

'We just want it all to stop': Palestinians across Gaza awake to new Israeli massacre

Wednesday 19 March 2025, by [AMER Ruwaida Kamal](#) (Date first published: 18 March 2025).

After recovering a semblance of safety during the ceasefire, Gazans are forced again to decide whether or not to flee their homes as Israel resumes its assault.

Contents

- [A renewed assault on children](#)
- [Bombs from north to south](#)

Palestinians mourn the death of Palestinians killed in an Israeli air strike outside the Nasser Hospital in Khan Younis, southern Gaza Strip, March 18, 2025. (Abed Rahim Khatib/Flash 90)

I heard the missile before it exploded. It was 2 a.m., and I had just woken up to pray and read the Quran. I went to the bathroom, when suddenly the door swung open: our home shook with the bomb's impact. We later learned that one of our neighbors' houses, in the Al-Fukhari neighborhood in Khan Younis, had been directly targeted.

Across the Gaza Strip, Palestinians awoke to the resumption of Israel's genocidal war. The army claimed to be targeting "terrorist cells, launch sites, weapons and additional military infrastructure," but the sudden aerial and artillery strikes on the enclave hit families in their homes and tents while they were sleeping, just an hour before the pre-dawn Ramadan meal. While our neighbors managed to survive, the Gaza Health Ministry reports that 408 have been killed, including 174 children, and 562 injured, with many more trapped beneath the rubble of collapsed buildings.

Nisreen Abu Jamea, a 40-year-old mother of four from the Khuza'a neighborhood, east of Khan Younis, spoke to +972 about the attack on the city. "We woke up to extremely heavy shelling on the border areas," she recalled. "Most of us here live in tents, and when the bombing began, we ran outside. Everyone was screaming and checking on each other; it is easy for the tents to catch fire from the scattered shrapnel, so we remained outside. Our children did not sleep all night because of the bombing."

After an hour of continuous shelling, the Israeli army [issued an order](#) for Khuza'a's residents to evacuate the area — leaving Abu Jamea and her family with few remaining options. "We don't know where to go: will we return to [Al-Mawasi](#), repeating our displacement ordeal yet again?" Nor does she know whether that will bring any more safety. "We are now worried about moving because the army is targeting civilian cars," she explained, "and with the fuel shortage, there are few means of transportation. So we are looking for a donkey cart to transport us."

When the ceasefire took effect in January, Abu Jamea was slightly hesitant to leave Al-Mawasi, where she had been sheltering with her family since October 2023. But about a week before the start of Ramadan, they decided to return to Khuza'a. "We wanted to spend the holiday in our own neighborhoods," she explained. "During the ceasefire, we could hear tank fire, and the eastern areas

[of Khan Younis] were completely unsafe, but we endured it to stay in our neighborhoods.”

Now, like many Gazans, Abu Jamea is in a state of complete shock. After returning to their homes and neighborhoods, and recovering a semblance of safety over the past two months, they don't know how they can go back to enduring a full-scale resumption of war — or even whether they will survive.

Palestinians at the scene of an Israeli airstrike in Khan Younis, in the southern Gaza Strip, March 18, 2025. (Abed Rahim Khatib/Flash90)

“We don't know why the war has returned again,” she told +972. “During the ceasefire, we tried to go back to our normal lives, despite the difficulties we faced. This allowed us to experience moments of relative safety, only to be faced once more with violent bombing.”

A renewed assault on children

In Abasan Al-Kabira — a small town just next to Khuza'a, east of Khan Younis — 33-year-old Salem Baraka was asleep with his four children when the bombardment began. “Since 2 a.m., they have been trembling with fear, asking us to leave the area and go to Al-Mawasi,” he told +972. “There has been continuous shelling on our town, and the army has ordered us to evacuate due to the renewed fighting.”

But like many Gazans in the area, Baraka is hesitant to leave Abasan and repeat the grueling experience of being displaced to Al-Mawasi, where he and his family lived for the first 14 months of the war. “We do not know if this situation is temporary, or if it will continue for longer than just a few days,” he explained. “We feel lost and do not know what is happening. During the month of Ramadan, we were already suffering from the siege, and now a war has been renewed against our children.

“I am still thinking about whether to evacuate or stay,” Baraka added, “but ultimately, I will choose safety for my children. Therefore, if the shelling continues like this, I will evacuate to one of the schools in the center or west of Khan Yunis. Once there, I do not know what I will do.”

Mahmoud Latifa, 29, also experienced last night's assault in Abasan, where he returned at the beginning of February after a long period of displacement in Al-Mawasi. “We felt humiliated inside those tents, so during the ceasefire, we went back to our homes,” he told +972. “They were badly damaged, but we chose to sit in what remained of them.”

Despite the agreement, Latifa testified that Israeli attacks on the town continued throughout February, with quadcopters enforcing a nightly curfew and shooting at residents who went into the streets. “I cannot say that we felt safe during the ceasefire: we sat for days without being able to leave our homes and buy basic goods, but we endured that instead of sitting in the tents.”

Palestinians mourn the death of those killed in an Israeli airstrike outside the Nasser Hospital in Khan Younis, southern Gaza Strip, March 18, 2025. (Abed Rahim Khatib/Flash90)

Still, the resumption of Israel's full-scale assault came as a complete and frightening surprise. “The tanks were firing shells randomly at the homes, without regard for the lives of civilians,” Latifa said. “We did not sleep a moment from the time the shelling resumed until the morning hours, when the Israeli army told us to evacuate.”

Now, Latifa and his family are gathering their belongings yet again, as they plan to set up their tent in Al-Mawasi. But as he knows too well, there is no promise of security there: if last night's attack

marks the start of a renewed Israeli campaign, nowhere in Gaza will be safe.

“The situation here could change in an instant: all areas in the eastern part of Khan Younis are threatened with evacuation,” he explained. “While some have departed to the west of the city, I see others who refuse to be displaced. We are tired of all these repeated wars, attacks, bombings, and killing. We just want it all to stop.”

Bombs from north to south

While Khan Younis and the surrounding areas experienced some of the most intense strikes last night, no part of the Gaza Strip was spared from Israel’s renewed assault. In the southern city of Rafah, 17 members of the Abu Rayash family were killed when their home was targeted during the early morning hours — including Khaled Abu Rayash, his wife Majda Abu Aker, their married children, in-laws, and grandchildren, most of whom remain under the rubble.

In Beit Hanoun, in the northeastern corner of Gaza bordering the Erez Crossing, 43-year-old Tayseer Al-Kafarna and his family of seven fled their home after waking up to the sound of bombs exploding throughout their neighborhood at dawn. Once the Israeli army issued evacuation warnings, declaring the area to be a military operation zone, Al-Kafarna began packing. “I left most of what I own. We had neither the time nor ability to carry everything,” he told +972.

This is the third time Al-Kafarna and his family have been displaced since the beginning of Israel’s assault on Gaza in October 2023. Each time, he must carry his 70-year old father on his back. This journey is no exception, and the Ramadan fast has only compounded his fragility. “My family and I have begun to live in a constant state of confusion,” he said. “The children suffer from psychological disorders due to constant fear.”

Palestinian children at the scene of an Israeli airstrike in Gaza City, March 18, 2025. (Ali Hassan/Flash90)

Al-Kafarna will head west, but he doesn’t know much beyond that. “We don’t know where to go. All the schools and clinics are full of displaced people. We will try to manage, even if it means we have to sleep on the street.”

Among those killed in the early morning aerial raid was 10-year-old Maryam Al-Khairi, at her home in the center of Gaza City. “We were asleep when the building opposite us was targeted,” Islam Al-Khairi, Maryam’s father, told +972. “Shrapnel reached my children’s room; Maryam sustained a severe head injury, and she died before we could reach the Baptist Hospital.”

Maryam’s 15-year-old sister, Salam, was also injured in the airstrike, but her condition is stable. “She doesn’t know that Maryam was martyred,” Al-Khairi explained. “She asks about her, as she saw her bleeding from her head. We tell her she’s fine, but none of us are okay.”

Now, Al-Khairi is left to suffer the cruel fate of losing his daughter at the end of the ceasefire — the only period since October 7 that he wasn’t constantly worried about her safety. “I took care of my children throughout the war, moving them from place to place until we returned to our home,” he recounted. “I didn’t know that I would lose my daughter in our home, which we were impatiently awaiting.”

Narmin Al-Helou, a resident of the Al-Tuffah neighborhood of Gaza City, already lost her husband and two of her sons last year. After last night’s attack, she decided not to take any more chances and fled the area, which is close to the border with Israel. “I don’t want to lose my other children who

miraculously survived last night's bombing," she said. "I fear that this escalation could be the beginning of a war that is larger and more violent than the previous one."

A little further south, in the Shuja'iyya neighborhood of Gaza City, 39-year-old Ahmed Sukar and his family were up all night paralyzed from the heavy strikes across the neighborhood. They have decided to head west for the New Gaza Preparatory School in the central Rimal neighborhood. "I'm only thinking about surviving and my family," he said. "I don't want to stay in Shuja'iyya for fear of renewed shelling or a surprise ground operation by the army."

Like Al-Kafarna, this is Sukar's third time being displaced. "Each time my family and I struggle to adapt to the situation, but life under constant displacement makes it impossible to think about the future," he told +972. "The world must see what is happening here and stand by us to stop the killing and destruction. We only want justice and freedom, like all the peoples of the world."

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Ibrahim Mohammad and Ibtisam Mahdi also contributed to this report.

P.S.

• +972. March 18, 2025:

<https://www.972mag.com/gaza-massacre-renewed-israeli-assault/>

Ruwaida Kamal Amer is a freelance journalist from Khan Younis.

• Our team [+972] 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.

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