



Dispatch from Palestine:

Women Speak – Bearing Witness Amidst Famine, Siege, and Occupation

Introduction

Femena stands in solidarity with Palestinian women in Gaza, the West Bank, and '48 Palestine who are enduring devastating violence and appalling, inhumane conditions as a result of Israel's brutal military aggression, its politics of occupation and apartheid, and its overall policies of discrimination and marginalization.

In the Gaza Strip, the current situation can only be described as catastrophic. In addition to relentless bombing, which has virtually destroyed the entire infrastructure of the Gaza Strip and killed over 68,000 people (by conservative estimates), Israel's total siege, which started on 2 March 2025 effectively blocked all food, medicine, fuel, and aid from entering, has pushed over 85% of Gaza's population into IPC Phase 5 famine, according to numerous reports. This famine is not incidental; it is a deliberate result of Israel's weaponization of food and its use of starvation as an instrument of war. The siege is not only strangling civilians but also targeting aid delivery and punishing acts of solidarity with the Palestinian people.

In the West Bank, Palestinians continue to face systematic violence, as a result of Israeli occupation and apartheid policies. There have been numerous raids and incursions into the West Bank, resulting in thousands of arrests, while Israel continues a policy of house demolition and land confiscation as it moves to annex more territories, collectively punishing and displacing Palestinians as it does so.

In addition to the Israeli army, Palestinians are targets of violence by settlers, whose attacks on Palestinians continue unabated and unpunished. All across Palestine, women bear the brunt of this brutality. Yet, they continue to resist with courage and clarity.

In this dispatch, Femena centers the voices of Palestinian women and women human rights defenders—those surviving in Gaza under siege and bombardment, those in the West Bank living under Israeli military occupation, and those Palestinians within the 1948 borders, where repression, marginalization and discrimination persist. These testimonies are raw, direct, and grounded in lived experience. The voices here are those of a few women, but their experiences are typical of countless other women enduring the same reality. These voices should be multiplied by the thousands, and even then they only give a glimpse of the cruelty they undergo. They speak of unbearable grief, unrelenting resilience, and an urgent call to action from the world.



Voices from Gaza

A.A., Young Woman in Gaza

She describes life under siege—where even food and water have become luxuries, and survival itself is uncertain.

“In Gaza, we are living through genocide. As a young woman, I’m just trying to survive in inhuman conditions—no food, no clean water, no medicine, no electricity. Basic vegetables and fruits no longer exist. Cooking a simple meal costs \$80 to \$100—without meat or fish. Flour prices change every day, like the stock market. A kilo costs \$10 today and might double tomorrow.

Elderly people, those with chronic illnesses, and people with disabilities are being left to die. There are no hospitals, no clinics, no medicine. I know a girl who was wounded by shrapnel—it pierced her chest and exited her back. She waited ten hours for surgery, without anesthesia, sterilization, or even painkillers.

We cook on firewood when we can find it. Fuel is gone. Transport is impossible. Water is nearly gone too, and diseases are spreading fast. Children dig through garbage for food, clothes, and wood to burn. They no longer go to school — instead, they fetch water, collect wood, wait in line for food, or try to help their families survive.

No study. No play. No safety. Only war, siege, and hunger. There's no electricity. Solar batteries now cost \$3,000 — up from \$800. I pay \$1 a day to charge my phone, and \$5 for a laptop. The assault has destroyed everything — schools, hospitals, streets, even our sense of identity. We just want to live in peace. To stop the genocide. We deserve life. Even if they destroy Gaza, Gaza will live inside us.”

S.M., Young Woman in Gaza

She speaks of a famine so severe that even children pray for death to escape hunger.

“My family tells me: we used to die from airstrikes and missiles. Now we die because there is no bread. Bread itself is killing people.

My friend, who was displaced in northern Gaza, has two children.

They told her, ‘Mom, there’s food in heaven.’

She answered softly, ‘Yes, everything is there.’

Then they said, ‘Pray for us to die, Mama. God hears your prayers. Maybe we can go to heaven where there’s food.

We are so very hungry.’”

R.A., Gaza-born, Now in Ramallah

She is a mother of two living in the West Bank, unable to reach her parents in Gaza.

“I’m 32 years old, a mother of two daughters who have never met their grandparents because of this genocidal war.

Israel’s policies separating Palestinians in the West Bank from those in Gaza have kept me from seeing my family for more than eight years. My parents are in Deir al-Balah, now facing a massive ground and air invasion, forced starvation, and a total collapse of medical care. My father, who was sick with COVID-19, has no immunity left. My younger sisters say he can no longer walk. Both of my parents collapse from malnutrition and dangerously low blood sugar. There’s no electricity, no clean water, no food, no medicine, no hospitals. I haven’t been able to reach them for days.

I live in exile—in my own homeland.”



Voices from the West Bank

B.A., Mother of Two, Near Jenin

She recounts a months-long military invasion that destroyed homes, livelihoods, and any sense of security.

“I don’t know where to begin. The invasion started in January. We thought it would be like the previous raids—over in ten days. But it kept escalating. Everyone in the camp was forced to flee. They bombed, burned, and destroyed homes, turning civilian houses into army barracks. They stole money, gold, and appliances—whatever they could carry. Young men were beaten and taken for interrogation. Some came back after two days, bruised and broken. For three months, my husband, his parents, and I were displaced from our home. When we finally returned, everything was smashed—TVs, kitchens, windows, everything. Soldiers have raided our home three more times since, sometimes just to check IDs. Our neighbors weren’t so lucky. One house was raided multiple times and looted each time. In another, soldiers found 10,000 to 20,000 shekels—and took them. The people of the camp are now scattered—some living in university dorms, whole families crammed into a single room. The local economy has collapsed. The main checkpoint has been closed for months. Businesses have shut down. Most people now survive on aid. Every night, military patrols arrive, firing shots and raiding homes as if it’s a war zone. Rumors say the soldiers here are the ones who served in Gaza. Maybe that’s true.

But for us, it feels like we're just their training ground."

M.S., Journalist, West Bank

She was detained without charge for documenting Israeli violations.

"For more than a decade, I've documented Israeli violations in the West Bank—night raids, home demolitions, and forced displacement. One night, soldiers stormed my home. There was no warrant, no charges. They took me to a detention center.

Days later, I was placed under administrative detention—no indictment, no trial, no right to defend myself. They told me my 'file is secret.' My supposed crime is the content I publish—in other words, telling the truth.

In prison, I learned I was not alone. Many women like me have paid the price for words and images.

But I came out stronger. The system that tries to silence us doesn't understand—the more they repress us, the more determined we become to speak."



Voices from '48 Palestine

She defends political prisoners and is now targeted for her legal advocacy.

“I am a Palestinian lawyer from Nazareth, defending political prisoners in a legal system that does not recognize Palestinian humanity. I represent women, men, and children detained in Israeli prisons—stripped of dignity, due process, and basic rights.

Because of my work, I have become a target. I’ve been interrogated multiple times, my office raided, and my movements restricted. I’ve even been barred from attending clients’ trials.

They don’t want a lawyer. They want silence.

But I refuse to be silent. My legal defense is both a political and moral act. Our very existence as Palestinians within ‘48 is resistance. Every time I enter a courtroom, I carry more than a case file—I carry the pain, the legacy, and the unwavering struggle of my people.”



Conclusion and Demands: Women Demand Dignity, Justice, and an End to the Siege

Palestinian women are leading voices of resistance—they are truth-tellers, protectors of memory, community organizers, mothers, lawyers, journalists, and women human rights defenders. What is happening today, first and foremost in the Gaza Strip, but also in the West Bank, and even within '48 Palestine is the culmination of a decades-long and deliberate and calculated campaign to bring about the annihilation and subjugation of the Palestinian people, enabled by global complicity and silence.

Femena stands in solidarity with their struggle and joins them in demanding the following urgent actions:

- There must be an immediate and unconditional ceasefire to end the ongoing military assault, siege, bombardment, and blockade of Gaza.
- There must be complete and unhindered access for humanitarian aid, with Israel lifting its blockade and allowing impartial humanitarian agencies—not militarized or politicized entities—to deliver lifesaving assistance.

- There must be a clear condemnation and prosecution of starvation as a weapon of war, with accountability pursued for those responsible for engineering famine.
- There must be immediate protection for Palestinian women human rights defenders, journalists, and lawyers, ensuring they are free from harassment, criminalization, and arbitrary detention—and that they can speak and work without fear.
- There must be the immediate release of all Palestinian prisoners, women and men, held in administrative detention or without charge by Israeli authorities.
- There must be unwavering support for justice and accountability, including full cooperation with international investigations into war crimes and crimes against humanity in Palestine, through a neutral, independent investigative body, or the International Criminal Court.
- There must be a real commitment to seeing an end to Israel's policies of occupation and apartheid, which lie at the root of the injustice and without an end to which there can never be true and lasting peace in the region.



Femena supports Women Human Rights Defenders, their organizations and feminist movements in Southwest Asia and North Africa (SWANA) through analysis of trends and policy, documentation, fostering the development of regional communities of practice and advocacy.

Femena's work is primarily focused on contexts of shrinking or closed civic space and contexts complicated by growing extremism and conflict.

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