

# Palestinians and the world must not lose hope

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**Those mobilising against the Israeli genocide face exhaustion and burnout. This is the result of Israel's 'war of attrition'.**

*Palestinian Mervat Alramli cries as she holds her Palestinian flag in protest of the Euroleague basketball game between Barcelona and Maccabi Tel-Aviv outside the stadium in Barcelona, Spain on April 4, 2024 [File: Reuters/Nacho Doce]*

When in early October we, Palestinians, laid out to the world what was going to happen, our testimonies and foresight were [seen](#) as an exaggeration.

Our warnings of Israel's terrifying enthusiasm for using excessive violence were not taken seriously. Worse, our warnings that Israel was going to commit killings of Palestinians on a massive scale were dubbed "anti-Semitic".

Today, the official statistics say 33,000 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli air strikes with US-made bombs, shelling and field executions in Gaza and the West Bank. This number does not account for all those "missing" under the rubble, shot dead in the streets or in their homes by the occupation soldiers, or [buried under the sand](#) by their bulldozers.

And while Gaza is bearing the brunt of Israel's tormenting violence, Palestinians in the West Bank are being arrested by the thousands, including children, most of whom are denied trial. They are held under torturous and abusive conditions that have resulted in the killing of at least 13 Palestinian captives in the last six months.

Meanwhile, Palestinians with Israeli citizenship as well as Palestinians in Jerusalem suffer under Israel's draconian apartheid laws while being policed, detained, tortured and attacked by Israeli mobs for simply sharing social media posts or consuming what Israel calls "[terrorist media](#)".

If I were to describe the past 26 weeks, it would be one hour after another of just barely pulling through. I have asked myself, what is the point of writing another piece about Israel's remorseless sadism?

Between pitching this article and finding the strength to actually write it, more than 3,000 Palestinian children, women and men were killed. Al-Shifa Medical Complex was completely destroyed and the extrajudicial killings in the West Bank have only intensified.

The feeling of numbness, of paralysis among Palestinians is one of the aims of the Israeli "attrition" strategy. A war of attrition is meant to create the conditions to drain, exhaust and weaken an opponent. It is meant to diminish the capacity to fight back.

Israel's goal is the emotional, moral and mental depletion of those resisting its occupation and colonisation so they lose motivation and commitment to engage and mobilise in the face of brute repression.

It has applied this strategy in "peacetime" as well. Following in the footsteps of European colonialists and their logic of pacification, Israel has sought to wear down the Palestinian population into full submission by making life impossible at all levels. While feeding the world the false narrative of "self-defence", it has tried to create the moribund Palestinian: not necessarily dead, but always on the edge, constantly facing the choice between death and torment.

I do not think I will ever be able to fully explain what it is like to be a Palestinian – in all the shades of bruises we come in. It is not for the lack of words as much it is for the recognition that if I were to speak of the horrors, I am not confident that those who listen would bear to hear all the pain embedded in the Palestinian experience.

For the past 182 days, Palestinians have been plunged into waves of deep grief, penetrating pain, and a crippling fear of anticipated loss. Quivers of terror remain stuck in our spine unable to escape, just like us.

One of the most testing parts of this aggression is having to manage this grief. So many people we know are either killed, arrested or displaced. Palestinians have suffered not only physical displacement but psychological displacement as well; our mental and emotional anchors have been dislodged. It is an excruciating type of pain to keep witnessing the different ways in which Palestinian bodies can be turned lifeless.

There is no capacity to bury the slain bodies, no ability to collectively mourn our losses, not just the material but also the emotional: the destroyed homes, the destroyed memories, and the destroyed hope we mustered to have.

With continued exposure to Israel's unyielding psychopathy, comes a collective feeling of burnout not only among the population still trying to survive Israel's slaughter, but also among those mobilising to stop a genocide still being committed as I write these words.

The burnout is real. Too many of us are too exhausted to say anything, to resist succumbing to the delusion that our voices do not matter and will achieve nothing. As we sit with those uncomfortable and hopeless feelings, the war persists and the scale of the horrors increases.

And it is not just us, Palestinians in Palestine. This extends to those in the world who rose up against the genocide. Israel has responded to global resistance with more slaughter – like the [killing](#) of international humanitarian workers – and more lobbying for its critics to be punished.

As governments refuse to take action to end the slaughter, those mobilising against the genocide are slowly and strategically pushed towards incapacitation, despair, and the conviction that the Israeli onslaught cannot be stopped.

In May of 2021, when Palestinians were in the midst of the largest uprisings of the past decades, when they showed true unity across Gaza, the West Bank, the 1948 territories and the diaspora, I wrote a piece for the Guardian titled, Why are Palestinians protesting? Because we want to live.

I wrote the piece on my phone in between running from tear gas fired by Israeli soldiers and barely escaping the brutal beatings at the hands of the Palestinian Authority's security forces.

Those were brutal times, terrifying times, and defining times. In that piece, I tried to capture the

strategy of colonialism: “This is what colonialism does: it suffocates every part of your life, and then it finishes by burying you.”

I was not trying to draw a silhouette of a killer. I was trying to capture the moment of defiance and renewed unity among Palestinians from the river to the sea and in the diaspora.

“It is a strategic, deliberate process, and it is only obstructed or delayed because oppressors are almost always confronted and challenged by those under their rule,” I wrote.

Indeed, over the past many decades, Israel was not left without challenge. Palestinians continued to rise up against its policies of repression: One uprising after the next, from nonviolence to diplomacy, to armed resistance. As the Israeli conquest of Palestinian lands, resources and lives intensified, so did Palestinian struggle.

For the past six months, Israel and its backers have sought to erase history and context and portray October 7 as an “unwarranted” brutal attack on Israel. The reality is, on October 7, a people suffocated by decades of colonialism and oppression used their last breath to reject the impossible choice of death or torment and to call out to the world.

Perhaps that is what really shook Israel and its allies on October 7. What triggered Israel’s wrath was the fact that Palestinians were still breathing after decades of colonial pacification.

Understand this: What stands between our eradication and our survival is you, the global community. As Israel unleashed its genocidal force onto us, it implicated the rest of the world.

Israel’s genocide is enabled by international engagement. It uses weapons provided by foreign governments and enjoys impunity guaranteed by them to avoid accountability for its crimes.

Recognise this: Palestinians are not buried yet, and while the destruction is massive, so is the number of survivors with dreams to pursue, miracles to witness, and a faith in humanity to be re-instilled.

Amid all the destruction there is life, and Palestinians are putting up one hell of a fight for it.

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## **P.S.**

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