

Foreign passport holders in Gaza decide to stay - "We will not leave"
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2nd January 2009, Gaza:

Despite the exception that Israel is making for foreign passport holders to allow them to leave Gaza for safety, some of the foreigners have chosen to remain and share the fate of the rest of the Palestinian people.

Alberto Arce (Spain) has been accompanying ambulances and reporting from hospitals; "Israel does not want witnesses to the crimes that it is committing against the people of Gaza. International journalists and aid agencies are not here. If we leave who will testify to the war crimes we are seeing.

On the 28th December I looked into the dying eyes of sisters Lama and Haya Hamdan, four and twelve years old, killed by an Israeli missile. The humanity I saw there was no different from our humanity. Are our lives worth more than theirs?" Alberto Arce - International Solidarity Movement.

South African-Palestinian Dr. Haidar Eid said; "I believe that this is a historical moment. That this massacre in Gaza runs parallel to that of the 1960 Sharpeville Massacre that took place in South Africa which led to the initiation of the BDS Campaign against Apartheid. The Gaza massacre of 2009 will intensify the BDS campaign against Israeli apartheid. In Apartheid South Africa, the BDS campaign ultimately led to the release of Nelson Mandela being released from prison to later become the first black president of a democratic, multi-racial, multi-cultural state in South Africa. So, the BDS campaign against Israeli apartheid must result in a unitary state where all citizens will be treated as equals." Dr Eid is a Professor of Social and Cultural Studies at Al Aqsa University, Gaza. He is also on the Steering committee of the Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (PACBI) and one of the founding members of the One Democratic State Group.

Natalie Abu Shakra (Lebanon) stated; "They did the same thing in Lebanon, but while in Lebanon some places were under heavy bombardment, some places were safe. In Gaza nowhere is safe. How can we leave these people behind, we will either live with them or die with them" - Natalie Abu Shakra - International Solidarity Movement

"With the Israeli ban on international journalists, the Gazan voice has been further muted. Communicating the reality on the ground with the external world is essential to highlight the illegality of Israel's attacks. We recently started accompanying ambulances to document the attacks on medical personnel, which is a violation of the Geneva Convention. I have seen and felt the suffering of families and cannot leave them, all the civilians are vulnerable to Israel's attacks. We intend to stay and continue exposing the nature of Israel's attacks on the Gazan people." Jenny Linnel - International Solidarity Movement

"Israel not only decides who can leave Gaza, but also who can enter. I have seen the demolished houses, mosques, universities and have felt the impact of terrorizing missile attacks in civilian areas. I have seen the dead children and heard the screams of families trapped in their homes as Israel bombs 30 meters away. The Gazan people, all 1.5

million of them, are unable to escape these illegal attacks. Our lives are no more important than theirs and we will stay during their suffering in solidarity and to document what Israel is preventing foreign journalists from revealing." Eva Bartlett - International Solidarity Movement

"Palestinians of Gaza have been isolated from the world by the Israeli imposed siege. Now we are being given the opportunity to leave, an unavailable option for the Gazan people. Staying here, in solidarity with Gazan families, is crucial during this horrific increase in Israeli violence. I have witnessed the effects of the siege, I have seen the ongoing violence towards the civilian population. We will continue to stand with the victims of Israel's illegal policies." Sharon Lock - International Solidarity Movement

"I believe I have a responsibility to be here in solidarity with the people of Gaza who are enduring crimes against humanity perpetrated by Israel. If the international community will not act to stop this physical, psychological and political war on the entire population of Gaza, then international observers, journalists and activists are needed here in Gaza. We must witness, document and stop wherever possible, the war crimes being committed by Israeli occupation forces against the people of Gaza. Israel doesn't want witnesses to its' crimes against humanity, but the people of Gaza do. They keep telling me, 'Please, tell the world what is happening to us, we can't believe what is happening to us. They fear the worst, everybody here is terrified and terrorized. I will not be leaving, it is the Israeli occupation forces that need to abide by international law' and leave Palestine." Ewa Jasiewicz - Free Gaza Movement

"The opening of the Eres Crossing should be used to transport international observers and medical supplies into Gaza, not out. We have seen firsthand the deaths caused by the siege and more recent bombings. I have lost many friends because of Israel's illegal military actions. We stand in solidarity with the Palestinian people and will continue to document the atrocities. As international observers, we have the responsibility to ensure that the international community has access to the reality of Israel's attacks on Gaza." Vittorio Arrigoni - International Solidarity Movement

International Human Rights Activists have been accompanying ambulances in the Gaza Strip since the murder of medic Mohammed Abu Hassera and Doctor Ihab Al Mathoon by Israeli missiles on the 31st December. The international activists were at the Kamal Adwan hospital, Beit Hanoun, as Dr Mathoon died.

Human Rights Activists staying in Gaza:

Alberto Arce - Spain

Ewa Jasiewicz - Poland/Britain

Dr. Haider Eid - South Africa

Sharon Lock - Australia

Vittorio Arrigoni - Italy

Jenny Linnel - Britain

Natalie Abu Shakra - Lebanon

Eva Bartlett - Canada