

# Inside the siege of northern Gaza, where ‘death waits around every corner’

Monday 28 October 2024, by [Al ASI Ola](#), [MHAWISH Mohammed R.](#), [MOHAMMAD Ibrahim](#) (Date first published: 23 October 2024).

**Limbs scattered on the streets, shelters set ablaze, hundreds trapped inside hospitals: Palestinians detail the apocalyptic scenes of Israel’s latest campaign.**

## Contents

- [‘All that’s left is the \(...\)](#)
- [‘No one did anything to \(...\)](#)

For over two weeks, the Israeli military has been waging one of the most brutal and destructive campaigns of the war in northern Gaza. Residents of Jabalia, Beit Lahiya, and Beit Hanoun are living through an unrelenting siege that has stripped them of food, water, and any illusion of safety. Survivors describe a nightmare beyond comprehension: airstrikes and shelling so incessant that their bodies haven’t stopped trembling.

The Israeli military operation, which began during the early hours of Oct. 6, has [so far killed](#) at least 640 Palestinians. Many in the besieged areas have described apocalyptic scenes of [dead bodies strewn across the streets](#), with medical teams unable to retrieve them amid the constant bombardment.

In recent days, the Israeli army has [released videos](#) that show soldiers rounding up Palestinians who were sheltering in displacement camps, and [forcing them](#) southward toward Gaza City. The UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) [estimated](#) that 20,000 people were forcibly displaced from Jabalia on Oct. 18 alone. Images posted to social media by Israeli soldiers also suggest that the army [set shelters on fire](#) to prevent Palestinians from returning.

The assault on northern Gaza has severely limited the functioning of hospitals in the besieged areas. Dr. Mohammed Salha, director of Al-Awda Hospital in Jabalia, told +972 Magazine that the situation at the facility is “catastrophic.” Around 180 people — medical staff, patients, and displaced families — are trapped inside the hospital, with the Israeli army bombarding the surrounding area. “We are just waiting for death to come,” he said. “Or a miracle.”

*An IDF drone shows displaced Palestinians forced to evacuate Jabalia, October 21, 2024. (X/Avichay Adraee/used in accordance with Clause 27a of the Copyright Law)*

“We have nothing left to treat the wounded and patients,” Salha said. “Even basic necessities like water and medicine are scarce, and the hospital generator is running on its last drops of fuel. If the generator stops, so will the lives of those depending on ventilators.”

Dr. Marwan Al-Sultan, the director of the Indonesian Hospital in nearby Beit Lahiya, described a similarly devastating scene. “Israeli tanks are surrounding the hospital from all directions, and several vehicles are stationed at its gates,” he said. On Oct. 19, the Gaza Ministry of Health [reported](#)

that Israeli forces had shelled the upper floors of the hospital, despite the presence of over 40 patients and medical staff. Two days later, troops set a nearby school ablaze, [sparking a fire](#) that reached the hospital's generators and knocked out all power — rendering the hospital largely non-operational.

Despite the Israeli army demanding the hospital's evacuation, Al-Sultan affirmed that he and his colleagues are refusing to leave. "There are 45 people trapped inside the hospital: 15 staff and 30 patients," he explained. "One patient has died due to the power outage and a lack of medical supplies. The electricity has been completely cut off, and the occupation forces are refusing to allow the generators to be operated. This threatens the lives of the patients, especially the most vulnerable ones."

### **'All that's left is the will to breathe'**

Nabil Al-Khatib, 57, and his family were sheltering in a UNRWA school in Beit Lahiya when Israel began bombing the area on Oct. 6. "We thought the school was safe," he said. But suddenly, they came under heavy fire. Shrapnel flew toward them, lightly wounding eight of Al-Khatib's children and grandchildren.

"We thought we wouldn't make it," Al-Khatib recounted, his voice cracking. "The air was thick with smoke. My youngest was so afraid that she wouldn't let go of me. I held her tight, telling her it would be over soon, even though I wasn't sure if it was true. It was the longest night of our lives."

*Palestinians fleeing on the outskirts of Jabalia refugee camp, October 8, 2024. (Bilal Salem)*

The morning brought no peace, only a brief lull in the bombardment. The family took advantage of a 15-minute pause in the shelling to flee. "We picked up the children, grabbed whatever we could, and ran," Al-Khatib recounted. "We left everything behind — our medicines, our lives as we knew them. But we had each other. That's all that mattered." The escape route was closed soon after, leaving many trapped behind.

The family managed to find shelter in a small classroom at Abu Zaitoun School near Al-Shati refugee camp, just south of Jabalia. "We're in Gaza City now, but there's no relief," Al-Khatib said. "I see people who have already lost everything: their homes, their families, their limbs. All that's left is the will to breathe, to stay alive until the next explosion."

Bilal Salem, a photojournalist who's been documenting the rapidly deteriorating situation in northern Gaza, told +972 that every minute feels like his last. "You hear the drone, or the whistle of a missile, and then everything turns to dust," he said. "We move through the ruins like ghosts, trying to capture what's left of people's lives, but the truth is, there's not much left."

His voice broke as he talked about the children: the way they cling to their parents, desperate for protection that their parents can't give. "I've covered Gaza my whole life, but this isn't war — it's genocide. It's like death is waiting around every corner."

Salem also spoke about the personal toll of his work: "It's hard to keep going when you're witnessing this kind of destruction," he explained. "I see bodies crushed under rubble, kids missing limbs, people bleeding out on the street because there's no one left to help them. It's like living in hell, and it just gets worse every day."



Despite the daily risks to his life, Salem continues to do his work. “Journalists are targets,” he said plainly. “We’re seen as enemies because we’re showing the world what’s really happening. I’ve lost count of how many friends I’ve lost doing this job, and every time I go out, I wonder if I’ll make it back.”

Today, the Israeli army [claimed](#) that six Al Jazeera journalists covering the current assault on northern Gaza are operatives in Hamas and Islamic Jihad. The Committee to Protect Journalists [noted](#) that “Israel has repeatedly made similar unproven claims without producing credible evidence,” and the move has raised fears that the army could seek to target these journalists in order to further suppress coverage of the military campaign.

### **‘No one did anything to save them’**

Neveen Al-Dawasa, a nurse, was trapped in northern Gaza for 16 days while sheltering at Al-Fawqa School in Jabalia. “We had nothing — no food, no water,” she told +972. “People broke into store rooms just to survive, and when they did, the Israeli army bombed the gates. They even bombed the water well while children were filling jugs. There’s no humanity left.”

On Oct. 21, Israel [bombed the school](#). “It was hell,” Al-Dawasa said bluntly, her voice betraying deep anger. “They gave us an hour to evacuate, but they bombed us before the time was up. They didn’t care.

“I saw the bodies myself,” she continued. “I remember seeing around 30 wounded and 10 dead. We called for ambulances, but they couldn’t reach us.”

*Palestinians fleeing Beit Lahia via Salah al-Din Street to Gaza City, October 22, 2024. (Omar Elqataa)*

After the bombing, the Israeli army used drones and tanks to force survivors to flee under the threat of death. “They told us there was a ‘safe passage,’ but when we tried to leave, they shouted at us from their tanks: ‘Go back, or we’ll shoot you!’” Al-Dawasa’s voice faltered. “They treated us like animals. Even worse.” Al-Dawasa eventually managed to escape Jabalia camp on Oct. 22, and sought shelter at Al-Ahli Hospital in Gaza City.

Mosab Abu Toha, a Palestinian poet from Jabalia now living in exile, took to social media to try and bring the world’s attention to what’s happening to those trapped in northern Gaza, including his own family. “My aunt’s house and her husband’s family are now besieged inside by tanks and soldiers,” he [wrote](#) on Oct. 17. “The Israeli soldiers are firing at the ground floor. She has 5 children and there are more than 30 persons in the building, mostly children.”

The next day, he [posted](#) an update: “I write with a heavy heart that my cousin Sama, 7 years old, has been killed in the air strike on their house along with 18 members of her family, which is my extended family.” He added: “I posted about this yesterday before the house was bombed. I told everyone that tanks and soldiers were besieging the area. But no one heard. No one did anything to save them.”

In a statement, the IDF Spokesperson claimed that the army was “allowing civilians to evacuate for their security in a safe manner and through organized routes” and that it is “in constant contact with the international community and the health system in order to maintain the ongoing operation of the hospitals’ emergency systems through the transfer of medical equipment and the supply of fuel.” +972 approached the army for comment regarding the specific incidents mentioned in this article, but they did not respond by the time of publication.

**Mohammed R. Mhawish, Ola Al Asi and Ibrahim Mohammad** October 23, 2024

---

## **P.S.**

- +972. October 9, 2024:  
<https://www.972mag.com/gaza-journalists-october-year-on/>
- Mohammed R. Mhawish is a Palestinian journalist and writer based in Gaza. He is a contributor to the book ‘A Land With A People — Palestinians and Jews Confront Zionism’ (Monthly Review Press Publication, 2021).
- Ola Al Asi is a Palestinian freelance journalist, writer, storyteller, and lecturer of English language, based in Gaza.
- Ibrahim Mohammad is an independent Palestinian journalist from Gaza City who covers humanitarian and social issues. He holds a BA in journalism and media from Al-Aqsa University.
- Our team has been devastated by the horrific events of this latest war – the atrocities committed by Hamas in Israel and the massive retaliatory Israeli attacks on Gaza. Our hearts are with all the people and communities facing violence.

We are in an extraordinarily dangerous era in Israel-Palestine. The bloodshed unleashed by these events has reached extreme levels of brutality and threatens to engulf the entire region. Hamas’ murderous assault in southern Israel has devastated and shocked the country to its core. Israel’s retaliatory bombing of Gaza is wreaking destruction on the already besieged strip and killing a ballooning number of civilians. Emboldened settlers in the West Bank, backed by the army, are seizing the opportunity to escalate their attacks on Palestinians.

This escalation has a very clear context, one that +972 has spent the past 13 years covering: Israeli society’s growing racism and militarism, the entrenched occupation, and an increasingly normalized siege on Gaza.

We are well positioned to cover this perilous moment – but we need your help to do it. This terrible period will challenge the humanity of all of those working for a better future in this land. Palestinians and Israelis are already organizing and strategizing to put up the fight of their lives.

Can we count on your [support](#)? +972 Magazine is the leading media voice of this movement, a desperately needed platform where Palestinian and Israeli journalists and activists can report on and analyze what is happening, guided by humanism, equality, and justice. Join us.

[BECOME A +972 MEMBER TODAY](#)