

Nuseirat refugee camp (Gaza): 'How is it reasonable to kill over 200 for the sake of four?'

Monday 17 June 2024, by [AMER Ruwaida Kamal](#) (Date first published: 13 June 2024).

It began without warning. "Planes were bombing. Tanks were firing. Quadcopter drones were shooting. People were running and screaming. It felt like Judgment Day, as if we were living our last moments."

Palestinians run through Nuseirat following an Israeli attack on the camp, June 8, 2024. (Khaled Ali/Flash90)

This was the scene at around 11 a.m. on Saturday, June 8 in central Gaza's Nuseirat refugee camp. Aerial bombardment, as described by a journalist in the camp who preferred to remain anonymous, was accompanied by the entry of dozens of Israeli military and police special forces personnel who [emerged from aid trucks](#). "We couldn't understand what was happening," the journalist added.

As later became clear, a major Israeli military operation was underway to retrieve four hostages whom Hamas had kidnapped from the Nova music festival almost exactly eight months prior. In doing so, Israeli forces unleashed devastation on Nuseirat camp, killing at least 276 Palestinians and wounding approximately 700 more.

"The intensity of the bombing felt like an earthquake," Enas Al-Louh, a 45-year-old from Gaza City who had sought refuge in the camp, recounted. "I thought my life would end right there. I was screaming at my children not to leave my side so that we could die together. For more than an hour, we lived through the horror of nonstop bombing and shelling."

For Amjad Al-Majdalawi, a 40-year-old who had been staying in Nuseirat camp with his family since the start of the war, the sound of explosions and people screaming in the market jolted him into a state of panic. "My mind stopped, and I ran to check on my family," he told +972. "While running, I saw the martyrs and the wounded lying on the ground, and the survivors begging for help.

Palestinians carry the body of one of the more than 270 people killed during an Israeli military operation in Nuseirat, June 8, 2024. (Khaled Ali/Flash90)

"I arrived home to find my children and my family screaming in fear," he continued. "We tried to find some relief from the shock of the event, but it continued to become more and more violent. The occupation deceived the camp through the state of calm in which we lived for several days [prior to the operation], without hearing the sound of reconnaissance planes. Then came the attack, with such brutality. Everyone in the camp lost someone from their family."

‘We are cheap blood in this hypocritical world’

As hundreds of wounded Palestinians began arriving at Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital in nearby Deir al-Balah, the Israeli army [called the hospital staff](#) and ordered them to evacuate, threatening to bomb the hospital. Staff passed on the warning to those it could, but most were too desperate to pay heed. The attack didn’t materialize, and it appears that the threat was intended to sow further chaos and confusion as Israel’s operation unfolded.

“All the photographers and journalists chose to stay,” the journalist recounted. “By covering the events inside the hospital — which continued to receive countless numbers of injured patients — we fulfilled our work. We didn’t care about the evacuation order, because what we experienced was more terrible than any other thought or feeling. The crying of mothers and children was so intense.”

Khalil Al-Dakran, the hospital’s spokesperson, told +972 that most of the wounded who arrived that day were women and children. But due to the Israeli army’s continuous attacks on central Gaza in the previous weeks, he explained, the hospital was unable to receive such large numbers.

Palestinians observe the destruction caused by an Israeli military operation in Nuseirat camp in the central Gaza Strip, June 8, 2024. (Khaled Ali/Flash90)

“We treated the injured on the floor of the corridors and outside in the tents, because there were no empty beds to receive the wounded,” Al-Dakran continued. “They arrived in ambulances, civilian cars, and animal-drawn vehicles.” The situation was so dire that the hospital was forced to send patients to Al-Awda Maternity Hospital, which was closer to the massacre in Nuseirat, despite it being ill-equipped to accommodate patients with severe injuries.

Al-Aqsa’s dwindling resources further limited the hospital’s ability to admit the influx of patients. “Some medical delegations come to Gaza with supplies that can help our patients, but the Israeli army confiscates these and prevents them from entering Gaza,” Al-Dakran explained. “It inhibits the entry of fuel and medical equipment into hospitals and keeps the wounded from seeking life-saving treatment abroad.”

The Nuseirat operation marked only the third time since October 7 that Israeli forces have freed hostages alive. The second, on Feb. 12, also came at a high cost to Palestinian lives, killing [at least 74](#) in Rafah’s Shaboura refugee camp in order to create a “[diversion](#).”

Al-Louh is still struggling to make sense of what he witnessed. “How is it reasonable to kill over 200 people for the sake of four? We are cheap blood in this hypocritical world that does not know the meaning of humanity, does not speak about the hundreds of martyrs and wounded, and does not express its anger at this massacre.”

Ruwaida Kamal Amer

P.S.

• +972. June 13, 2024:

<https://www.972mag.com/nuseirat-camp-israeli-hostages-massacre-gaza/>

CORRECTION: An earlier version of this article incorrectly stated that the Nuseirat operation was the second time Israel had freed hostages alive since October 7, rather than the third.

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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