

# Yazan al-Kafarneh's death a stain on humanity



Yazan al-Kafarneh (L) suffering from malnutrition in the last few hours of his life at a children's hospital in Rafah, Gaza, on March 2, 2024.  
● MOHAMMED TALATENE/DPA



By Seraj Assi  
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## PERSPECTIVE

The world just watched a 10-year-old Palestinian boy, Yazan al-Kafarneh, starve to death in Gaza. Others like him have already died of hunger, and many more will if Israel does not stop its brutal starvation of Gaza's civilian population.

The body of this article contains a graphic image of Yazan al-Kafarneh to illustrate the effects of the ongoing starvation of Palestinians.

Yazan al-Kafarneh, a 10-year-old Palestinian boy from Gaza, had been dying of hunger for weeks as a result of Israel's crippling blockade and deliberate starvation of Gaza. Images and videos of Yazan, who had cerebral palsy, showed the motionless boy lying on a hospital bed with a skeletal body, sunken cheeks, bare bones, and hollowed eyes. For days his parents sat helpless by his bed and watched him fade away. His father shared an older photo of Yazan, healthy and happy, just before Israel displaced the family from Beit Hanoun in North Gaza to Rafah in the South.

Yazan succumbed to starvation on March 4, dying in his mother's arms at a local hospital in Rafah. He weighed eleven pounds when he died. "Today, I lost my son due to lack of food,"

his grieving father told reporters. His weeping mother added, "I lost my child today after ten days at the hospital due to malnutrition. My son's health rapidly deteriorated, and he lost weight until he became a skeleton. My son is now in heaven, but I never imagined that we would reach this stage. My message to the world is to look at Gaza's children and see how their lives have changed."

The world has watched Yazan die in real-time. So far, nearly twenty Palestinian children and newborns have perished of starvation because of Israel's inhumane blockade of Gaza — and more such deaths are imminent. Last month, the United Nations warned of an "explosion" in child deaths due to Israel's starvation of civilians. For weeks, aid groups such as Human Rights Watch have been warning that Israel is "using starvation of civilians as a method of warfare in the occupied Gaza Strip". The starvation of Gaza is a crime against humanity. In the trembling words of the Palestinian ambassador to the United Nations, Riyad Mansour, "Look at our children. Look at Yazan. Look what agony they are enduring. Dozens more children who have died of malnutrition have been identified, and many more have died and are dying in darkness and destitution. This has to stop. For God's sake, this has to stop."

Over the past five months, Israel has imposed a total blockade on the already besieged strip, depriving over two million people of food, water, energy, and medicine. Israel continues

to willfully impede relief supplies that are indispensable to the survival of Palestinians in Gaza, where over 700 thousand people in the North are facing starvation. Thus far, Israel has killed at least 30 thousand Palestinians in Gaza, while wounding nearly 72 thousand others. About 85 percent of Gaza's population has been displaced.

Israel's deliberate starvation of Palestinians like Yazan al-Kafarneh makes a brutal mockery of international appeals to allow aid to the besieged enclave. Last month, Mahmoud Fattouh, a two-month-old Palestinian boy, died from starvation in northern Gaza, having gone days without milk. Footage shows the emaciated infant gasping for breath in a hospital bed. A paramedic who rushed the boy to the hospital said, "We saw a woman carrying her baby, screaming for help. Her pale baby seemed to be taking his last breath. We rushed him to hospital, and he was found to be suffering acute malnutrition. Medical staff rushed him into the ICU. The baby has not been fed any milk for days, as baby milk is totally absent in Gaza." Israel's inhumane starvation of Gaza has spared no one: neither children, newborns, women, nor elderly people. Today Abdul Rahman al-Dahdouh, an elderly Palestinian man, died due to severe dehydration and malnutrition, as Israel continues to prevent food convoys from reaching northern parts of Gaza, forcing children to walk miles in search of food and water for their families.

People in Gaza are looking down into the abyss. On February 29, Israel massacred Palestinians scrambling to collect flour from aid trucks on al-Rasheed Street in Gaza City. On March 3, Al Jazeera reported that Israeli soldiers again opened fire on a crowd of hungry people in Gaza City, this time at the al-Kuwait roundabout.

Western governments, led by the Biden administration, are complicit in Gaza's humanitarian catastrophe. Embarking on political theatrics, the United States airdropped food in Gaza over the weekend — barely the equivalent of two trucks. Instead of demanding an end to the siege and a permanent cease-fire, the United States has chosen to act helpless before its genocidal partner, while refusing to halt its massive military aid and arms shipments to Israel.

A recent video featuring Joe Biden indifferently licking ice cream while addressing the plight of Palestinian children has removed the last shred of dignity from the US administration.

The article first appeared on Jacobin.



The photo shows the body of the 10-year-old Palestinian child Yazan al-Kafarneh who died from severe hunger due to Israel's ongoing crippling siege on Gaza.  
● RABIE ABU NOQAIRA/ANADOLU

In midst of genocide

## Gaza's cats warm children's hearts, beds

By Sally Ibrahim  
Reporter

### PERSPECTIVE

As Israel's indiscriminate onslaught on the besieged coastal enclave continues, cats have snuggled up alongside displaced

Palestinian children under flimsy tents as a means of refuge from the harsh, cold weather and brutal war.

Separately speaking to *The New Arab* (TNA), several children said they are doing their best "to protect stray cats from death from the cold weather or starvation".

"These poor cats cannot save themselves from Israel's attacks. They cannot find food in the streets. They also are victims of the Israeli war against us in Gaza," said Subhi Elian, a 12-year-old boy displaced to Rafah, located in southern Gaza.

'At least, we can live longer together'

A month ago, Elian, who was forced to run from his home in Gaza City with his family to shelter in Rafah, noticed two stray cats sleeping beside him. He says at that moment, he felt extreme sadness.

"I cried as I felt the cats also suffered from the war. They cannot speak to ask us to help them; they only came here and slept," Elian remarked to TNA.

Elian says he shares his food with his new feline friends, whom he named Semsem and Lolo. "We are starving, but, at least, we can live longer together until we get more food the next day," he added.

At first, Elian's father, Mohammed, asked his son to let go of the cats because there was barely food for the family, arguing that the cats would only increase their burden. But Elian did not concede and pleaded, so the father relented.

"Since then, I suddenly started receiving more assistance from UNRWA," the father told TNA, "It seems the cats brought us luck."

Abdul Qader al-Assar, an 8-year-old child from the al-Nusseirat refugee camp, adopted three cats after seeing them desperately search among piles of rotting garbage for food.

"The cats were so skinny and unable to move," he said. "I decided to adopt and care for them until the war ended."

'All of us are under attack by Israel'

Israel launched a massive war on Gaza after Hamas led an attack on Israeli military bases and civilian settlements within and around the Gaza envelope on October 7, with some 1,200 Israelis dying in the fighting.

Since then, Israeli war jets, ground artillery, and naval boats have battered all of the besieged coastal enclave, killing at least 29,000 and wounding more than 67,000 Palestinians, mostly women and children.

Because of the war, numerous stray animals were also killed or had to be abandoned. This is why Salman al-Hams, a 15-year-old boy in Rafah, gathered as many starving cats as he could and routinely fed them in front of his house.

"They are animals, and they have rights like humans (...) Israel does not distinguish between us and the animals in Gaza. All of us are under attack by Israel," he said to TNA.

"Even though we are struggling to obtain food, we are still happy to share it with these poor cats and stray dogs in our areas," he added.

According to the UN's Food and Agricultural Organisation, Gaza's entire 2.3 million population is currently classified as facing either crisis, emergency, or catastrophic levels of food insecurity.

The UN, Human Rights Watch, and other humanitarian organisations have warned that starvation of civilians as a method of warfare is being used in Gaza — a move deemed illegal under International Humanitarian Law and in direct breach of UNSC Resolution 2417.

The article first appeared on *The New Arab*.



A Palestinian boy holds up an adopted stray cat in a tent in Deir al-Balah, Gaza, on January 27, 2024, in the midst of Israel's brutal onslaught in Gaza.  
● GETTY IMAGES