

My Hunger Strike for Gaza: A 31 Day Experience. Engineered Starvation of the People of Palestine

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*When Northern Gaza was placed under a complete siege, the Biden Administration issued a warning that if conditions didn't improve within 30 days, he would stop weapons shipments to Israel. At the time of the announcement, hundreds of thousands of Palestinians faced imminent starvation because the Israeli military was blocking trucks of humanitarian aid from entering Northern Gaza. **As children and their parents either starved to death or suffocated under the rubble of their homes that were deliberately bombed - Biden told them to wait thirty days. When the thirty days were up, Israel correctly called Biden's bluff. They knew he wasn't going to stop sending weapons, and they were right.***

I began this hunger strike to demand that my government end the siege on Gaza. It's clear to the entire world that Israel acts with full backing from **the United States and both governments are responsible for the death and human suffering happening in Palestine.**

The people of Gaza were starving before Biden's 30 day warning. They faced famine even before October 7th. People who defend this genocide will often note that there was peace on October 6th, 2023. But on October 6th, there was an Israeli imposed blockade that only allowed in the minimal calorie intake per Palestinian every single day - with no intention of making sure it reached each of the two million people that resided in Gaza. On top of that deprivation, Israel waged sporadic wars on the people of Gaza every few years. Nearly a month has gone by since Israel called Biden's bluff - the arms are still flowing into Tel Aviv with American flags stamped into the bomb casings and the people of Gaza are still starving to death. When the very few aid trucks do arrive to feed the starving population, Israel kills them while they stand in line for food.

I want to tell you what 30 days with no food does to a person, and my experience is made easier by the fact that I have a roof over my head, access to clean water, and a certainty that I won't have to flee my home at any moment depending on the whim of the IOF evacuation orders. The women my age in Gaza are not given the same luxuries. I'm an Elder, a mother and a long time Peace and Social Justice activist. I've lived in California for over 40 years, mostly in Sonoma County, but also in San Francisco and presently in Marin County.

In the first days of my hunger strike, I felt really tired and the hunger pangs were intense. Now they occur only several times a day. My body aches and as of today I've lost 17 pounds. I'm constantly cold and my resistance and immunity are low. I learned yesterday from a dear friend and sister Palestinian Activist — something I didn't know about

hunger strikes— that after days of starvation, beginning to eat food again could kill you. Your body isn't used to processing even a little bit of food. My friend Hazami, who ended her hunger strike this week, ended up in the hospital. So, I wonder what would happen to a person who hasn't had enough food for months and months? What happens to them when they have no hospital to go to? What happens when the remaining hospital they do find gets bombed? Or when their doctors get executed? I know I will be able to eat again, but what if I was a child and I had no idea when food might be coming? How scared would I be? Hunger isn't just hunger in Gaza, it's grief and suffering compounded a hundred times. It's a form of torture.

I feel I've been living in a traumatized state for over a year. I cry everyday, multiple times a day, my heart is beyond broken, it's shattered. I wake up each morning worrying about the genocide that is happening in Gaza, knowing that if it wasn't for my government's partnership with the Israeli government this couldn't continue. Our government is sending billions upon billions of our tax dollars to slaughter innocent children, mothers and fathers, entire families with bombs and artillery funded by our country.

I understand that "my trauma" is nothing compared to what the people of Gaza must be suffering. I can't even imagine the horrors they're being forced to live through or die from.

I'd gone to Washington DC on Oct 3rd wanting to work for diplomacy in the war in Ukraine. When Oct 7th happened, I decided to stay until we had a ceasefire in Gaza. I was there for seven long months, going to Capitol Hill, the White House and the State Department everyday trying and failing to get a Ceasefire. I came home broken. Last summer I joined the Handala in Lisbon, part of the Freedom Flotilla that is trying to break the Siege of Gaza. There are ships with 5,500 tons of humanitarian aid stuck in Istanbul, because the Turkish government has succumbed to Israeli and US pressure not to allow the ships to sail! The US government is not allowing much needed humanitarian aid to reach Gaza, but then spends millions on building a port that was never going to work. Our government's hypocrisy is soul crushing.

I was desperate for this genocide and ethnic cleaning of Palestine to end, so I took a stand and put my body on the line. Today, Thursday Dec. 19th, is the beginning of the 31st day of my hunger strike/fast for Gaza. Even now my Representative in Congress, Jared Huffman, refuses to sign onto Representative Casar's letter for an arms embargo against Israel. I asked for a meeting with him on the 25th day of my hunger strike/fast and was told he was unavailable to meet with me. Since it's clear Rep. Huffman doesn't care about Palestinians or his constituent's lives and he seems to be indifferent to our collective suffering, I'm ending my hunger strike/fast for Gaza with my dear friends and colleagues at the press conference at a press conference today and saving my energy to sue the *****.



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