

Each face in Gaza represents a precious life and its own story, and many of their stories have gone viral as examples of truth, faith, and resilience. Gaining the empathy and prayers of millions of admirers and well-wishers around the world, their stories are an inspiration for those watching these modern-day heroes jump into action to help one another. Embodying the values of the Qur'an, the people of Gaza are teaching us how to grieve, worship, live, and die. Among those we look up to for his demonstration of unwavering faith is a well-known grandfather, Khaled Nabhan or "Amu Khaled" as the world affectionately refers to him now. He lost two of his precious grandchildren, Reem, who, he said was the "soul of my soul," and her brother Tarek, just three and five years old. He fondly recalls their joyful memories together—Reem's tiny earring is now pinned to his clothing, close to his heart. Remarkably, he is still able to turn his attention to console another child who has just lost her leg, reassuring her that it awaits her in paradise. He is seen volunteering at the make-shift emergency rooms and leading funeral prayers, staying productive in the sight of his Lord, despite the immense weight of his own grief.

Brave photojournalists and numerous others still in their youth, are now the flag bearers of the truth and among the first responders on the scene after every bombardment. Many have already lost loved ones and many their own lives. They are deliberately targeted in order to silence them from exposing the truth about the atrocities being carried out.

Wael Al-Dahdouh is a veteran correspondent for Al Jazeera who lost his beloved wife, Amna, fifteen-year-old son, Mahmoud, seven-year-old daughter, Sham, and his one-and-a-half-year-old grandson, Adam. Barely a month later, his eldest son, Hamza, only twenty-seven and also a journalist, was brutally targeted and killed in his vehicle.

Wael is foremost a man of faith, and a father of eight. The strength of his faith shone through at the onset of his devastating news when he continued, committed to his work and the dissemination of truth even as he discovered the grim reality of his loved ones' deaths and mourned his losses. In an interview shortly after the first attack, he said, "It's a difficult moment in the life of a Palestinian journalist, when they go to cover an incident for the news and find out that the news is their own family."

Whether a mother comforting her children as they huddle together before the imminent overnight airstrike, a reporter capturing the anguish of its aftermath, a brother discovering his sibling has just joined those martyred, or a child undergoing surgery without anesthesia, we have witnessed the people of Gaza call upon God with the same conviction and powerful words that protected the Prophet Ibrahim (peace) from the blazing fire he was thrown into at the command of a tyrant ruler several millennia before.

Quran: "Allah alone is sufficient as an aid for us and He is the best Protector."

These are people of the Quran, those who strive to embody the excellence of its guidance, and this is how they will be honored and remembered. In divine revelation, the people of Gaza find the means to strengthen their faith and resilience, just as the Prophet (peace) and his Companions did during the Battle of Uhud. In Uhud, the Muslims were outnumbered and suffered a tremendous loss at the hands of the enemy. Nevertheless, they stood by their Prophet (p) and their cause. They remained steadfast, relying on God for victory, calling upon Him with this same supplication

We are required to persevere against injustice in all forms, to free others from oppression, and to stand firm for justice consistently, regardless of the religion, ethnicity, or background of the one being oppressed. If we are the ones enduring injustice, we are commanded to persevere, spread optimism, be strong, avoid faltering and becoming weak of heart. We are to turn to God in prayer and supplication, until the last breath of life. The meeting with God is near, so we cannot let this world distract us from why we are here; we cannot let this transitory world obscure what awaits us in the next life, the life of eternity.

#### SUPPLICATION

God has informed us of that His promises are true (Quran 35:5). He has informed us about the **acceptance of the prayer of the oppressed**, the righteous, the one who sincerely calls upon Him, and that not only are His promises true, but also that He is nearby (Quran 2:186). Someone may wonder, then, where is God's response to the supplication of the people of Palestine? The answer to that is found in the narration where Prophet Muhammad (p) said: "There is no Muslim who calls upon God, without sin or cutting family ties, but that God will give him one of three answers: He will quickly fulfill his supplication; He will store it for him in the Hereafter; or He will divert an evil from him similar to it." While supplication is answered in different forms, the one calling upon God is always rewarded for every single sincere supplication, and none goes unanswered.

Supplication is a means of communication and relationship between the Master and the servant, the Creator and the created being. It is an ongoing relationship, whether in times of ease or difficulty, whether to cry out in desperate need or to express gratitude, amplified if the believer is consistently pious all year. Making supplication shows that the believer recognizes how much we are in need of God, regardless of how much one has been blessed with worldly things, or not. The truth is that we are always in need of God, not just during calamities. Additionally, one does not know which form the supplication is being accepted in, but one must persevere and not be hasty, for God's promise is always true.

# Free Palestine

## Where is God's Help?

To answer the question posed — Where is God's help? God says: "Do you think you will be admitted into Paradise without being tested like those before you? They were afflicted with suffering and adversity and were so shaken that the Messenger and the believers with him cried out, '**When will God's help come?**' **Indeed, God's help is near**" (Quran 2:214).

**God's help is near.**

**Never think of those martyred in the cause of God as dead. In fact, they are alive with their Lord, well provided for—rejoicing in God’s bounties & being delighted for those yet to join them. There will be no fear for them, nor will they grieve.**

**W**e learn from stories of the most righteous humans, the prophets and messengers that God could instantly change a person’s situation but sometimes tests the believer for various reasons in His unlimited wisdom. If anyone “deserved” instantaneous relief from oppressors and the fulfillment of their requests, it would be the Prophets who went through severe pain for years, sometimes decades, with patience and sincere dedication. This is a lesson we learn historically and, also, we see today in the resilience of the righteous Muslims in Gaza. Their faith is tested, their sins are purified, their rank in paradise is raised, their supplication is elevated, their resilience is strengthened, their faith is manifest, their martyrdom is eternal bliss. Their worldly loss leads to increased gratitude and trust in God, and their firmness is inspiration for other Muslims. Without doubt, their pain is unequivocally recorded and will ultimately be ameliorated and rewarded by God.

God informs us of so many people historically who went through suffering, and yet persevered, in order for us to learn lessons from their resilience and promised reward. Some of them won battles when they were attacked by others, and the victory given to them in this world is a type of worldly success. But many of them did not live to experience relief or victory. Some were martyred in battles like Badr and Uhud. Their success was in holding on to their faith and enduring difficulty with patience and dedicated convictions about God, His wisdom, His justice, His promises. Leaving this world in a good spiritual state is the true success, when the believer enters the realm of eternal bliss and reward.

None of us chooses the tests that come our way. The tests are sometimes hard and sometimes almost inconceivably difficult. Palestinians did not choose the test of being occupied. But we believe with full conviction that God will never burden us with a test we cannot handle and

will reward each of us based on the personal tests we encounter. We do not know what tests may come our way in this life. But we are only accountable for our reactions and decisions relative to those tests. Whoever surrenders to God, is patient, inculcates goodness in himself and enjoins it in the world, and stands firm in justice — God does not fail to reward him or her.

Amid the devastating genocide raging through Gaza, from the rubble emerges an indestructible light that has captivated the hearts of people across the world—the faith and resilience of the people of Gaza. This isn’t the first war. Sadly, this also isn’t the first time that ethnic cleansing of an indigenous people has occurred at the hands of a tyrant occupier. However, this is the era of social media, where outsiders are able to witness the destruction unfold in an unprecedented way. Frequently described as an open-air prison and a concentration camp, Gaza has been held hostage and is now facing starvation, with little to no access to the essentials for survival, such as water, food, fuel, and medical care. The relentless slaughter of thousands of innocent civilians, a significant number of whom are women and children, is horrific and unfathomable.

Yet, we see their hope. The survivors are miraculously able to stand up and continue, despite losing everything time and time again. These are not ordinary people; their dignity and courage shine through our screens. As a Muslim-majority population, they bury their loved ones in gratitude for every God-given breath and with certainty that they will be reunited with them in paradise. Their eyes and hearts are fixed on the eternal life to come. The people of Gaza live in this world knowing it is not the be-all and end-all that modern-day secularism claims it to be. Betrayed and abandoned by the vast majority of the world, they see the stark reality of an unjust world that turns a blind eye to their plight and dismisses their screams.

Yet, they remain determined. Their faith cannot be silenced. Whether young or old, their voices carry the conviction that true victory is achieved in redirecting their fear and complaints to God Almighty, while exerting steadfastness through their refusal to give up. Their gratitude is firmly grounded in the belief that, despite their meager and desperate circumstances, they have already attained the greatest provision of this life—divine guidance. Hence, they wholeheartedly invest their effort toward the everlasting returns to come. This is demonstrated through their servitude, worship, and reliance on God. This is faith in action, this is Islam: complete submission to God. They have patience,

gratitude, and trust in God’s promise of paradise. This is the source of the inner peace and contentment we see manifested in the unmistakable glow upon their faces, amid the tears and smiles, and upon the faces of those left behind. The transformative nature of divine guidance inspires and produces such exemplary faith and resilience.

The people of Gaza are keenly aware of the battle over truth and are actively engaged in upholding it, and it is their perpetual and personal relationship with the Quran that strengthens, nourishes, and shapes their ability to do so. The Palestine Chronicle reports that Gaza has one of the proportionately largest Quran memorization populations in the world, frequently organizing Quran study and memorization events throughout Palestine.

According to one estimate, the Islamic Waqf of Gaza reported nearly 40,000 students of the Quran since 2006. Zakariya Alzemly, a professor of the Science of Quran and Comparative Religion explained this noteworthy dedication to the Quran, stating that, “The Quran gives us comfort. We’re living in bad conditions, under pressure. The Quran teaches us patience.”

It is the Quran that imparts upon them the knowledge and sharpened insight to empower them with the conviction and courage to stay the course to win, despite experiencing an ongoing massacre and ethnic cleansing.

In the face of arrogant oppressors who deny their right to exist, and who engage in genocide and humiliation, the people of Gaza clearly see the light of hope and victory. They know that God does not abandon anyone who sincerely calls upon Him and upholds truth. Every hardship has the promise of ease from Him. His guidance, the Quran, is that light and the rope to salvation to hold firmly to, from the depths of any and every darkness. God has a plan, and there is perfect wisdom in His timing. We see from the words live-streamed on social media that the people of Gaza find comfort and motivation in God’s verses, which reassure them of the eternal reward that awaits them.

Their truthfulness is found in their servitude and worship of God alone, adhering to His divine guidance, with sincere intentions and conduct.

Such are the believers who are praised by God for their virtues. God promises to reunite them in paradise with the righteous among their loved ones. They will be rewarded for keeping their covenant with Him, for upholding the ties of kinship, and for what they spend for His pleasure, while mindful of Him, fearing Him, and turning to Him alone in worship.

**May God grant justice & relief to our brothers & sisters in Palestine & all around the world. May He use us as a means of facilitating justice for them & for all oppressed people, wherever they are.**

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