

Even Survival Is Resistance: Life and Loss under Genocide in Northern Gaza

May 5, 2025 Articles, Features



Palestinian barbers gave free haircut to children ahead of Eid Al-Fitr. (Photo: Mahmoud Ajjour, The Palestine Chronicle)

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By Noor Alyacoubi – Gaza

Yet still, they try. Because here, in Gaza, even survival is a form of resistance.

In the narrow alleyways of northern Gaza, where homes have crumbled and futures hang in limbo, a generation of Palestinians is fighting not just to survive, but to live with dignity.

Dreams are deferred, educations halted, and businesses buried under rubble, yet young people press on, burdened with responsibilities far beyond their years.

No Room to Dream

27-year-old Mohammad al-Firi lives in a tent with his wife, young son, and daughter. Their home was flattened in an airstrike.

“I’ve been displaced five, maybe six times,” he told The Palestine Chronicle. “In the last one, I lost everything.”

Before the war, he and his older brother co-owned a barber shop. It was modest, but it provided for both families.

“We weren’t rich, but we were stable,” he said. But the bombing destroyed it all. At first, al-Firi tried going door to door with his clippers, offering haircuts to anyone who’d let him in.

“I was scared every time,” he said. “What if a strike hit while I was inside? But I had to go. I have kids to feed.”

With their father in prison, al-Firi and his brother now also provide for their mother and sisters. Eventually, they scraped together enough to set up a makeshift shop in a tent on top of the rubble.

“We paid 1,400 shekels for a clipper that used to cost 100,” al-Firi explained. But nothing else is there—no mirror, no chair, no combs, no generator.

The heat, the flies, the lack of power—it all drives customers off. “People see the setup and walk away,” al-Firi told us, adding:

“Before the war, we were doing okay. Now, we can’t even afford food.”

Still, al-Firi opens the tent each day, cleans his tools, and waits. “We don’t have room to dream right now. We just try to survive.”

Living Day by Day

Just streets away, 23-year-old Mohammad Afana spends his days on top of his family’s shattered home in Jabalia refugee camp, one of the most devastated areas of the war.

Before everything fell apart, he studied law at Al-Azhar University and worked part-time with his father and brothers at their frozen meat shop—a testament to his sense of responsibility.

Then the war began, and life stopped. His studies were suspended. The family business shut down.

“At first, we tried to keep it going,” Afana told us, “but soon there was no meat, no chickens. The borders closed. The blockade tightened. We had no supply.”

Trying to adapt, Afana opened a juice stand—just a fridge and a simple plan to survive the heat. But essentials like sugar quickly became luxuries: “It went from 4 shekels to 60 per kilogram. People couldn’t afford juice. We had to shut it down.”

With his father battling cancer in Egypt and his mother gone with him, Afana and his brothers took on the full weight of the family. Though unmarried, he bore the same responsibilities as his older siblings.

“We had no choice. We had to support each other,” he said.

They tried reselling aid packages, a makeshift hustle in Gaza's collapsing economy. It worked for a while—until daily price fluctuations made it impossible.

“One day, we had something to sell. The next, nothing,” Afana explained.

Then came a new idea. Using two solar panels they'd bought months before, they set up a small phone-charging station next to the ruins of their home. Neighbors bring phones, LED lights, and laptops—for a small fee.

With Gaza's power grid crippled, solar energy has become a lifeline. But it, too, is out of reach for most. No panels have entered the Strip since October 7, and prices have soared.

“The income is so limited,” Afana says. “If the sun is strong, we make a little. If it's cloudy, we earn nothing. We live day by day.”

He pauses, then adds, “Still, we're thankful for every day we live.”

The Economic Collapse

Since October 2023, Gaza's unemployment rate has soared past 70%. Whole industries—construction, education, retail—have vanished. Food prices have doubled. Fuel is nonexistent. Electricity, when available at all, lasts only hours.

In this economic vacuum, young Gazans are turning to informal, fragile means of survival. Aid is inconsistent. Blocked crossings and logistical chaos make it nearly impossible for supplies to enter.

Afana and al-Firi's stories echo across Gaza. Each destroyed home, each shuttered shop, each interrupted education adds to a growing weight that can't be measured in numbers alone. It's measured in lost time, fractured futures, and stolen peace.

Yet still, they try. Because here, in Gaza, even survival is a form of resistance.

(The Palestine Chronicle)