

After the Smoke Clears: Gaza's Everyday Resistance

years of physical therapy and mental health treatment; and left an entire population with severe trauma. Some six hundred thousand people, one third of Gaza's inhabitants, were internally displaced with most having to rely on some kind of emergency food assistance—bearing in mind that prior to the assault, already 1.4 million Gazans were food insecure owing to the siege.

The damage to Gaza's infrastructure was also staggering. Some fifty-five thousand homes were either totally destroyed or severely damaged, fruit orchards leveled, and seventeen thousand hectares of croplands flattened. According to the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the agricultural infrastructure that was obliterated included "greenhouses, irrigation systems, animal farms, fodder stocks, and fishing boats," along with half of the territory's poultry stocks.¹

Livestock, dairies, chicken coops, over two hundred manufacturing facilities, as well as mosques, TV stations, and university campuses: everything vital to the prosperity and development of the economy and people's livelihoods was targeted, in line with Israel's 2010 stated blockade goals of ensuring no development and no prosperity in Gaza.² Almost half of Gaza's hospitals have been closed.³ It is difficult to grasp the magnitude of the disaster as Gaza rebuilds: farmers without farms, students without classrooms, youth without prospects, workers with no factories, fathers without jobs, children without mothers, mothers without children . . .

But clearly figures paint only part of the picture. After all is said and done, however many of them may be killed, hurt, beaten, displaced, injured, starved, or maimed, Palestinians remain human beings. As obvious as these words may seem, they cannot be overstated. Faced with a regime whose modus operandi is to dehumanize its enemy by equating children with human cannon fodder, legitimate resistance with terrorism, and hospitals with military installations, it becomes more critical than ever to return our attention to the human element, to stop using figures and hyperbole, and instead to speak of faces and of dreams, of the desires and of ordinary moments in the everyday struggle to remain human, even if all of these are indissociable from the greater political issues.

Israel's summer assault on Gaza, like those that came before, spared nothing and no one. Men, women, children, and even animals were targeted. What distinguished it from others was the accompanying discourse which held the defenseless, stateless, besieged population targeted