

A Saturday with No Sunday: The Struggle for Existence

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This piece reflects the author's personal journey living under siege in Gaza, navigating daily hardships, loss, and fear. Yet, despite everything, it is also a story of hope, proof that light can still exist in the darkest places. Through her writing, the author aims to deliver the unheard voices from Gaza to the world, showing that even amid destruction, creativity and resilience endure.

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A Saturday with No Sunday: The Struggle for Existence

Shams Mazen Rajab

7 October 2023 wasn't just a normal Saturday in Gaza. It was a huge turning point, a sudden, harsh stop that threw the city and its people into a never-ending, sad waiting place. 'A Saturday With No Sunday' isn't just talking about a day, it's how I deeply felt, like time froze at a moment of fear and pain and the days after didn't bring the comfort or hope that Sunday usually does.

Since that terrible Saturday, Gaza has been caught in a terrible cycle of violence and so much loss. Dreams have disappeared, precious lives have been lost, and the already weak buildings and roads have been destroyed even more. Every single day brings more heavy burdens, from the bitterness of losing loved ones to the hard struggle to find the simplest things needed to survive.

Feeling scared and worried has become a constant for the people, while the hope of living for a better tomorrow gets smaller under the ongoing bombing and widespread destruction. 'A Saturday With No Sunday' also shows the deep feeling of loneliness and disappointment that surrounds Gaza.

The city, which has long suffered under the tight hold of Israeli occupation, feels even more cut off from the outside world in the middle of the terrible situation. Heart-breaking cries for help go up, but the help often comes slowly or isn't enough, making people feel like the world is just watching from far away while this unbearable human crisis gets worse.

But even in the darkest corners of this bitter reality, the amazing strength of the human spirit in Gaza shines through.

This isn't just about sharing; it's about an unspoken pact that no one will be left to face adversity alone. It is a living testament to the deeply ingrained values of community and empathy that have been passed down through generations. The collective spirit is also vividly displayed in the spontaneous and organised efforts to heal and rebuild. When homes are damaged, it is the neighbours who are first on the scene, clearing debris with their bare hands, offering shelter, and providing comfort.

The numerous volunteer initiatives, driven by a selfless desire to improve their shared environment, showcase the proactive nature of this communal bond. From cleaning streets and repairing infrastructure to organising educational programmes and providing psychosocial support, these efforts are fuelled by the understanding that collective action is the most potent tool for recovery and progress.

The laughter of children playing in the alleyways, despite the shadows of conflict, is perhaps one of the most poignant manifestations of this collective spirit. Their innocent joy, nurtured and protected by the community, is a powerful symbol of resilience and a defiant affirmation of life in the face of adversity. It underscores the shared responsibility to safeguard the well-being and the future of the younger generation, ensuring that hope remains alive and vibrant.

This inherent unity is not a passive response to hardship; it is a dynamic and evolving force that continuously seeks innovative solutions to the myriad challenges faced. It fosters an environment where ideas are exchanged, skills are shared, and collective wisdom is harnessed to overcome obstacles. Whether it's developing ingenious ways to cope with power shortages, establishing community gardens to supplement food supplies, or creating grassroots initiatives to support local businesses, the collective spirit fuels a culture of resourcefulness and innovation.

Furthermore, the collective spirit in Gaza extends beyond the practicalities of daily survival; it encompasses a shared cultural identity and a deep sense of belonging. Through communal celebrations, storytelling, artistic expression, and the preservation of traditions, the community reinforces its shared heritage and strengthens the bonds that tie people together. These cultural practices serve as a vital source of solace, identity, and collective memory, reminding individuals that they are part of something larger than themselves.

In essence, the enduring power of the collective spirit in Gaza is a beacon of hope in a challenging landscape. It is the unwavering belief that by standing together, supporting each other through thick and thin, and nurturing the seeds of hope, the community can not only withstand adversity but also cultivate a future marked by resilience, unity, and a shared sense of purpose. It is a testament to the profound strength that lies within human connection and the extraordinary capacity of the human spirit to persevere and thrive, even in the most trying of circumstances.

However, these brave efforts, as great as they are, can't replace the urgent need for a real solution that ends this destructive war and makes sure the people of Gaza have a safe and stable future. 'A Saturday With No Sunday' has to end. 'Sunday' needs to come, bringing hope and the recovery everyone longs for. The world is called upon today more than ever to act strongly, to stop the long-lasting human suffering, and to bring about justice and hope for a tomorrow where freedom and peace shine on this land.

The people of Gaza deserve a new dawn, a life of dignity that fits their humanity, and an end to this nightmare that weighs heavily on every single day they live, while the war still goes on and takes more lives and dreams.

Biography

Shams Mazen Rajab is in the final semester of a degree in English Language and Teaching Methods at Al-Aqsa University in Gaza. She has a great passion for creative writing and translation and has written articles and poems published for various platforms, including [Through Our Eyes](#) and [We Are Not Numbers](#). Shams believes that writing is not only a means of expression but also a refuge and escape from the harsh reality she has been through; through it, she has found her voice and strength to face life's challenges.

In July 2025, Shams volunteered with a French educational platform aimed at high school students (Tawjihi) in Gaza, where she helped correct English exams and guide students to improve their professional skills. Shams has also volunteered as a Conversation Leader in English Language Teaching. During the war, she has been teaching Arabic to foreign students, believing that language is a bridge for communication and resilience.



Photograph of the author, courtesy of the author.