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## *History will remember that Israel committed a holocaust*

Although Israel has cut off electricity and the internet, the Palestinians have managed to broadcast a live image of their own genocide to a world that allows it to continue. But history won't lie. He will say that Israel perpetrated a holocaust in the 21st century.



It's 8 p.m. in Gaza, Palestine, at the end of my fourth day in Rafah, and it's the first time I've been able to sit in a quiet place and think.

I've tried taking notes, photos, mental images, but this moment is too big for a notepad or my failed memory. Nothing had prepared me for what I was about to witness.



Before crossing the border between Rafah and Egypt, I read all the news from and about Gaza. I didn't take my eyes off any video or image posted from the field, no matter how horrifying, shocking, or traumatic.

I kept in touch with friends who told me about their situation in the northern, central and southern Gaza Strip, each region suffering differently. I kept abreast of the latest statistics, the latest political, military and economic maneuvers of Israel, the USA and the rest of the world.

I thought I understood the situation on the ground. But it wasn't.

Nothing can really prepare you for this dystopia. What reaches the rest of the world is only a fraction of what I've seen so far, which is only a fraction of the total horror.

Gaza is hell. It's a hell full of innocent people gasping through the air.

But even the air is burned. Each breath scratches and digs into the throat and lungs.

What was once vibrant, colorful, full of beauty, potential, and hope, against all odds, is now covered in gray misery and filth.



There are hardly any trees left

Journalists and politicians talk about war. Informed and honest people talk about genocide. What I see is a holocaust, the incomprehensible culmination of 75 years of Israeli impunity for persistent war crimes.

Rafah is Gaza's southernmost area, where Israel has crammed 1.4 million people into a space the size of London's Heathrow airport.

Water, food, electricity, fuel and supplies are in short supply. Children do not go to school, as their classrooms have become makeshift shelters for tens of thousands of families.

Almost every square inch of empty space is now occupied by a precarious tent housing a family.

There are hardly any trees left, as people have been forced to cut them down for firewood.

I didn't notice the lack of vegetation until I stumbled upon a red bougainvillea. Its flowers were dusty and lonely in a deflowered world, but still alive.

The incongruity shocked me and I stopped the car to photograph it.



Now I look for greenery and flowers wherever I go, so far in the south and center areas (although the central area is becoming more and more difficult to access). But there are only small patches of grass here and there and the occasional tree waiting to be burned to

make bread for a family subsisting on UN rations of canned beans, canned meat and canned cheese.

A proud people, with rich culinary traditions and habits of eating fresh food, has been reduced and accustomed to a handful of pastes and porridges that have been on the shelves for so long that the only thing that can be tasted is the rancid metal of the cans.

The situation is worse in the north.

My friend Ahmad (not his real name) is one of the few people with access to the Internet. It's sporadic and weak, but we can still message each other.

He sent me a picture of himself that looks like the shadow of the young man I knew. You have lost more than 25 kg.

At first, people started eating horse and donkey food, but that doesn't exist anymore. Now they eat donkeys and horses.

Some eat stray dogs and cats, which in turn starve to death and sometimes feed on the human remains that litter the streets where Israeli snipers have shot people who dared to venture into the field of view of their scopes. The old and the weak have already died of hunger and thirst.

Flour is rare and more precious than gold.

I've heard the story of a northern man who recently managed to get his hands on a sack of flour (which normally costs \$8) and was offered \$2,500 worth of jewelry, electronics, and cash in return. He refused.

Feeling small

The people of Rafah feel privileged to receive flour and rice. They will tell you about it and you will feel humiliated, because they will offer to share what little they have.

And you will be ashamed, because you know that you can leave Gaza and eat whatever you want. You will feel small, because you are not in a position to really contribute to alleviating the catastrophic needs and losses, and because you will understand that they are better than you, because they have remained generous and hospitable in a world that has been very ungenerous and inhospitable to them for so long.

I brought as much as I could, paying extra luggage and weight for six pieces of luggage and filling another 12 in Egypt. What I brought for myself would fit in the backpack I was carrying.

Tuve la previsión de traer cinco bolsas grandes de café, que resultaron ser el regalo más popular para mis amigos aquí. Preparar y servir café al personal que me alojó es lo que más me gusta hacer, por la alegría que me produce cada sorbo.

Pero pronto no habrá más.

Cuesta respirar

Contraté a un conductor para que llevara siete pesadas maletas de suministros a Nuseirat, que bajó por unas escaleras. Me dijo que llevar las maletas le había dado una sensación de humanidad, ya que era la primera vez en cuatro meses que subía y bajaba escaleras.

Le recordaba que vivía en una casa y no en la tienda de campaña donde reside actualmente.

Es difícil respirar aquí, literal y metafóricamente. Una bruma inalterable de polvo, decadencia y desesperación llena el aire.

La destrucción es tan masiva y persistente que las finas partículas de vida pulverizada no tienen tiempo de asentarse. La escasez de gasolina ha llevado a la gente a llenar sus coches con estearato, un aceite de cocina usado que arde mal.

Desprende un hedor característico y una película que se pega al aire, el pelo, la ropa, la garganta y los pulmones. Tardé en encontrar el origen de este olor penetrante, pero es fácil distinguir otros.

La escasez de agua corriente o limpia degrada lo mejor de nosotros. Cada uno hace lo que puede consigo mismo y con sus hijos, pero llega un momento en que deja de importarle.

En algún momento, la indignidad de la suciedad es ineludible. En algún momento, se espera la muerte, aunque también se espere el alto el fuego.

Pero la gente no sabe lo que hará después de un alto el fuego.

Han visto imágenes de sus barrios. Cuando se emiten nuevas imágenes de la región norte, la gente se reúne para intentar averiguar de qué barrio se trata, o de quién era la casa sobre la que está el montón de escombros. A menudo, estos vídeos proceden de soldados israelíes que ocupan o vuelan sus casas.

Borrado

He hablado con muchos supervivientes que fueron sacados de entre los escombros de sus casas. Cuentan lo que les ocurrió con aire impasible, como si no les hubiera pasado a ellos, como si fuera la familia de otro la que hubiera sido enterrada viva, como si sus propios cuerpos destrozados pertenecieran a otros.

Los psicólogos dicen que es un mecanismo de defensa, una especie de adormecimiento de la mente para sobrevivir. El ajuste de cuentas vendrá después, si sobreviven.

Pero, ¿cómo afrontar la pérdida de toda una familia, la visión y el olor de sus cuerpos desintegrándose a tu alrededor entre los escombros, a la espera de ayuda o de la muerte?

¿Cómo sobrellevar el borrado total de tu existencia en el mundo: tu casa, tu familia, tus amigos, tu salud, tu barrio y tu país?

There are no photographs of your family, of your wedding, of your children, of your parents; Even the graves of your relatives and ancestors have been razed to the ground. All this while the most powerful forces and voices vilify you and accuse you of being responsible for your miserable fate.

Genocide is not just mass murder. It's an intentional erasure.

From history. Of memories, books and culture.

The erasure of a land's potential. The erasure of hope in and for a place.

Erasure is the driving force behind the destruction of homes, schools, places of worship, hospitals, libraries, cultural centres, leisure centres and universities.

Genocide is the intentional dismantling of the humanity of others. It is the reduction of an old, proud, cultured and prosperous society to cases of penniless charity, forced to eat the unspeakable in order to survive, to live in filth and disease with nothing to hope for but the end of the bombs and bullets that rain down on and through their bodies, their lives, their lives, etc. their stories and their futures.

No one can think or wait for what will happen after the ceasefire. The ceiling of their hope, at this time, is that the bombing will stop.

This is a minimum requirement. A minimum recognition of Palestinian humanity.

Although Israel has cut off electricity and the internet, the Palestinians have managed to broadcast a live image of their own genocide to a world that allows it to continue.

But history won't lie. He will say that Israel perpetrated a holocaust in the 21st century.



Portrait of Susan by [@artist\\_amiral](#), age 14, Gaza

[Susan Abulhawa](#), born in 1970 in a Palestinian refugee camp in Kuwait to parents originally from Al Quds, is a Palestinian-American journalist, writer and human rights activist. His books include *Sunrises in Jeni*, translated into 30 languages, *The Blue Between Sky and Water*, and *Against a World Without Love*. He emigrated to the USA at the age of 13, studied biomedical sciences at the University of South Carolina and worked in this sector. In 2001 he founded a non-governmental organization, [Playgrounds for Palestine](#), to build playgrounds in refugee camps. [@susanabulhawa](#)

[Susan Abulhawa](#), *Electronic Intifada*, 6/3/2024

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