

Anonymous Gazans on Hamas

Reported by Mudar Zahran

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A., a Fatah member in Gaza

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T., former Hamas Ministry officer.

"They would fire rockets and then run away quickly, leaving us to face Israeli bombs for what they did."

D., Gazan journalist

"Hamas imposed a curfew: anyone walking out in the street was shot. That way people *had* to stay in their homes, even if they were about to get bombed. Hamas held the whole Gazan population as a human shield."

K., graduate student

"The Israeli army allows supplies to come in and Hamas steals them. It seems even the Israelis care for us more than Hamas."

E., first-aid volunteer

"We are under Hamas occupation, and if you ask most of us, we would rather be under Israeli occupation... We miss the days when we were able to work inside Israel and make good money. We miss the security and calm Israel provided when it was here."

S., graduate of an American university, former Hamas sympathizer.

"There were two major protests against Hamas during the third week of the war. When Hamas fighters opened fire at the protesters in the Bait Hanoun area and the Shijaiya, five were killed instantly. I saw that with my own eyes. Many were injured. A doctor at Shifa hospital told me that 35 were killed at both protests. He went and saw their bodies at the morgue."

D, a store owner

"Hamas did kill protesters, no doubt about that. But we could not confirm how many were actually killed. If I have to guess, the number was more than reported. I am confident that not all of the 21 men Hamas killed on August 22

were collaborating with Israel. Hamas killed those men because it was weakened by Israel's attacks and felt endangered. So it went on a 'Salem Witch-Hunt.' They arrested everyone who opposed them and had to make a few examples to scare people from standing against Hamas. Hamas's tactic worked. Now Gazans are afraid to talk against Hamas even in front of their own family members. Gazans are probably afraid to criticize Hamas even in their sleep!"

Gazan academic, a PhD. from a Western university

"Taha was already in Hamas's jail before Israeli operations started. Hamas imprisoned him and tortured him because he was critical of its radical policies. He had warned Hamas not to cooperate with Qatar and Iran. Eye-witnesses said they saw Hamas militants bring him alive into the yard of Shifa hospital in Gaza and shoot him dead. They kept mutilating his body in front of viewers and little children and left it on the hospital's yard for a few hours before allowing the staff to take it to the morgue."

Gazan political activist

"Even before the Israeli operation began, Hamas rounded up 400 of our members and other political-opposition figures. I would not be surprised if Hamas kills them all and then claims they were killed in an Israeli bombing. Hamas already beheaded a man known for opposing its views on the 22nd day of the war, then reported on its Facebook page that he was caught sending intelligence information to Israel. If Hamas does not like you for any reason, all they have to do now is claim you are a Mossad agent and kill you."

A., a Fatah member in Gaza, spoke over Skype

"The Israeli army sends warnings to people [Gazans] to evacuate buildings before an attack. The Israelis either call or send a text message. Sometimes they call several times to make sure everyone has been evacuated. Hamas's strict policy, though, was not to allow us to evacuate. Many people got killed, locked inside their homes by Hamas militants. Hamas's official Al-Quds TV regularly issued warnings to Gazans not to evacuate their homes. Hamas militants would block the exits to the places residents were asked to evacuate. In the Shijaiya area, people received warnings from the Israelis and tried to evacuate the area, but Hamas militants blocked the exits and ordered people to return to their homes. Some of the people had no choice but to run towards the Israelis and ask for protection for their families. Hamas shot some of those people as they were running; the rest were forced to return to their homes and get bombed. This is how the Shijaiya massacre happened. More than 100 people were killed."

S. a medical worker:

" Hamas fired rockets from next to homes. Hamas was running from one home to another. Hamas lied when it claimed it was shooting from non-populated areas. To make things even worse for us, Hamas would fire from the balconies of homes and try to drag the Israelis into door-to-door battles and street-to-street fights -- a death sentence for all the civilians here. They would fire rockets and then run away quickly, leaving us to face Israeli bombs for what they did. They are cowards. If Hamas militants are not afraid of dying, why do they run after they fire rockets from our homes? Why don't they stay and die with us? Are they afraid to die and go to heaven? Isn't that what they claim they wish?"

D., Gazan journalist

"When people stopped listening to Hamas orders not to evacuate and began leaving their homes anyway, Hamas imposed a curfew: anyone walking out in the street was shot without being asked any questions. That way Hamas made sure people *had* to stay in their homes even if they were about to get bombed. God will ask Hamas on judgment day for those killers' blood.... Hamas held the entire Gazan population as a human shield."

K, another graduate student at an Egyptian university who had gone to Gaza to see his family but was unable to leave after the war started

" Hamas fires from civilian areas for a good reason: The Israelis call the civilians and give them ten minutes to evacuate. This gives Hamas time to fire another rocket and run away.... Some people say Hamas wants civilians killed in order to gain global sympathy, but I believe this is not the main reason. I think the reason is that if all the people were allowed to evacuate their homes, they all would have ended up in a certain area in Gaza. If that happened, it would have made the rest of Gaza empty of civilians, and the Israelis would have been able to hit Hamas without worrying about civilians in all those empty areas. Hamas wanted civilians all over the place to confuse the Israelis and make their operations more difficult."

T., a former Hamas Ministry officer

"The cease-fire Hamas agreed to carried the same conditions the Egyptians and the Israelis offered during the second week of the war -- after only 160 Gazans had been killed. Why did Hamas have to wait until 2,200 were killed, and then accept the very same offer? Hamas has blackmailed the world with the killed Gazan civilians to make itself look like a freedom fighter against an evil Israel."

Hamas showed Gazans that it could not care less for their blood and their children. And why should Hamas care? Its leaders are either in mansions in Qatar or villas in Jordan. Mashaal [Khaled Mashaal, the head of Hamas] is in Qatar, Mohammad Nazzal is in Jordan and Abu Marzouk is in Cairo: why should they want a ceasefire? Everyone here in Gaza is wondering why Hamas rejected so many ceasefires. Hamas knows it will not defeat Israel's army, so why did it continue fighting? The answer is simple: Hamas wanted us butchered so it could win the media war against Israel by showing our dead children on TV and then get money from Qatar....Gazans are not stupid. We are now telling Hamas: Either you bring victory and liberate Palestine as you claim, or simply leave Gaza and maybe give it back to the Palestinian Authority or even Israel -- or even Egypt! We have had enough of Hamas's hallucinations and promises that never come true."

S., a Gazan businessman

"Most of us see Hamas as too radical and too stubborn, especially the way it was refusing ceasefires offered from Israel. They even refused a 24-hour ceasefire during the third week of the war. They denied us even 24 hours of quiet to bury the dead. Even some Hamas loyalists here are asking why Hamas refused several ceasefires and made us suffer. Hamas did this on purpose because Hamas is a slave to Qatar. Qatar wants the war to go on because it is a terrorist Islamist country, and Hamas wants more of us dead to appease its masters in Qatar. Let's be realistic, Hamas is in a bad shape now. Israel destroyed most tunnels; that is why Hamas had to join the ceasefire talks in Cairo. Were the Israelis' hits to Hamas not so painful, Hamas would not be negotiating in the first place. At the same time, Hamas is asking Israel for the impossible, like an open seaport and an airport. Israel would never allow that, and Hamas knows this, but Hamas might just be buying time by throwing out these demands. You have to keep in mind that Hamas is not concerned with our conditions as Gazans. After all it is our children who are dying, not the children of Hamas's leaders. Hamas is weak now, and I believe it lost most of its tunnels. Israel's Iron Dome destroyed so many of their rockets before they landed in Israel; that is why Hamas is being ruthless with Gazans. When Hamas locks people inside homes about to be bombed, when it kills people protesting against it and when it executes alleged traitors without even a trial, these are war crimes."

O., a researcher who lives in Gaza Strip's second largest city, Khan Younis

"I do not know a single Gazan who is pro-Hamas at the moment, except for those on its payroll. Hamas maintains its control here through a military

dictatorship, just like North Korea. People will be killed if they protest. Even Gazans living abroad fear to criticize Hamas because Hamas will take revenge on their relatives who are here."

A., a teacher (Washington Institute, July 2014)

"Of course I am against Israel and I want it out of Gaza and out of the West Bank, but I still believe Hamas is more of a threat to the Palestinian people. Hamas took over Gaza by killing us [Palestinians] and throwing our young men from high buildings. That is what Hamas is about: murder and power. Hamas is also delusional. Its leaders refused the Egyptian cease-fire proposal, they got hit hard by the Israelis, and then when the war stopped, they declared victory. Even the prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, admitted it when he lost Ohoud war [A war in which pagan Arabs defeated Muhammad's army and in which Muhammad was almost killed]. Hamas lives in its own fantasy world. Hamas wanted the dead bodies to make Israel look ugly. The media has exerted a huge pressure on Israel for every dead Gazan. In that sense, Hamas's tactic has worked, and we have seen more Western tolerance of Hamas, especially in Europe. Of course Hamas doesn't care if we all die so long as it achieves its goals. We are not going to accept living under Hamas any longer. Even if there is calm, and the firing stops, we are going to still be under Hamas's mercy, where all basic living standards are considered luxuries. Hamas is just buying time by going to the ceasefire talks. Hamas does not want a ceasefire....[Why?] Qatar's Sheikh... is Hamas's god who gives them billions and tells them what to do. May God curse Qatar!"

M., a Gazan television producer

"This theft [of 150 truckloads of aid donated by charities in the West Bank the day before], angers all of us [Gazans]. The Israeli army allows supplies to come in, and Hamas steals them. It seems even the Israelis care for us more than Hamas."

E., a first-aid volunteer

"They [Hamas] take most of it, sell it to us, and just give us the stuff they do not want."

A., another aid worker

"Gazans are thirsty and Hamas is stealing the water bottles provided to us for free and selling them at 20 Israeli shekels [approximately \$5] for the big bottle and 10 Israeli shekels for the small one."

A Gazan mosque's imam

" Hamas was [responsible for his losing a leg]. My father received a text-message from the Israeli army warning him that our area was going to be bombed, and Hamas prevented us from leaving. They said there was a curfew. A curfew, can you believe that? I swear to God, we will take revenge on Hamas. I swear to God I will stand on my other foot and fight against Hamas. Even if Israel leaves them alone, we will not. What had my two-year-old nephew done to be killed under the rubble of our home so Khaled Mashaal [Hamas leader based in Qatar] could be happy? We want change at any cost. I am not claiming the Israelis are innocent, but I know Hamas has fired rockets from every residential spot in Gaza. If that was not hiding behind civilians, then it was stupidity and recklessness. Nobody who is normal, in his right mind, in Gaza supports Hamas. People have lost parents, children and friends, and have nothing more to lose. I believe if given the chance and the weapons, they will stand against Hamas."

H.

"When Hamas starts caring for our children we will start caring for Hamas. Hamas has one policy, to attack Israel; so Israel attacks back, and gets us killed and Hamas then gets more money from Arabs and Erdogan [Turkey's president]. My son has autism; he cannot handle the sounds of rockets and bombs landing. Why would I support Hamas, which causes this suffering to him? Gazans have had enough of Hamas, any claims that we love Hamas is just propaganda. A [recent poll](#) indicates that most of us support Hamas; this is not true, except maybe in the West Bank where they have not yet lived under Hamas rule. I cannot accuse the polling center of fabricating the poll, but my safest explanation for the result is that Gazans polled are too afraid to give their true opinions of Hamas. Hamas watches everything here. Most Gazans now have to deal with the aftermath of the war. Almost 300,000 Gazans are now homeless and Hamas is not providing them with anything. So why would they or their extended families have any love for Hamas? Would there be any common sense to that? Most Gazans are angry at Hamas, and most of us would love to see them replaced by any other force."

K., a Gazan school teacher

"Don't get fooled. Gazans are not in love with Israel yet, but they do not want to fight Israel anymore. We do not want to embrace Israel; we just want to live normally without wars. We want to live and work in Israel like we used to. We are under Hamas occupation, and if you ask most of us, we would rather be under Israeli occupation, instead. I would welcome Netanyahu to rule Gaza so

long as Hamas leaves, and I think most Gazans feel the same way. We miss the days when we were able to work inside Israel and make good money, we miss the security and calm Israel provided when it was here, but politically speaking, we just think of it as the better of two evils: Israel and Hamas."

S., a graduate of an American university and a former Hamas sympathizer

"I will not forgive either Hamas or Israel for losing my daughter. If you ask me if I hate Israelis, my answer would be no, but do I love them? Of course not. There is too much blood between us, but I can only hope someday we both will move on and heal our wounds."

M., who lost his 11 year old daughter in an Israeli bombing

"I wish Israel never existed, but as it does not seem to be going away, I would rather be working in Israel like I used to before the first Intifada, not fighting it. Hamas sympathizers, apologists and appeasers should be ashamed of themselves for supporting a terrorist organization that has butchered civilians, Israeli and Palestinian. Apparently a group of Israelis is working on bringing Hamas leader Khaled Mashaal to trial in the International Criminal Court. But perhaps the world should consider putting all the Hamas leaders on trial for crimes against the Gazan people."

F., a Gazan physician