

The Agony of Uprooting from Gaza: “Evacuation is killing me... I feel like my heart will explode”



Under a barrage of heavy shelling, Israel’s plan to fully occupy the Gaza Strip is entering new phases of execution, with particular focus on the areas surrounding Gaza City the primary target of what decision-making circles in Tel Aviv are calling “Operation Gideon’s Chariots 2.” The operation aims for total destruction, territorial control, and the depopulation of the area to prevent any return.

In this context, the people of Gaza are reliving their most harrowing nightmare: forced displacement. Once again, they are being pushed to abandon what remains of their homes and tents and head south. This scenario lies at the heart of Israel’s stated goals in its widening offensive.

But the fears go far beyond the pain and hardship of the journey. This time, displacement feels final. The nature of the military advance has shifted to long-term entrenchment, sealing neighborhoods off from their residents and making return nearly impossible. It is this permanence the threat that this might be the last time they see their homes that intensifies the anguish and makes the nightmare feel endless.

Gaza City’s residents now teeter between fragmentation and fear of an uncertain

future. They dread losing their city once the beating heart of the Strip. Even with destruction all around, the emotional toll of possibly losing Gaza surpasses hunger, displacement, and relentless bombing. It is a layered grief, where all emotions merge into one.

Hearts on the Verge of Explosion

Emotions in Gaza run the gamut from exhaustion and despair to longing and disbelief. Many find themselves unable to articulate what they feel. Some refuse to leave what remains of their homes or neighborhoods, unwilling to endure the trauma of displacement again.

Um Al-Mu'taz, a resident of Gaza City, says: “Every time I hear the words ‘Evacuate Gaza,’ I feel like my heart is going to explode. I look at my home—built with tears and years of hard work and I can’t bear the thought of leaving it. I know the next phase means wiping out what’s left of the city.”

She continues: “I walk through Gaza’s streets—the ones I love—and tell myself: this could be the last time I walk here. The sound of artillery in Al-Zaytoun and Al-Sabra tells me what’s coming is worse.”

Speaking to Noon Post, she adds: “I want to take a handful of sand from each street and label it, just to keep a piece with me. I take pictures of my children in every corner so the memories remain.” On the idea of displacement, she says: “The fear of forced evacuation is killing me. I can’t bear to go through this all over again—it’s painful in every way.”

She concludes: “Gaza isn’t just a city. We love it. We love its details... even its rubble. Gaza is my soul. And if we’re forced to leave, it will always remain our homeland and our longing no matter what.”

Survival, and Nothing Else

With packed bags near the doors and constantly changing evacuation maps, the people of Gaza are consumed by a single question: how do we survive? They know this pain all too well, but this time they face it exhausted, for longer, and under the most violent threat yet.

Mahmoud Mustafa tells Noon Post: “The idea of going through displacement again is terrifying. We’ve been through it so many times since the start of this war from Gaza to Khan Younis to Rafah to Deir al-Balah then back to Gaza during the last ceasefire. Each time, my family and I were just trying to survive... survive, and nothing more.”

He adds: “This time felt different—we thought displacement was over when we returned to Gaza. Now everything’s changed. Khan Younis is destroyed. Rafah is destroyed. Even finding a spot to pitch a tent is nearly impossible.”

On the toll this has taken, he continues: “This genocide has completely worn us out. We have no strength left for another displacement. I live in a state of internal denial—as if none of this is really happening. I just can’t go through it again.”

While the decision to stay or go echoes through households, small bags are packed with essential documents, children’s medications, a light blanket, a bottle of water, and a final phone charge just in case. In a city caught between fronts, the plan can be summed up in two words: just survive.

Waiting for a Fragile Ceasefire

In Gaza, pain is not limited to a single choice or type. Every moment, every detail, becomes a new layer of agony and depletion. As the war nears its second year, Gazans continue to stare death in the face, seeking whatever life they can salvage, even as death has loomed since day one.

What they face is an enemy with no limit to its crimes, seemingly following a manual of atrocities committed under the glaring indifference, if not outright approval, of a cruel world.

Ramiz Hassan, a schoolteacher, tells Noon Post: “The most painful part of every escalation is the repeated displacement and constant uprooting. For a moment, you think you’ve survived, but each time you flee, it takes something from your soul, your health, your life.”

He adds: “It’s gotten to the point that my health is deteriorating. Whenever we settle in one place, I eat compulsively. But the moment there’s a rumor of displacement, I lose my appetite, my nerves fray, and arguments erupt over the smallest things.”

On the looming threat of another military campaign aimed at completing the takeover and destruction of Gaza City, Hassan says: “I will hold on until the very last breath, clinging to a lifeline called ‘ceasefire.’ That’s our only hope to stop what’s happening to us.”

He adds: “Sadly, each round of violence comes with new ways to torment us... to dismantle our lives piece by piece.” He sighs: “In a normal world, each day is better than the one before. But in our world—the world of genocide unknown to the rest of humanity—yesterday is better than today, and today is better than a tomorrow we can’t even imagine.”

We Will Survive... To Live Here

At the end of a road paved with alarms and signs of forced displacement, one question hangs over Gaza: Can a city be uprooted from the hearts of its people? Gazans know death is at their door and that maps are redrawn by the hour. But they also know that cities are not carried on shoulders—they’re carried in

memory and in the refusal to leave.

On the edges of alleyways that have become frontlines, fragments of life pile up: a school notebook soaked in mud, baby medicine in a plastic bag, an old photo of a house now reduced to rubble. These remnants are more than nostalgia—they are declarations of resistance against uprooting. A silent vow: We will preserve this place so it doesn't disappear.

New routes may open to a narrow south that cannot hold such vast hearts. Borders might even be redrawn within the city itself. But in every home, the same refrain echoes: “We want to live here.” This is not a slogan—it's a decision repeated in quiet, difficult choices: sleeping with shoes on just in case, yet still insisting on preparing a simple breakfast every morning; writing down names and phone numbers on children's arms.

This is why every call for “evacuation” via a so-called “safe route” feels like a contradiction both linguistic and existential. Real safety lies not in leaving, but in halting the killing, criminalizing starvation, stopping displacement, and opening a path for the dignified return of the uprooted. Unless that truth is heard, Gaza will continue to repeat it in the voice of its people, not in political statements.

Gaza today stands on the brink of a decision meant to be final. But its people have made a different kind of choice—both temporary and permanent: We will survive... to live here. And even if forced to leave, they will leave a trail of sand behind them—a glowing path of return that will shimmer in memory, no matter how far they are pushed away.