

# Economic conditions 'suffocating the joy of Ramadan' in Gaza

Tue, 2019-05-14 00:24

GAZA CITY: Ramadan has arrived under very harsh conditions in the Gaza Strip, the result of the 13-year siege and waves of Israeli military escalation, as well as the internal division that has existed since mid-2007.

Gazans began the first day of Ramadan by burying the victims of Israeli airstrikes, which targeted hundreds of homes and public and private facilities over two days.

Israeli military escalation has increased the suffering of the Gazans, who have been denied the joy of Ramadan due to widespread poverty, high unemployment, the salary crisis and the inability of citizens to purchase items.

Employee Mohammed Sultan said that he was unable to provide for his seven-member family because of the delay in paying employees' salaries in Gaza.

"We received the last salary about a month ago, and we expected to get our salaries before the month of Ramadan, but that did not happen," Sultan said.

Employees of the Palestinian Authority (PA) led by President Mahmoud Abbas are no longer better off than their Hamas counterparts.

Since March 2017, the PA has deducted more than 60 percent of the salaries of about 50,000 of its employees in Gaza. The PA says the measure is due to a financial crisis, but Palestinian factions and employees see it as "sanctions" to pressure Hamas "and to destabilize the Gaza Strip since it took control of the Gaza Strip in mid-June 2007."

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## **SPEEDREAD**

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"We did not feel the month of Ramadan, nor did we feel happy," said Amal Al-

Sattari, an employee of the PA.

"We lost the holy month and we did not feel it because of the salary crisis and our inability to shop for the needs of Ramadan, as we always used to do."

"How are we going to provide iftar and suhoor? And we do not have one shekel in our house. It's a real tragedy," she said.

Al-Sattari, who is raising six children after her husband's death seven years ago, asked how her children could be responsible for the political differences that were causing such suffering.

"Instead of taking into consideration our circumstances for the month of Ramadan, paying our full salaries, the PA increased the deduction rate, and about 40 percent of our salaries were paid to us a few days before Ramadan," she said.

The suffering of workers is even more severe, with 52 percent unemployment and more than half of Gaza's 2 million people dependent on humanitarian aid from UN and other charities.

"We have received Ramadan and the refrigerator is empty, and my sons cry, they want the lantern of Ramadan," said Mohamed Allawi, a construction worker who is unemployed.

"The lowest price for the Ramadan lantern is NIS5 (\$1.40), and if I had (the money), food and drink would be the first (items) to buy. We are in a situation that does not allow us and our children even a simple joy."

Allawi said: "People everywhere are thinking about cooking the best food in Ramadan, and our iftar was beans and some rice on the first day, the same as the day before."

Adnan Ahmed was forced to borrow money from a friend before Ramadan for shopping and celebrating with his nine-member family.

Adnan, a cleaner in a hospital in the southern Gaza city of Rafah, said that he and many of his acquaintances had to sell their wife's jewelry to overcome the economic crisis. However, the crisis went on longer than expected and there was nothing left to be sold.

Mohammed Saleh, a cheese seller, complained of customers' reluctance to buy, despite the cheapness and variety of goods offered, adding that he had been hoping for an economic rebound by the end of Ramadan.

Saleh said: "Although I arrived early on the first day of Ramadan and wanted to offer different types of cheeses, which are usually more popular in Ramadan, this was not enough to attract customers because of the deteriorating economic conditions of most people."

He added that although many people visited the market, the majority could not afford to buy anything.

It was no different for the seller of sweets and nuts, Mohamed Taha, who confirmed that for the third year in a row, Ramadan was one of the most difficult times for the people of Gaza, because of poverty and unemployment. The situation had deteriorated more with the salary crisis of employees at the Palestinian Authority.

He said that he had been selling in the market for many years, but had not seen a recession like the one that was currently being experienced.

Shopper Hisham Madi complained about the rise in the price of many goods, increasing the burden placed on heads of households this month.



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**[Soldier killed, large number of protesters wounded in clashes: Sudan's](#)**

# transitional council

Mon, 2019-05-13 14:21

KHARTOUM: Sudan's transitional military council says soldier killed, large number of protesters wounded in clashes in Khartoum late on Monday.

Earlier, the council said on Monday that the structure of transitional bodies had been agreed with opposition groups and their make-up would be addressed in further talks a day later.

"We discussed the structure of the transitional authority and agreed on it completely, and we also agreed on the system of governance in the transitional period," said Lieutenant General Shams El Din Kabbashi, the spokesman for the Transitional Military Council (TMC).

Sudanese protesters resumed negotiations with the army earlier on Monday while calling for renewed demonstrations to press the generals to hand over power to a civilian government.

Meanwhile, Sudan charged ousted president Omar Al-Bashir and others with incitement and involvement in the killing of protesters, the public prosecutor said in a statement on Monday.

Earlier this month, the public prosecutor ordered Bashir to be interrogated on charges of money laundering and financing terrorism.

There has been no comment from Bashir since his ousting and arrest on April 11.

The military removed President Omar Al-Bashir from power in April after four months of mass protests, but the demonstrators have remained in the streets, demanding the dismantling of his regime. In recent weeks they have threatened a general strike and civil disobedience.

Lt. Gen. Shams Al-Deen Al-Kabashi, a spokesman for the military council, said Monday's meeting between army rulers and protest leaders, the first in over a week, was held "in a more optimistic atmosphere."

The protesters are represented by the Forces for the Declaration of Freedom and Change, a coalition of opposition groups led by the Sudanese Professionals Association, which has spearheaded the protests since December.

The protesters said late Sunday that they hope to secure commitments to a swift transfer of power in the three-day talks.

The military agreed last month to recognize the FDFC as the uprising's only legitimate representative in a victory for the protesters. But the generals have called for other political parties – with the exception of Al-Bashir's National Congress Party – to be included in the transition.

The opposition has vowed to continue protests, centered on a sit-in outside the military headquarters in the capital, Khartoum. It has called for a series of nationwide protests, including another march to the main sit-in, for the coming week.

The two sides remain divided over what role the military, which is dominated by Al-Bashir appointees, should have in the transition period until elections can be held. The military wants to play a leading role in a transition lasting up to two years, while the protesters have demanded an immediate

transition to a civilian-led authority.

The protesters fear the army will cling to power or select one of its own to succeed Al-Bashir. They also fear that Islamists and other factions close to the deposed leader, who is now jailed in Khartoum, will be granted a role in the transition.



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Cash crisis tops Sudan's economic woes

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## [Bids to annul Erdogan's 2018 election victory rejected](#)

Author:

Mon, 2019-05-13 23:40

ISTANBUL: Turkey's High Election Board (YSK) has rejected bids by opposition

parties to annul all votes in the Istanbul local elections, as well as last year's nationwide elections, broadcaster NTV said on Monday.

The YSK last week ordered a re-run of the Istanbul mayoral election, citing irregularities in the appointment of polling station officials after appeals by President Tayyip Erdogan's AK Party (AKP), but did not cancel votes for district administrators, mayors, and municipal councils.

The main opposition Republican People's Party (CHP) and the Iyi (Good) Party argued that if the mayoral vote – which the CHP won – was canceled then all the other votes in Istanbul, as well as Erdogan's victory in a presidential election last year, should also be annulled because the same flaws took place in those elections.

After weeks of appeals by the AKP and its nationalist MHP ally, the election board ruled last week for a re-run of the Istanbul mayoral election which the CHP's Ekrem Imamoglu won by a narrow margin.

It was the first time in 25 years that the AKP or its predecessors had failed to win control of Istanbul, Turkey's largest city with a budget of close to \$4 billion. Erdogan launched his own political career as Istanbul mayor.



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# Daesh remnants wage hidden war of raids, killings

Author:

Mon, 2019-05-13 22:33

BADOUSH, IRAQ: It was a chilly January evening, and Khadija Abd and her family had just finished supper at their farm when the two men with guns burst into the room.

One wore civilian clothes, the other an army uniform. They said they were from the Iraqi army's 20th Division, which controls the northern Iraqi town of Badoush. In fact, they were Daesh group militants who had come down from the surrounding mountains into Badoush with one thing on their mind: Revenge.

Around 13 more gunmen were waiting outside. The terrorists pulled Khadija's husband and his two brothers into the yard and shot them dead, leaving them in a pool of blood – punishment for providing information to the Iraqi military.

"How can we live after this?" Khadija said. The three brothers were the providers for the entire family. "They left their children, their livestock, their wives, and their elderly father who doesn't know what to do now."

A year and a half after Daesh was declared defeated in Iraq, the militants still evoke fear in the lands of their former so-called caliphate across northern Iraq.

The terrorists, hiding in caves and mountains, emerge at night to carry out kidnappings, killings and roadside ambushes, aimed at intimidating locals, silencing informants and restoring the extortion rackets that financed Daesh's rise to power six years ago.

It is part of a hidden but relentless fight between the group's remnants waging an insurgency and security forces trying to stamp them out, relying on intelligence operations, raids and searches for sleeper cells among the population.

The militants' ranks number between 5,000 and 7,000 around Iraq, according to an Iraqi intelligence official.

"Although the territory once held by the so-called caliphate is fully liberated, Daesh fighters still exhibit their intention to exert influence and stage a comeback," said Maj. Gen. Chad Franks, deputy commander-operations and intelligence for the US-led coalition.

In towns around the north, Iraqi soldiers knock on doors in the middle of the night, looking for suspects, based on intelligence tips or suspicious

movements. They search houses and pull people away for questioning.

In February, Human Rights Watch accused authorities of torturing suspects to extract confessions of belonging to Daesh, an accusation the Interior Ministry has denied. Detainees are pushed by the thousands into what critics call sham trials, with swift verdicts – almost always guilty – based on almost no evidence beyond confessions or unaccountable informants' testimony. The legacy of guilt weighs heavily especially on women and children, who face crushing discrimination because of male relatives seen as supporting Daesh.

AP journalists embedded with a battalion of the 20th Division last month and witnessed several of its raids at Badoush.

Badoush, on the Tigris River just outside the city of Mosul, is a key battleground because it was once one of the most diehard Daesh strongholds.

In the summer of 2014, it was a launching pad for the militants' blitz that overran Mosul and much of northern Iraq. Daesh built a strong financial base by extorting money from the owners of Badoush's many industrial facilities. Security officials estimate two-thirds of its population – which numbered around 25,000 before the war – were at one point members or supporters of the group.

Now the population is divided. Residents who suffered at the hands of Daesh or lost loved ones to the group are suspicious of neighbors they believe still support the militants. Within families, some members belonged to the group and others opposed it.

The Badoush area alone has seen 20 terror attacks, from bombings to targeted killings, since it was retaken from the militants in March 2017, according to the Kurdish Security Council. The militants brag about the attacks in videos that show fighters storming houses and killing purported "apostates" and spies.



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Daesh men 'convicted' in Iraq

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## [Boat with 8 Syrians capsizes off Lebanese coast; 5 missing](#)

Author:

Associated Press

ID:

1557744311341195100

Mon, 2019-05-13 10:09

BEIRUT: Lebanon's state-run National News Agency says a fishing boat that was illegally carrying eight Syrian refugees to the Mediterranean island of Cyprus has capsized.

The report says the incident occurred on Monday off the northern Lebanese town of Chekka. It says that Lebanon's navy detained three of the Syrians when they returned to the coast and that the other five are still missing.

Lebanon is host to the highest number of refugees per capita in the world, with about 1 million Syrians – or nearly a quarter of the small Arab country's population.

In September, a child drowned after a boat carrying 39 migrants hoping to reach Cyprus capsized off the northern Lebanese coast.



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