

“We are in Hell”: Gaza resident speaks to WSWS

Our correspondent
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The *World Socialist Web Site* recently spoke with Ghassan (not his real name), who lives in Deir al Balah in the Gaza Strip, about the conditions facing his family and hundreds of thousands of other people following nine months of Israel's genocidal war.

Ghassan lives in a house damaged by bombs, which he shares with more than 30 people from multiple families. There is no electricity in the area, other than that generated by solar panels. Internet and mobile data are unreliable, but communication with the outside world is possible, and many Gazans continue to use social media to spread awareness of the atrocities committed by the Israeli regime, which are minimised if not completely buried by the corporate media.

Ghassan explained that he and his family were forced to flee late last year, with hundreds of thousands of others, for the southern city of Rafah. “They bombed our neighbourhood. We had damage to our house: our windows, doors, the roof, some walls. Then we left, not to Rafah directly, but first to a United Nations school, then in another place, then we tried to go back home.”

Israel had initially told Gazans that they would be safe in Rafah, but this was a lie: Rafah was bombed repeatedly and invaded early this year, forcing hundreds of thousands of already-displaced people to evacuate.

Ghassan's family travelled to Deir al Balah, along with tens of thousands of refugees from Rafah. They initially lived in a house with several other families, around 50 people in total, “but some families left and went to camps, other families went to their homes.” Conditions remain extremely crowded and unhealthy, made worse by the lack of water and the summer heat. The household includes many children, some of them very young.

Speaking about the conditions of life for these children, Ghassan said: “It is no childhood, because there is no school, so they are in the street, they are just playing around the house. That's it. They look for wood for lighting fires, for cooking, and to bring water for washing. They are in danger. There is no safe place. Despite [the Israelis] saying ‘this area is safe,’ you can be sure this area is not safe.”

Ghassan also explained the challenges facing his elderly parents. “My father is okay, he doesn't have any health problems, but my mother is sick, she has heart problems. We were waiting for her to have an operation, but no chance, because of what happened. Now, it is difficult for her because she [needs] medicine and it is difficult to find it.”

Because of the destruction of Gaza's health system and the vast majority of its hospitals, “you will find emergency treatment, not specialist treatment. You can't imagine [what it is like], with the people who have hepatitis, the people who have cancer. So the situation is difficult.”

Ghassan had visited the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital to donate blood and witnessed the overwhelmed, chaotic conditions. “It is very, very busy and it is very noisy. Maybe a couple of thousand people are there.” He added that there were still doctors in Gaza, “but many have been killed, and many are in prison.”

Finding food and drinking water is a daily ordeal; both have to be purchased and are very expensive. With no jobs in the Gaza Strip, people are forced to rely on whatever money and supplies they had saved before the genocide began. After nine months, even those who had some resources now have little or nothing left.

There is limited food aid, Ghassan explained. “UNRWA helps with flour and some canned food like chickpeas, canned meat, things like that.” Ghassan was also aware of the World Food Program distributing similar items, but he said, “It is only four or five kinds of food; you can't eat this food every day for eight months.”

The distribution of aid has been severely impeded by Israel's blockade, its killing of aid workers, as well as the theft of food from storage facilities. Ghassan had witnessed a crowd of desperate, hungry people chasing and seeking to take food from a delivery truck.

On July 9, a group of United Nations experts issued a statement declaring: “Israel's intentional and targeted starvation campaign against the Palestinian people is a form of genocidal violence and has resulted in famine across all of Gaza.”

In response to media reports which continue to put the Gaza death toll at 38,000—a figure that has remained static for months—Ghassan said: “In my opinion, it will be at least 100,000. So, don’t believe the media. They [Israel] control the media, they control the news and they are showing you what they want.”

This reporter noted that the *Lancet* has estimated at least 186,000 people have been killed, directly or indirectly, in Israel’s genocide, but this finding has largely been buried by the corporate media.

Ghassan, who was born and raised in the Gaza Strip, said he had lived through “five or six or seven wars. I said to a friend from Europe: I have a PhD now in wars in Gaza.” Despite Israel’s murderous assaults on Gaza in 2008-9, 2012 and 2014, and the extreme deprivation caused by its decades-long blockade, when compared with the present genocide, Ghassan said, “You could say we were in Paradise before October 7. Now we are in Hell.”

Describing the methods used by the Israeli military to kill Palestinian civilians, Ghassan said: “If they find someone [who] is wanted, they kill anyone who is around. If he is inside the house, they will bomb this house and many houses around this house. If they find him in the street, they will bomb the street and anyone near him. They don’t want to kill one, they want to kill 20. They enjoy killing us.”

People are living in a constant state of terror, with regular explosions and “with the drones during the day and the night: it’s all the time, very noisy, very dangerous. They use different kinds of drones: big, small, some used for spying, recording, shooting.” It is especially dangerous to go outside at night, Ghassan said.

He explained that some drones played recordings of “the resistance people’s voice, or the prisoner’s voice” and “voices of women crying” and people shouting to be careful, as though a bomb had struck. “They record these voices from these people, put it on the drone, and they use these drones in the street, [to lure] the people to go out, and when people go out, they shoot them.”

Eventually, Ghassan said, a ceasefire would be agreed, but the suffering of the people would continue: “We say here sometimes: the war is after the war, because it will be a different life.” The survivors would have to rebuild their entire lives from scratch, and huge amounts of money would be required.

Ghassan was scathing about governments throughout the world, saying, “No leader, no government is strong enough to give Israel orders to stop this war.” He made clear that this included “the Arab or Islamic countries. They left us alone, watching us. They’re the same as the USA, there’s no difference.”

This reporter explained that Washington and its allies in

Europe and the Middle East are in full support of Israel’s war on Gaza, including its genocidal methods that are a template for future wars.

Ghassan sharply criticised the protest movement against the Netanyahu regime in Israel, saying: “They protest to end this war to get their prisoners back. Not to stop killing us. They protest to get their son, get their mother, their sister or daughter who are prisoners in Gaza, their family. They care about themselves, they don’t care about us.”

In response, the WSWs reporter agreed that this was largely the character of the protests, but noted that there is a climate of fear and censorship in Israel, and many people do not know what is taking place in Gaza. There is also principled opposition to war and killing by the Israeli Defence Force, which is small but growing.

Commenting on the global protests, including the student encampments calling for an end to the genocide, Ghassan said: “It’s too late, but it’s better than nothing. It is good that the world is beginning to change, I hope.”

Ghassan appealed for people internationally to take more action: “We need humanity. We need you more and more, because you are our voice. Don’t leave us alone, don’t stop your support, keep doing what you are doing.”

The WSWs is calling for working people throughout the world to take strike action to shut down the production of weapons of war, and to refuse to ship them to Israel. The Socialist Equality Party in the US is organising a protest in Washington DC on July 24—not to make futile appeals to the war criminal Joe Biden and his administration, which is supplying Netanyahu’s war machine—but as part of the fight to build an independent movement of the working class, which is the only force that can stop the Gaza genocide and the widening imperialist wars throughout the world.



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