

Eye Witness Report from Gaza. No Shelters to Escape the Israeli Attacks

By [Dr. Mona El-Farra](#)

Global Research, July 10, 2014

[Gaza's Ark](#) 8 July 2014

Region: [Middle East & North Africa](#)

Theme: [Crimes against Humanity](#), [Police State & Civil Rights](#)

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Last night and while Israeli army forces launched military attacks all over Gaza, by sea, air and artillery shelling, hundreds of thousands of children were unable to sleep inside their roof tinned homes, clinging to their parents, crying, terrified. The shelling of last night was so strong and went through the tiny strip from north to south, east and west. At least 100 attacks took place.

In Gaza we do not have shelters to escape to, during the attack.

These attacks come on top of a deteriorating economic situation. Right now it is Ramadan, the month of fasting and an increasing number of families have difficulty to get basic food, survival is a constant fight.

Thousands of government employees could not reach banks to have their salaries. I know the salaries are affected by internal problems between Fatah and Hamas, but the outcome is severe hardship - in the meantime the bombs keep dropping on top of our heads. The feeling of insecurity throws its shadow against all the population.

The military operation continues with threats of its expansion in the coming few days, and no news about any ceasefire.

Prior to the attack the local council authorities warned people swimming in the Gaza sea (the only recreational outlet for the 1.7 million population, most of whom are children) that it had now become so polluted with sewage water, that the authority had to pump it untreated into the sea, due to a lack of fuel to pump it to treating basins before dumping it into the sea.

- 95% of water is unsuitable for drinking.
- Unemployment is 55%.
- Many jobs are irregular or almost unpaid placements, there's no real economy.
- Food insecurity affects 70% of the population.

Through the Middle East Children's Alliance we're continuing to implement the water purification systems in schools and kindergartens, to provide thousands of Palestinian children with clean water. Although at the moment it is summer holidays, the community has accessibility to our school units.

Because of our deep understanding of the poor recreational facilities for Palestinian children

in general and especially in these difficult times, we are carrying on. We are making sure our educational, entertainment and recreational activities with our partners inside community centres are there to help the children when they need it most, to attract their attention away from the night's shelling. The support from Meca for these ongoing programmes in the north centre and south of Gaza strip is especially important now.

While we help the children and support them we take care of the mothers too, via psychological courses all over the Gaza Strip. The courses aim to educate women about trauma, and how to deal with the family and children during crisis times.

Different health facilities have just announced their need for more emergency supplies, which was already lacking because of the closure of the borders and siege of Gaza. We were fortunate that just before the attack Meca managed to send some highly needed emergency medications to the Red Crescent Society.

The Meca team as well as all humanitarian and health organisations in Gaza are going through a very difficult situation. We are physically unsafe and we cannot sleep. We work hard to support people in these very difficult times.

The streets of Gaza are empty, few cars are here and there, Israel continues their assassination policy as well as the many home demolitions by air raids. Recently many of the attacks have been hitting civilian areas with countless injuries. This makes it so hard for all of us living in Gaza, as the majority of the population live in very crowded areas.

While they hit their targets, civilians pay the big price. We have had 18 casualties so far and the toll is increasing. As I write, news is coming in all the time - a car has just been attacked with 4 killed in Wehda street which is a crowded market area and there are reports of many injured. I have just returned from the Red Crescent now where life is paralysed, in the car I was worried about attacks against any moving vehicle. We are hearing the bombings continue around us. No place is safe and no street is safe.

My message is for people who are looking from the outside to have a conscience and not stand for what is happening to the Palestinian people again under the eyes of the world. It is not about charity it is about solidarity with us and what we are facing not just under this brutal onslaught but day in day out.

Small and big efforts to create massive international mobilisation are the only way to reduce the extent of the horror and loss facing the Palestinians of Gaza, whether its demonstrations, pressuring the powerful, boycotts and through amplifying our voices and testimonies from beneath the bombs, whose words cannot always carry without your help.

This is not a war or a military operation the foreign media suggests. It is collective punishment and a brutal attack against all Palestinian people again, and it is civilians and the vulnerable who always pay the PRICE.

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