

Today in Gaza, I No Longer Believe We'll Get Out of Israel's Assault Alive

Early this morning, a blast blew in the windows, and I shielded my baby with my body and realised: No place is safe.

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Gaza City - As I write this, I no longer believe we will get out of this alive.

On Wednesday, I woke from my sporadic sleep to the sound of the bombardment that has continued nonstop for the past four nights. Each day we wake up in a different house. But each day the sounds and smells we wake to are the same.

Our home was badly damaged on the first night of the bombardment. So we moved to my parents' home. Then on Tuesday, a missile strike that destroyed a home just one building away left my parents' home uninhabitable. So we came to the home of my in-laws. Now, there are 40 of us here. It feels as though the missiles are following us - getting closer with each strike - and we are running out of places to run to.

I prayed fajr, the pre-sunrise prayer, and then lay down beside my two-month-old son as he slept. I couldn't smell his skin, his hair through the stench of gunpowder, smoke and dust that seems to permanently fill the air.

It was just a few minutes later that the windows blew in, covering us with shards of glass. I instinctively covered his tiny body with my own. Then, I grabbed him and ran, all the while crying out for my eight-year-old daughter.

"Banas! Where is Banas?" I pleaded as everyone ran, all of us calling out for our children, our parents amid the mayhem. When I found her, she was crying and shaking. My husband and I took turns hugging her to comfort her as best we could, knowing that there was so little comfort to be found.



The shattered glass and a cut from an early morning explosion on October 11, 2023 [Maram Humaid/Al Jazeera]

Still shaken, we ran downstairs to the ground floor, so we could leave if needed, but then, the bombardment appeared to stop. Outside, the air attacks had levelled yet another home, just metres from where we were. It was hit without prior warning. Oftentimes, a small strike is followed by a larger one. Thankfully, the people who lived there were not inside when it struck.

When we were still at my parents' home, we had similarly run downstairs amid the shouts and cries of neighbours warning one another to take cover after a strike hit a nearby building. The moments waiting for the second, bigger strike to hit were unbearable. I held my baby tightly and turned his face towards my chest as though I could shield him from the dust and the fumes from the explosives.

Hours passed. Then on Tuesday evening, a big missile hit, flattening the building. Our screams filled the air amid the sound of shattering glass and objects. About 10 minutes later after the dust had settled, we saw my parents' front door and windows had been destroyed and the furniture was covered in debris. We quickly packed our belongings and left.

I thought my parents' home would be safe. I thought my in-law's place would be safe.

But where do we go next? There is not a home in Gaza that is safe.

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Featured image: Children from Maram's family shelter together after an air strike hit near her in-laws' home [Maram Humaid/Al Jazeera]

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