

Nights of Fear in the West Bank: How Palestinian Families Cope With Night Raids





Kifaya Khreim, international advocacy coordinator at the Women's Center for Legal Aid and Counseling

The Palestinian night is no longer a time for rest. Instead, it has become an hour of constant anticipation and fear, as families face a relentless pattern of nightly raids and arrests that threaten their sense of security and psychological and social stability. Within this harsh reality, stories of resilience emerge particularly among women and children striving to adapt to repeated violations despite overwhelming hardship.

In this interview, NoonPost speaks with Kifaya Khreim, international advocacy coordinator at the Women's Center for Legal Aid and Counseling (WCLAC). She recounts the experiences of Palestinian families and explains the daily challenges women face as they strive to protect their children and preserve family stability.

Across the West Bank, nighttime raids have become a routine part of life, reshaping patterns of sleep, work, and social interaction while leaving deep psychological, economic, and social scars that extend far beyond the moment of the raid itself.

Amid these violations, a pressing question remains: how can the international community and human rights institutions support these families and strengthen their resilience in the face of ongoing occupation policies? This interview sheds

light on aspects of Palestinian reality that often remain outside media coverage, underscoring the urgent need for sustained solidarity and support.

How have repeated night raids changed families' sense of safety inside their homes?

Through field researchers working with the center, interviews and field visits were conducted with women in the West Bank—including Jerusalem—as well as in the Gaza Strip. The goal was to document the impact of home raids and other Israeli violations against women and their families, drawing on direct testimonies and field-based evidence.

Since the beginning of 2022, following the election of what many observers describe as Israel's most far-right government, there has been a marked increase in home raids conducted both day and night. Nighttime incursions in particular have surged across the West Bank without exception. After October 7 and the subsequent attacks on the Gaza Strip, these violations have taken on new and more severe forms.

Typically, raids take place after 2 a.m., involving between 30 and 40 soldiers storming homes. They are often accompanied by trained dogs released inside the house among women, children, and other residents, with little regard for age, illness, or humanitarian considerations.

These operations frequently involve multiple forms of violence, including beatings of family members, forced stripping, and invasive searches. Testimonies also document cases of sexual assault. Incidents of theft have been recorded as well, including the confiscation of women's gold and cash found inside homes.

Doors are broken down, furniture is deliberately smashed not for the purpose of search but destruction apparently intended to inflict the greatest possible harm on the family. In some cases, food supplies have been destroyed or mixed together, in addition to physical assaults.

The effects of these practices do not end with the raid itself. Rather, they erode families' sense of safety within their own homes and leave deep psychological, social, and economic consequences especially for women and children.

Has nighttime become a source of fear and anticipation rather than rest for Palestinian families?

In many areas, night has become a time of persistent terror. Palestinian families report living in constant anxiety after dark. Some avoid locking their doors for fear they will be destroyed during raids, as soldiers frequently break doors when entering homes forcing families to repeatedly bear the cost of replacing them.

In other cases, residents leave their doors open to facilitate soldiers' entry, a

stark reflection of the level of fear experienced by both children and adults.

The psychological toll on children has been severe. Documented cases include bedwetting, sleep disturbances, and persistent fear throughout the night. Adults, meanwhile, live in a constant state of vigilance, monitoring their homes and struggling to sleep or feel secure.

The impact extends beyond psychological distress. Social life has also been disrupted. Some families report avoiding visitors or community activities out of fear of sudden raids, leading to greater isolation and compounding psychological, social, and economic pressures.

How do Palestinian families take precautionary measures to adapt to night raids?

Families have developed coping mechanisms to prepare for potential raids. Many sleep fully dressed to remain ready for sudden intrusions inside the home. Clothes and essential belongings are often kept close at hand in case of an unexpected raid or arrest, particularly for individuals previously detained because of humanitarian, journalistic, or legal work.

Some family members remain awake throughout the night, watching for movement inside or around the house due to the frequent repetition of raids carried out by Israeli soldiers and settlers.

How does sleep disruption caused by night raids affect people's ability to go to work or school?

Almost no Palestinian household has been untouched by this experience. Many families find themselves unable to carry out normal daily activities the following day whether going to work, attending school, or performing routine tasks because of ongoing psychological and physical exhaustion.

In some cases, individuals attempt to continue their day as usual, relying on a remarkable capacity for resilience and behaving as if nothing had happened despite the profound psychological impact.

Unfortunately, effective psychological support mechanisms are often lacking for families subjected to repeated violations. This underscores the urgent need to strengthen community support institutions capable of mitigating the psychological and social consequences of these ongoing raids.

How do raids and the arrest of a family's main breadwinner affect economic and social stability?

Palestinian families face broad economic, social, and psychological repercussions as a result of night raids particularly when the primary breadwinner is arrested or property is destroyed.

Violations include the confiscation of cash, gold, and jewelry, as well as the destruction of food supplies and household property. Television screens and furniture are broken, rendering homes barely habitable. Documented cases also include car theft, the burning of crops by settlers, the destruction of trees, and the killing or theft of livestock intensifying the economic burden on families that rely on agriculture as their primary source of income.

Arrests—of both men and women—have devastating effects on families. Relatives and lawyers are often unable to visit prisons or check on detainees. Families experience severe psychological stress due to limited information about detention conditions, including reports of deprivation of food, medicine, and clothing, as well as humiliation and torture of prisoners, according to multiple human rights reports.

These violations intersect to create a climate of psychological and social terror, alongside direct economic harm that makes it extremely difficult for families to maintain daily life or preserve a basic level of stability.

How do raids affect the role of women within Palestinian families?

Women bear the heaviest burden in confronting the consequences of raids and violations. In circumstances involving arrests, home invasions, or the killing of a family member, women often become the family's central pillar responsible for providing food, care, and emotional support for children and the elderly while maintaining family cohesion amid fear and despair.

Even after homes are demolished or property destroyed, women continue to perform these responsibilities under extremely harsh conditions. Although men and women work together to cope with the damage, the burden on women often multiplies dramatically, making them enduring symbols of resilience and perseverance despite immense hardship.

Do raids affect people's participation in social and community activities?

Repeated raids have wide-ranging social consequences. Families' ability to attend social events or visit areas subject to nighttime incursions, closures, and military checkpoints has diminished significantly.

Persistent fear discourages people from attending social gatherings or moving freely between villages and cities, gradually fostering social isolation and weakening community bonds.

In areas such as Masafer Yatta and al-Mughayyir, these effects are even more pronounced. Frequent closures and raids have prevented many girls from continuing their education. In some cases, families feel compelled to arrange early marriages for their daughters outside these areas to protect them from

risks on the road or potential attacks by settlers and soldiers.

What challenges do women face when dealing with their children after night raids?

Women—like men—often feel powerless when trying to shield their children from the trauma of repeated raids. Watching children experience fear or violence during an intrusion makes it extremely difficult for mothers to calm them or restore a sense of safety.

Even if a child is reassured after one incident, the fear quickly returns with the possibility that the experience could recur any night.

These challenges are compounded by the lack of psychological support services in many areas. While some women have been able to access counseling for themselves and their children, many families receive no support at all, intensifying mothers' constant fear for their children, spouses, siblings, and parents.

How do raids and arrests affect women's psychological and social well-being?

Many women suffer symptoms consistent with post-traumatic stress. Persistent anxiety, fear, and dread of leaving home become common, especially as women must often travel through checkpoints where they face threats from Israeli forces.

Reports include beatings, insults, strip searches, and threats of sexual assault or rape, further intensifying feelings of fear and vulnerability.

In some documented cases, women were forced to strip completely during raids as part of systematic humiliation experiences that leave devastating psychological scars and deepen the climate of terror they live under.

Do night raids create tensions or conflicts within families?

Night raids generate immense pressure within Palestinian families. Tensions often rise as parents struggle to protect their children from danger.

In many cases, families prevent their daughters from attending school or work in areas experiencing repeated closures and raids. Researchers have also documented an increase in domestic violence cases, often reflecting the psychological and economic pressures resulting from occupation practices, including repeated home invasions and property theft.

Will these experiences leave lasting effects on children and women?

Children raised amid constant fear and violence face significant challenges in developing basic educational, social, and cultural skills. Fear replaces a sense of safety, undermining their ability to learn and grow in healthy ways.

For women, these experiences create a persistent sense of vulnerability and anxiety that limits educational, economic, and empowerment opportunities. Fear of raids, assaults, or losing a family member imposes severe restrictions on daily life and shapes both their present and future.

How does the local community support families affected by raids?

In many documented cases, local communities show strong solidarity with affected families. Relatives, neighbors, and extended family members often provide moral and financial support to help replace lost resources or repair damaged homes.

Community-led initiatives have emerged to rebuild houses, raise donations, and provide direct assistance often driven by grassroots efforts rather than formal institutions.

What are the broader long-term social impacts?

Night raids and arrests leave lasting effects on the structure of Palestinian families and communities. Military checkpoints, settler attacks, and closures have fragmented local communities, leaving families isolated from one another and weakening mutual support networks.

Although Palestinians repeatedly demonstrate resilience by rebuilding their homes and communities, these ongoing violations leave enduring scars that affect future generations, limiting children's educational and social opportunities and increasing psychological and economic pressures on families.

What social support do families need most?

The most urgent needs are psychological and economic support. Affected families require trauma-informed counseling particularly for women and children as well as solidarity visits from community members or human rights organizations, which can provide reassurance that their suffering is not forgotten.

Economic assistance is also essential to rebuild homes and livelihoods damaged during raids. Equally important is documenting and sharing these stories in the media to amplify their voices globally.

What is your final message to human rights organizations and the international community?

My message to the international community and human rights institutions is the need to continue applying pressure through economic, academic, and diplomatic boycotts on the occupying state, as such measures can have tangible effects on its policies toward Palestinian communities in the West Bank.

Despite declining trust in the international community following the events in

Gaza, it remains important to hold onto hope that international pressure and boycott efforts can contribute to meaningful change.

International institutions can also provide psychological support to affected families and economic assistance for rebuilding homes, strengthening Palestinians' ability to remain resilient on their land. The West Bank particularly areas most exposed to settler violence represents the first line of defense for Palestinian land and presence, and international support remains vital for protecting these communities and reinforcing their resilience.

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