

---

# EVERY MOMENT IS A LIFE

---

## Gaza in the Time of Genocide

Compiled by  
**susan abulhawa**

Editors  
**susan abulhawa | English**  
**Huzama Habayeb | Arabic**

Translators  
**susan abulhawa**  
**Kay Heikkinen**

A Collaboration Project Between  
Palestine Writes and the Culture and Free Thought Association

**ONE SIGNAL  
PUBLISHERS**

**ATRIA**

NEW YORK AMSTERDAM/ANTWERP LONDON  
TORONTO SYDNEY/MELBOURNE NEW DELHI



**Lubna Meqdad** holds a degree in Arabic language from Al-Aqsa University. She worked as a high school teacher for an educational initiative during the genocide. She is an advocate and activist for children, and leads creative writing training for young women.

لبنى مقداد، حاصلة على درجة البكالوريوس في اللغة العربية من جامعة الأقصى. عملت معلّمة لطلبة الثانوية العامة ضمن مبادرة تعليمية أثناء الإبادة الجماعية. وهي ناشطة تقوم بالعديد من المبادرات للأطفال، ومدربة للكتابة الابداعية لليافعات.



**Maram Hammou** is a general surgery medical student. She wants to use science as a tool to serve humanity, to create a bridge of knowledge toward a better life for communities in need.

مرام حمو، طالبة طب بشري وجراحة عامة، تسعى إلى استخدام العلم كأداة لخدمة الإنسانية، وبناء جسر من المعرفة نحو حياة أفضل للمجتمعات المحتاجة.

## From Tent to Tent

By Lubna Meqdad

On the sixty-seventh day of the genocide, we fled our family home in Hamad City to a patch of farmland in Mawasi, Khan Younis, where dozens of displacement tents had sprung up, planted like grief in the soil.

We settled in a tent built by members of our extended family—my uncle and his sons—using white nylon sheeting and wood planks. It had two sections. The men's area contained an old, worn rug for sleeping, a wooden table holding kitchen and cooking wares, a gas burner beside it, and, beneath the table, some canned foods—rations we were forced to purchase, even though they were supposed to be distributed for free to displaced families like us.

The women's side is where we slept on a straw mat with a few blankets. There were sacks of flour we'd bought at exorbitant prices, after two months of Israel's siege without even a handful of flour available in the markets.

Dividing the two sections hung a tattered blanket, a flimsy partition between the men and women.

To the back of the tent, a wall enclosed the farm. We placed a few possessions there, things we'd salvaged from our house—now only a memory. We women shared our bedding with the children for warmth. My pillow was the coat I wore everywhere. My fingers were cracked from the cold, my hands were rough and weary from

forced displacement, and my head pounded from the ceaseless buzzing of drones overhead. When I finally collapsed at the end of the day, I would lie awake, reflecting on what had befallen me, my city, my life.

Khan Younis—a city as lovely as a bride in constant splendor—was slowly becoming rubble. Every day I watched residential buildings crushed like shells folding into themselves, towers reduced to mountains of debris, streets emptied of breath. Between one tent and another were stories unfinished. Lives inching toward their end. Memories forged by pain.

One night, precisely at 7:00 p.m., missiles began raining down from sea, land, and sky. We didn't know where they were landing, or what was happening outside our tent. Contacting relatives in other displacement areas wasn't easy. Most of the time, we relied on broadcast news channels, but that too was difficult, because electricity had been cut off almost entirely from the first hours of the aggression.

We lingered in shock, unsure what to do, hoping for clarity as fires blazed where missiles hit nearby. The air filled with the stench of white phosphorus, suffocating us.

The Israeli occupation army invaded our area without evacuation warnings. Tanks and bulldozers advanced from the hill known as Al-Muharrarat. Their vehicles pushed forward into the farmland that had been our refuge. Tanks fired shells at people cowering in tents. An armored vehicle loaded with soldiers flying a yellow flag\* approached the gates of the farm. We heard rockets whistling from every direction. The screech of bullets and shells pierced the air again and again.

Still, despite our fear and dread, my younger cousin and I cooked a meal—canned “luncheon” meat, the sort we scorned

---

\*The yellow flag is the emblem of Chabad, an orthodox Jewish movement that opposes the existence of Palestinians in land claimed by Israel.

before the genocide, mixed with bell peppers, onions, and spices. We stirred it over a slow fire, poured it into a broad white dish, and served it with some green olives.

Though humble and simple, the food was delicious. We just wanted to eat together. The tanks had drawn closer, and we knew we could meet our maker at any moment.

The shelling intensified. We decided to have our Nescafé—a habit we refused to give up, even though supplies of it had been cut off when the borders closed. We served it alongside all the kinds of biscuits we'd managed to buy—cravings born in wartime—even though these same biscuits were supposed to be part of the free food aid offered to our hungry people.

By 9:00 p.m., the roar of the Israeli tanks had grown louder. Still, we laughed and joked together. Some of our relatives were shocked that we were so set on preparing supper and had such an appetite for coffee and cookies while the Israeli military was rolling toward us. What surprised them most was our absurd laughter—we, who'd been forced from our home, narrowly escaping being buried alive under the rubble, to a place we believed would be safe.

We heard someone yell, "Help! Help!"

It was our neighbor Abu Bassam, from next to the farm. A tank shell had penetrated the wall where he sat, shrapnel striking him and his children. But we couldn't help, and soon his cries stopped. We don't know what became of him and his family. Had any of the neighbors managed to save them?

From our vantage, Israeli fire rained all around. It was nearly impossible to leave. The Israeli armored vehicle with the yellow flag was right at the gate, promising more killing. The firing didn't stop. It wrapped our night in blood. None of us expected to survive.

At first light, we peered through the holes the shells had blown in the gate. No tanks. No bulldozers. My uncle ventured

out to see who was left in the area. He found an old man in a white galabia, his bearded face pale, cowering in fear that a sniper or hovering quadcopter might pick him off. He had returned to retrieve some of his things and warned us that an Israeli tank was dug in on the hill, watching. The other tanks were advancing toward the Al-Khair Hospital in Al-Mawasi. He urged us to evacuate immediately.

His words sent panic through us. At first, we were too afraid to move, terrified of the drone above shooting anything that moved. But we had to go.

We gathered our belongings and went out in groups—so that if the first group was struck, the second might survive to collect our remains. That's what we thought.

I left with my sisters and female cousins, walking cautiously through the alleyways. After enough time had passed to ensure that we had survived, the second group followed.

The tents and homes nearby had been burned to the ground. I saw craters from the shells that had hit Abu Bassam's house and later inquired about him. "He and his children were taken to the Abu Yusuf al-Najjar Hospital in Rafah," they said.

People stared at us, wide-eyed in astonishment, when we made it out. They couldn't believe we had survived after everything that had happened to us the night before.

We crossed more than 5 kilometers on foot, walking on a road packed with others fleeing Khan Younis to Rafah, hoping it might be safer.

In the crush of the large crowds, my sister and I became separated from the rest of our family. We decided to continue on to the Shakoush neighborhood in Mawasi, Rafah—a place my uncle had mentioned—hoping we'd reunite there. She and I stopped to rest after hours of walking and glancing over our shoulders. We sat with other displaced people, watching the road and try-

ing to reach our siblings or any member of the family. To no avail.

Finally, after nightfall, we made contact and found each other. Together, we built a new tent and slept close to one another. If death came, we would go together. And if life allowed, we would go on together.