

غزة GAZA: صدى THE ECHO OF المنسيين THE FORGOTTEN

ENG

‘The Palestinian question is more than a problem of borders (hudud), it is a problem of existence (wuyud)’.

Rashad Abu-Sháwir

The genocide in Gaza has been a trend in recent months, if not years. Most of the traditional media have set up a barrier when it comes to showing the information and it has become a discursive war of two sides with a clear inequality between them, in which the general public is left with the ‘echoes’, the small brushstrokes that are shown on the news and without knowing in depth the reality of a conflict that is destroying an entire people. The exhibition ‘Gaza: the echo of the forgotten’ presents the reality of the genocide in Gaza through the perspective of three Gazan photojournalists: Mohamed Zaanoun, Ahmed Zakot and Abood Abusalama who document the acts of the Israeli army from the inside, giving a real vision of the crimes against humanity. This exhibition also seeks to highlight the victims, the ‘forgotten’, the human beings with names and surnames, who are consensually ignored in the mass-media, showing their daily lives and the real impact of the massacre on their lives.

PALESTINE THROUGH TIME

1947: Palestine's Partition Plan was approved by the General Assembly of the United Nations. The territory was divided into two independent states; a Jewish state and a Palestinian Arab state, while Jerusalem is under an international regime.

1948: Plan was declined by Arab elite, which led to the Arab-Israeli war in 1948. Israel declared his independence and established himself as a sovereign state. The majority of Palestine was occupied by Egypt and Jordan.

NAKBA: The beginning of seventy six years of exile. On May 15th, 1948, almost a million people (more than 700.000) were converted into refugees in his own land.

1967: Six days War. Israel established himself in the territories of Gaza and Occidental Ribera, Oriental Jerusalem included, and later he'll be annexed. Second exodus. One of the most critical moments in the history of the Palestinian people. This was a crucial point in the political situation of the region.

1974: In the General Assembly, the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people to freedom of determination, national independence, sovereignty and the comeback of the refugees were reaffirmed.

1987: First Intifada. Popular awakening of the Palestinian people against Israel occupation.

1988: The National Council of Palestine reunited in Argel and proclaimed the establishment of the Palestine State.

2000: Failure of the peace negotiations between Israel and Palestine, which led to the start of the Second Intifada. The violence and the clashes were present during many years.

غزة **GAZA:**
صدى **THE ECHO OF**
المنسيين **THE FORGOTTEN**

ENG

2005: Israel gave up unilaterally Gaza's strip.

2006: Hamas won the parliamentary elections with 44% of the votes and was given the mission to create government.

2007: Hamas won control over Gaza, which led to an economic and military crash for Israel.

2012: New era of violence between Gaza and Israel. Ceasefire negotiated by Egypt.

July-August 2014: New clashes between Gaza and Israel. Since then, many armed conflicts have happened.

Actuality: Since October 7th 2023, the poor life conditions in Gaza caused by the State of Israel are unquestionable, like their denial to recognise the existence of the Palestine people.

LA NAKBA

The Palestinian people find themselves in a Nakba that seems to have no end. The deplorable living conditions imposed by the Israeli state, as well as the persistent refusal to recognise the existence and the right to life of the Palestinian people, are aspects that cannot be ignored. It is imperative that the forgetting and denial of their existence not be legitimised. We are currently witnessing a genocide unfolding before our very eyes. Despite being tried by the Criminal Court of Justice, which issued arrest warrants for Benjamin Netanyahu and his former defence minister Yoav Gallant, or by South Africa, which has taken the route of denouncing Israel for non-compliance with the Convention on the Prevention and Healing of the Crime of Genocide before the International Court of Justice of the United Nations in December 2023, these measures are ineffective because of the few signs of condemnation within the international community. The fundamental step is to restore to the Palestinian people what is rightfully theirs: their land.

Over the decades, the Palestinian people have maintained and continue to maintain the idea of 'Sumud' (resistance) to the Zionist occupation. The daily life of an entire people is hindered by military arbitrariness, checkpoints and house demolition decrees, as well as the indiscriminate killing of civilians. In this context, 'sumud' stands as a beginning and a starting point for rebuilding and finding ways to resist.

As journalist Teresa Aranguren points out in her work *Contra el olvido. Una memoria fotográfica de Palestina antes de la Nakba, 1889 – 1948*: 'Everything that exists leaves a trace. No matter how much we try to erase it, the trace of the Palestine that was, of those people who were expelled from their land and their lives in 1948, remains in the hole left by their absence'.

غزة GAZA:
صدى THE ECHO OF
المنسيين THE FORGOTTEN

ENG

AL SHIFA HOSPITAL. THE BURIED CRIMES

Starring Palestinians who survived Israel's devastating bombardment of the Gaza Strip's largest hospital complex, 'Al Shifa Hospital. The Buried Crimes' chronicles the final siege of Al Shifa Hospital from 18 March 2024 to 1 April 2024.

This documentary began filming hours after the withdrawal of Israeli troops in an attempt to mitigate the subsequent statements by the State of Israel about the events that took place during the 14 days of bombardment, destruction, torture, starvation, arrests, humiliation and murder.

During this film, we follow in the footsteps of several witnesses, presenting a complete and complementary view of each of the accounts they tell us. As the Turkish director of the production, Al Baghdadi, said in an interview with the Spanish media 'elDiario' at the presentation of the documentary in Madrid: *'There are different witnesses so that the vision is complete, their stories complement each other. The nurse saw what happened to the detained men; a detainee saw what happened to the nurses; and their testimonies coincide, which is further proof of their credibility.'*

THE PHOTOJOURNALISTS

Mohammed Zaanoun, an independent photojournalist from Gaza that is 38 years old, has already won multiple awards in the arabic level but also international level thanks to his pictures as a war journalist.

He was injured while he was covering Israel's invasion of Al-Shujaiyya in 2006, which made him lost parts of his face and scars and wounds around all his body.

His work has been published in journals such as Le monde, the New York Times or Al-Jazeera, and also in Non Governmental Organization.

Since the beginning of the total siege in Gaza Strip, October 7th, 2023, Mohammed Zaanoun pictured the devastation in Gaza under the israeli bombs and his photographs are dramatic. They're the testimony of the civil's fear that they are the target of the israeli bombings. A bomb destroyed his house and forced him to go to the south of the Gaza Strip.

Nowadays, he lives in exile in Egypt, where he could take refuge with his family.

Abdulrahman Abu Salama, also known as Abood Abu Salama, is a palestinian journalist and a photographer from Gaza, born in April 1997, nowadays lives in the Jabalia refugee camp, in the north of Gaza strip.

Aboud describes the tragic situation that he has witness and still witness, both personally and as experienced by the residents of Gaza. He established a comparison between happy moments captured by his camera before war started, and the later sadness. Those moments are becoming a true tragedy that is only shown in movies, but unfortunately for gazans, this is their harsh reality that plagues their dreams, their days and every detail of their lives. The gazan dream has become to just sleep and get up alive.

It should be noted that Aboud has escaped death on many occasions, surviving several murder attempts by Israel, who has targeted him and many of his fellow journalists who suffer deprivation of their freedom to convey Gaza's message to the world.

غزة GAZA: صدى THE ECHO OF المنسيين THE FORGOTTEN

ENG

Ahmed Zagout is from Gauza. He started working on the news agency Reuters as a photographer in 2002 and worked there until 2020. Lately, he continued his career as a freelance photographer for many journals and international agencies; he covered 4 of the wars on the Gaza strip, as well everyday life on the strip and the divisions and coup events that took place between the two biggest palestine factions in 2006. One year before that, the photographer covered the presidential palestine elections and many events and stories related with the palestine citizens living in the Strip.

Nowadays, he works as an independent cameraman to many institutions in the Gaza strip, working on the coordination and coverage of the activities and projects.

THE GAZA STRIP THROUGH TIME SINCE THE 2000s

Gaza strip is a land 41 kilometres long and 10 kilometres wide between Israel, Egypt and the Mediterranean Sea.

Since the beginning of 2000's, Israel has attacked the area multiple times till nowadays. The most relevance are:

2004: Operation Days of Penance: 7 Palestinian deaths and 430 harmed.

2006: Operation "Summer Rain", "Sansón Columns" and "Autumn Clouds"

2008: Operation Warm Winter. In 2008, during all the hostilities, 402 Palestinians lost their lives.

2009: Operation Molten Lead. In 2009, during all the hostilities, 983 Palestinians lost their lives.

2012: Operation Defensive Pillar. In 2012, during all the hostilities, 168 Palestinians lost their lives.

2014: Operation Protective Margin. This year ends with a temporary ceasefire. In 2014, during all the hostilities, 2251 Palestinians were found dead.

2018: On March 30th, 2018, there was a huge peaceful demonstration against the Gauze strip lock. Unfortunately, this was a massacre, and 189 Palestinians were found dead and 6000 people were injured.

2021: Operation Guardian of the Walls. May 10th established the beginning of the military confrontation between Israel and Gauze. This war ended May 21st thanks to a ceasefire. In 2021, during all the hostilities, 261 Palestinians lost their lives.

غزة GAZA: صدى THE ECHO OF المنسيين THE FORGOTTEN

ENG

2023: In 2023, between January 1st and October 6th, the Tzahal (Israel Defense Force) had already killed 248 Palestinians in the occupied territory and 5200 were arrested. In response to the attack that Hamas launched to Israel's territory. On October 7th, Israel carried out the operation called "Iron Swords". Since that time, the humanitarian situation in Gauze has been getting worse every day. At the same time, November 19th, they launched their first warning over the Al-Shifa Hospital which welcomed 2300 patients.

2024: Premeditated destruction of the Al-Shifa Hospital, reference centre and the biggest in Gauze.

ISRAELI LEADERS

October, 2023. Benjamin Netanyahu (Prime Minister) compared the Palestinians to the Amalekites, a people who were exterminated by God according to the Bible. ‘You must remember what Amalek has done to you, says our Holy Bible. We remember it and we are fighting.

June, 2024. Itamar Ben-Gvir (Israel’s Minister of National Security): They ask me if Palestinian prisoners should be given food... and I say that Palestinian prisoners should be shot in the head and killed.

February, 2024. May Golan (Minister of Social Equality and Minister of Women’s Empowerment): I am proud of the ruins of Gaza! May every baby, even 80 years from now, tell their grandchildren what the Jews did when they murdered their families, raped them and kidnapped their citizens!

November, 2023. Avi Dichter (Minister of Agriculture) described the evacuation of the north in October as: “Gaza Nakba 2023. This is how it will end”.

October, 2023. Yoav Gallant (ex-Minister of Defence): “we are fighting human animals and we act accordingly”.

CURRENT SITUATION IN GAZA

The Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide was adopted by the United Nations on 9 December 1948. Currently 154 countries have ratified or acceded to the Convention. According to Article II of the Convention, Genocide means any act committed ‘with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such’. It is, the text continues, a process that takes the following forms: ‘(a) killing of members of the group; (b) serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; (c) deliberate infliction on the group of conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; (d) measures intended to prevent births within the group’. This description defines what has been happening in recent years in Gaza.

The systematic destruction of recent years has wiped out the entire life and history of the Gazan people: homes, hospitals, schools, libraries and universities. Likewise, the Tzahal, the Israeli military forces, have eliminated the Palestinian intelligentsia: academics, scientists, doctors, administrators, technicians, journalists, artists, intellectuals and poets. In the words of Enzo Traverso, PhD in History: ‘The Palestinian population of Gaza is subjected to a planned and relentless massacre, uprooted and deprived of the most basic conditions for survival. Israel’s war in Gaza is taking on the characteristics of genocide, but nothing is being done. The word genocide is banned by the media who, when forced to use it, are quick to enclose it in inverted commas and invite an ‘expert’ to qualify the accusation when he does not simply deny it.’

The current situation in Gaza leaves nearly 1.5 million Palestinians, more than half of its population, relocated within their own land. A few kilometers away, separated by an electrified barrier and protected by the Iron Dome, the shield that intercepts rockets, Israelis live as if they were in Europe.

GDP in Gaza has been steadily declining in recent years. Seventy-five per cent of the population is under twenty-five years old and has lived in segregation and under siege since birth. Its unemployment rate is still at 50 per cent and the population living in poverty is at 80 per cent, making UNRWA’s humanitarian aid a critical issue, as it has been suspended for several months by several EU countries and its entry routes have been cut off by the IDF.

غزة GAZA: صدى THE ECHO OF المنسيين THE FORGOTTEN

ENG

UNRWA

After more than a year of the heaviest bombardment of a civilian population since World War II, and restriction of humanitarian aid, the lives of Palestinians are shattered.

International media crews have been barred from freely entering and reporting on the humanitarian crisis and the impact of the war.

Palestinian journalists have my admiration. They continue to carry the torch even though too many of them have been killed. Without the courage and determination of Palestinian journalists we would not know or understand the extent of the tragedy unfolding in Gaza.

In the midst of this unrelenting misery, UNRWA remains the backbone of the humanitarian response. We have paid a terrible price, with 254 staff killed in 13 months.

These are dangerous and unpredictable times. The failure to take meaningful action to uphold international law is weakening the foundations of our multilateral system and will have consequences.

The future of Palestine refugees is a shared responsibility. Our rights and our future are at stake in Gaza today. They must be defended and restored. Our commitment to them is a test of our shared humanity that we have failed for too long.

Philippe Lazzarini,
UNRWA Commissioner General