

Israel-Palestine War: A New Mother Struggles to Care for Her Baby Under Bombardment in Gaza

Little food, no water, no medicines, anguished parents struggle to meet their children's needs while their own bodies weaken

By [Maha Hussaini](#)

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Six days after she gave birth to her first baby, Salma Radi was forced to evacuate her home in northern Gaza to flee [Israel's](#) relentless bombing and seek refuge in the central Gaza Strip, where she and her husband are now staying in a small apartment with 43 other people.*

Displaced, scared, and in bad health, Radi is struggling to take care of the baby, Omar, she had following two IVF attempts.

"I was still bleeding badly after having given birth when we had to evacuate our home, leaving everything behind. I carried my son and one bag and ran with my husband in the dark for around one hour until we found a taxi," Radi, 28, told Middle East Eye.

Before dawn, at 4am, that day, the couple had received a recorded phone message from the Israeli military, ordering them to evacuate ahead of imminent bombing on Gaza City.

"We started running around the house not knowing what to do. We took our official papers and money and left everything else behind – the piles of canned food we had bought at the beginning of [the war](#), our clothes, the beautiful bedroom and the things we had bought for Omar over the past year," Radi said.

Radi had not brought milk for her son since she was still nursing. But a few days after they were displaced, her son stopped breastfeeding.

"He started crying hysterically whenever I tried to breastfeed him. He spat out the milk and refused to have it. He remained about a whole day without food. I didn't know what to do or why he was refusing to breastfeed," she said.

After many phone-call attempts on the severely damaged communication networks, Radi finally managed to reach her doctor. She was told that anxiety and fear change the taste and texture of breast milk, and that is why her baby has been refusing it.

“I also do not eat well, and thus cannot produce enough milk. Honestly, in the past years, I was yearning to have a child. I cried and prayed day and night so that God would grant me a baby. But now I regret all of it,” she said.

“I regret having a baby, and I feel guilty for bringing him to this world where he is already suffering and will continue to suffer for the rest of his life as long as he is [Palestinian](#).”

“I do not say this to my husband, but I truly regret all the days when I prayed to have a child.”

No Safe Road Home

When Israel launched its [war](#) on the Gaza Strip in response to the Hamas attack on 7 October, Radi’s husband, Mahmoud, rushed to the supermarket to stock up on food, bread, drinking water and medicine. But when they had to flee their home, they did not manage to take any of it with them.

Today, Radi and her husband are unable to go back home to get the much-needed food they had bought, after Israel cut off the northern Gaza Strip and Gaza City from the central and southern areas by bombing the roads linking them.

“The only way left for us to go home now is al-Rasheed Street, on the coastal road, but whoever drives there gets targeted by Israeli gunboats and tanks,” she said.

On Friday, Israeli forces targeted a group of internally displaced persons who were driving on al-Rasheed Street on their way to the southern Gaza Strip, which the Israeli military had warned people to move to for their “safety”.

At least eight people, including children, were killed.

A few hours later, a group of ambulances transferring a number of wounded people to the Rafah border in the south were also targeted on the same street, although the Palestinian health ministry had coordinated with the Red Cross before transferring them.

An ambulance driver was wounded, and the ambulances returned to al-Shifa hospital in Gaza City.

At least 9,448 people have been killed, including 3,900 children and 2,500 women, since Israel started its most aggressive bombing campaign in Gaza on 7 October, when Hamas fighters launched an unprecedented attack on southern Israeli towns.

‘Our Worst Nightmare’

With Israel cutting off water and food supplies to Gaza, owners of grocery markets say they will not be able to restock the emptying shelves until Israel lifts its siege of the already-blockaded enclave.

In Nusairat refugee camp, one of the most densely populated areas in the central Gaza Strip, tens of thousands of residents have sought refuge from the bombing in Gaza City and the northern Gaza Strip.

With few markets and bakeries still open, residents and displaced people struggle to get food and bread.

“With around 44 people, half of them children, staying together in one house, we need food and running water all the time. Children finish their breakfast and 30 minutes later they start asking for lunch or a snack because they do not get enough food in each meal,” Radi said.

She added that the children, who usually need one load of bread for breakfast, now only get a quarter of that and a few pieces of cucumber.

“In order to get a bag of bread, we have to wake up at dawn and walk for around 60 minutes to reach the only bakery that still has not been bombed in our area,” she said.

“We wait in a queue where hundreds of people, who had come from all districts around the Strip, stand, and after around two or three hours we finally get one bag of bread.”

Due to the lack of flour, water, and fuel needed to run the machines and bake the bread, bakery owners now sell each person only one bag of bread to cover the needs of as many families as possible.

Families that need more than one bag have to send several members to stand in the queue outside the bakery and buy one bag each.

“Of course, we do not cook because we do not have cooking gas and enough water and vegetables. So we mainly rely on canned food. But canned food needs a lot of bread, so we are always in an endless dilemma thinking what to eat and what to feed the children,” Radi said.

“And of course, because there is no water, we are bathing the children with wet wipes only. They are starting to have allergies and skin infections due to the lack of sanitary conditions.

“Every day we say this will end soon, but it only gets worse. Every day we say they will not target places around us, but they are bombing more homes in our neighbourhood.

“We did not expect to live this in our worst nightmares.”

**The name has been changed upon request.*

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Articles by: [Maha Hussaini](#)

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