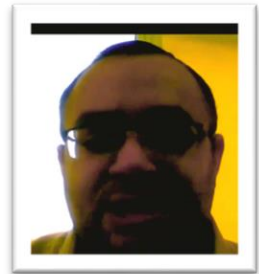


CASE STUDY 27

Azzam

An aid worker from Gaza



Azzam al-Saqqa is a Palestinian aid worker who has lived in Gaza all his life. By 2021, he had been an aid worker for 12 years. He provides humanitarian help to people affected by Israel's blockade of the Gaza Strip and victims of violence. During that time, Israel conducted major military strikes on Gaza in 2008-9, 2012, 2014, 2018 and 2021.

In 2014, Azzam told the Guardian newspaper:

"In Gaza, people do everything too quickly. We go to the toilet too quickly, fearing it will be targeted while we are inside. We do the work too quickly, fearing the offices will be targeted at any time. We distribute food and water quickly, fearing distribution points will be hit. We even pray too quickly, fearing we'll be killed while praying."



Palestinians collect their belongings from under the rubble of a residential tower, which witnesses said was destroyed by an Israeli air strike in Gaza City on 24 August. Credit: UN Photo/Shareef Sarhan. Photo Date: 26/08/2014

"The office is receiving calls for help, writing reports and contacting suppliers. Teams on the ground are delivering the services – it's like a

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beehive. Everyone is busy doing something. I'm so proud of all they are doing."

For 11 days in May 2021, there was a surge centred on Gaza in violence following protests about planned evictions of Palestinians in Jerusalem. Palestinian rockets fired from Gaza killed 12 civilians in Israel and one Israeli soldier. Israel's bombardment of Gaza killed 248 Palestinians, at least 100 of whom were non-combatants.

Speaking to EAPPI soon after a ceasefire brokered by Egypt, Azzam said:

"Every single day of the 11 days that we survived could have been the last day for all of us. Sometimes the shooting was so close that we literally said our last prayer. We had no escape - we don't have bomb shelters in Gaza."

"And every time it's over we say, 'Wow... A new day we've actually survived this!' And there's actually no time to grieve because we are constantly busy worrying about electricity worrying about the internet connection... then we lose water, we get the water, we lose the electricity supply and, like, it's living in that constant fear when you don't even have time to express that fear."

"One of my colleagues, she has like a 6 year old son, who was going to his mother and expressing how guilty he feels for the bombings. He thought that this bombing that we had in Gaza, was because he was not listening to his mom. He was saying, 'Please, mom just let this stop and I promise you I will listen to every word you say.'"

"To live and survive all these atrocities on the ground and for people to have our voices heard, globally, it means so much to me and everyone in Palestine."

"What we really lack in Gaza is an opportunity to demonstrate the talents that we have. So open doors for Palestinians so that we can feel that the blockade is not blockading minds. Even if the borders are closed, let's just like try to build bridges beyond the physical."