenging the dominant discourses that seek to dehumanize us. Storytelling helps to assert our right to be seen and heard. Palestinian storytellers work tirelessly to ensure that our voices are centred and our experiences acknowledged and respected. We don't write to amuse our readers with fantasy epics or imaginary stories. We write in a language that is not ours to challenge perceptions imposed by our oppressors, ignite the empathy of our fellow human beings, and inspire others to stand in solidarity with the Palestinian people. Our stories are a call to action, a plea for justice, and a reminder that our shared humanity transcends the divisions that seek to separate us. *We write so that others cannot say they did not know.*

This book is a tribute to the memory of all those we have lost—the 21 members of my own family, killed by the Israeli army while they were sleeping; the thousands of students who lost their lives; the journalists and hundreds of academics taken away from their families at the hands of the occupiers; and most importantly, to Refaat Alareer, our mentor and hero.

I want to express my deepest gratitude to the Palestinians in Gaza who have shared their stories with such courage and honesty. Your voices are powerful, and your words have the ability to change hearts and minds. Through your stories, you are contributing to a legacy of resilience and hope. This anthology serves as a testament to our enduring spirit, a reminder that even in the face of displacement and adversity, we have the power to write, to dream, and to imagine a better world. A world without chains and walls, where writers and storytellers can not only live safely, but most importantly, in dignity. A life that we deserve.

Ahmad Alnaouq, July 2024

Displacement is not a coincidence but the outcome of a premeditated agenda. It's fundamentally a human rights issue and documenting the stories of displaced people in Gaza is an important step towards restorative justice.

~ Nkosi Zwelivelile
Grandson of Nelson Mandela

*Displacing people in Gaza has become forcibly normalized. Some Palestinians have been displaced 20 times. The stories in *Displaced in Gaza* are a must-read.*

~ Ahmed Abu Artema
Palestinian poet, journalist and co-founder of the Great March of Return

Before you can forgive, you must remember. In these testimonies, Palestinians insist on memory. We are aware how the world is ready to move past our memory as soon as the world determines we are now "after Gaza," that the genocide has stopped. But after the genocide is still a genocide. Palestinians know that we must overcome this "after," too. And so we tell our stories to honor the love in our hearts.

~ Fady Joudah
Palestinian poet and author of "The Earth in the Attic" and "[...]: Poems"

These first-hand Palestinian accounts by survivors of Israel's ethnic cleansing are chilling testaments to the devastation of displacement. Subject to genocidal violence as part of the ongoing Nakba – settler colonial elimination – the individuals whose stories are included here are part of a crucial documentation project. This important collection is a call out to the world community to not only bear witness, but to assert our collective political will to end these atrocious war crimes.

~ J. Kēhaulani Kauanui, Ph.D.
Professor of American Studies

This harrowing collection of first testimonies from survivors of the Gaza Genocide – featuring voices from old and young, fathers, and mothers – offers an urgent, personal perspective on the realities faced by those forcibly displaced by Israel. It should be read by all people. Read them, then read them again – you will be left wondering how the world allowed such atrocities to unfold – and be motivated towards meaningful action.

~ Laila El-Haddad
Author of "Gaza Mom" and "The Gaza Kitchen"



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