



# PALESTINIAN WOMEN IN THE SHADOW OF GENOCIDE IN GAZA (2024)

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## ABSTRACT

*This paper explores the resilience and strengths demonstrated by women in Gaza amidst the ongoing conflict that escalated in October 2023. Despite facing profound hardships—including the loss of homes, loved ones, and basic necessities—women in Gaza have emerged as pivotal figures within their families and communities. Utilising qualitative narratives, this study highlights the values of solidarity, resourcefulness, and determination among these women, illustrating how they support each other and maintain cultural identity in the face of adversity.*

*Through in-depth interviews and field observations, the findings reveal Gaza's and Palestinian women's crucial roles as caregivers, educators, and community leaders. They emphasise their contributions to family cohesion and social stability amidst ongoing violence and psychological trauma. This study underscores the power of women's narratives as a source of hope and resilience, which can inform humanitarian responses and policymaking during wars or conflict zones.*

*Moreover, the implications of this research extend beyond Gaza's boundaries, offering critical insights into women's dynamic role in similar crises globally. This paper highlights the need for support systems tailored to empower women as key stakeholders in their communities. Ultimately, it calls for reconceptualising women's roles in the struggle for freedom by building more cohesion on the internal front, recognising their agency and essential contributions to societal resilience and recovery.*

**Keywords:** Women's Resilience, War on Gaza, Palestinian Women, Solidarity, Community Support, Narrative Research, Cultural Identity.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The ongoing conflict in Gaza has profoundly affected its civilian population, particularly women, who bear the brunt of the humanitarian crisis. As the war has unfolded, it has become increasingly clear that these women are not just passive victims but active agents of resilience and strength. This paper seeks to illuminate the myriad roles women in Gaza play in fostering solidarity, caring for their families, and preserving cultural identity amidst overwhelming adversity. The values that emerge from their experiences reflect a deep commitment to community and familial stability, showcasing their ability to inspire hope and enact change even in the face of profound suffering.

Throughout recent conflicts, Gazan women have demonstrated extraordinary resilience, often stepping into roles traditionally held by men due to the ongoing violence and displacement. They form support networks, share resources, and engage in humanitarian efforts, embodying a spirit of solidarity vital for their communities' survival. Despite the trauma of loss and the challenges ahead, these women maintain a sense of hope, working tirelessly to provide comfort, education, and emotional support to those around them.

The literature reveals how women's experiences in Gaza are marked by individual and collective struggles, shaping their identities as caretakers, educators, and advocates for their families and communities. By examining these narratives, this study aims to highlight the values and strengths that Gaza's women bring to the forefront during these harrowing times and contribute to a broader understanding of Women dynamics in conflict zones.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1. Values Coming from Women of Gaza Despite the Ongoing Genocide

The situation in Gaza, especially during times of conflict, led to profound reflections on resilience, strength, and solidarity among women. Buheji and Mushimiyimana (2023b) noted that women in Gaza demonstrated extraordinary resilience in the face of adversity. They often take on increased responsibilities, caring for families and supporting loved ones during crises, displaying strength in maintaining hope and stability. Al-Muhannadi and Buheji (2024)

Women in certain areas formed support networks to help one another through crises. This solidarity fosters a sense of community, where women share resources, provide emotional support, and collaborate on relief efforts and advocacy. Through storytelling, art, and cultural practices, women in Gaza work to preserve their identity and heritage even amidst destruction, Buheji and Khunji (2023). Many women inspired their community by frequently engaging in healing practices and humanitarian efforts, extending compassion to those affected by violence. Their roles as caregivers and nurturers are pivotal in helping communities recover and rebuild. These values reflect the challenges women face in Gaza and their ability to inspire and lead in difficult times. Buheji (2024a)

## 2.2. Resilience Amidst Ruins: The Plight of Palestinian Women in Gaza

Since October 2023, Palestinian women in the Gaza Strip have endured an intense and devastating war marked by relentless hardships and displacement. While they have faced adversity in prior conflicts, this war has inflicted a new, profound pain—one that involves the loss of not only their homes but entire neighbourhoods and families. Many have experienced the heart-wrenching loss of loved ones, including children, husbands, or parents. In this total genocidal context, all Palestinians in the Gaza Strip suffer collectively. Barr (2023)

**Figure (1)** Illustrates a Gazan Woman between the Displaced Camps Wondering about the Future



**Source:** Courtesy of UN Women (2024) Report - Scarcity and Fear, April.

The literature highlights the myriad roles that Palestinian women embody in the shadow of war and displacement. Their influence extends beyond the personal sphere; they are the bedrock of the family and community, providing patience, steadfastness, and stability to those who have lost loved ones. In the face of overwhelming hardship, these resilient women work tirelessly to maintain family cohesion, reinforcing the emotional and social fabric that binds their communities together. Buheji and Hasan (2024a)

Palestinian mothers exemplify resourcefulness, ensuring their families are nourished and clothed despite limited resources. Their determination to uphold the dignity of their households in the most challenging of circumstances is a testament to their strength. They are the unyielding foundation upon which their families lean, fostering a sense of hope and perseverance. Although men face significant burdens in providing for their families, the vital inner strength and emotional support women offer are irreplaceable. These women are the steadfast pillars that bolster their homes, giving reassurance and stability. Their endurance and patience serve as a powerful example of human resilience. With her incredible strength and unwavering spirit, the Palestinian woman stands as a beacon of hope in the face of adversity. We pray for her continued steadfastness, success, and guidance as she navigates the challenges ahead.

## 2.3. Shattered Lives: The Impact of War on Gaza's Women

The ongoing conflict has left the women of Gaza grappling with severe economic and psychological distress. Constant displacement has resulted in women having deep emotional wounds and the grief of losing family members. The trauma extends beyond the individual, affecting internal migration patterns and reshaping community dynamics. Barr (2023)

UNRWA (2024) explained how using homemade, makeshift alternatives to sanitary pads negatively impacted women's and girls' health and well-being. Overall, in Gaza, there are over 690,000 menstruating women and adolescent girls who require menstrual hygiene products in addition to access to clean water, toilets and privacy. The shortages of hygiene kits stocks have put many women and girls at risk of reproductive and urinary tract infections and protection-related risks. Barr (2023)

**Figure (2)** Shows the Suffering of Women and Girls in getting access to clean water, and clean toilets with Privacy



**Source:** Courtesy of UN Women (2024) Report - Scarcity and Fear, April.

Statistics reveal that nearly one in ten Gazans is either martyr, missing, or wounded, underscoring the pervasive nature of this tragedy. Additionally, countless women suffer from chronic health issues, with inadequate access to necessary treatments, medications, and living conditions.

#### **2.4. Guardians of Hope: Palestinian Women's Roles in Conflict**

In the face of continuous displacement, Gazan women have established makeshift camps and tent communities, often characterised by a lack of basic amenities. Many of these women struggle to secure proper shelter, food, and sanitation, enduring a life devoid of privacy and dignity. Daily realities compel women to take charge of their families, as husbands or fathers are often preoccupied with searching for what keeps them alive, Buheji and Hasan (2024b). In these circumstances, women emerge as pillars of strength, assuming responsibility for managing household needs and fostering resilience within displaced communities. Buheji (2024e)

## 2.5 Enduring Pain: The Multi-Dimensional Struggles of Gazan Women

For most women in Gaza, the burden of maintaining family stability amid harrowing conditions is immense. They strive to embody hope and fortitude, working tirelessly to ensure their families remain steadfast despite grief and despair. The past thirteen months have showcased innumerable women deserving of the title “Khansa of Palestine,” reflecting their enduring spirit and capacity to rise against adversity, make unique sacrifices, and show high acceptance of the fate of life, as the “Khansa” did in the early ages of Islam.

Figure (3) Shows the Type of Women Suffering as per the Gaza Map



Source: Courtesy of UN Women (2024) Report - Scarcity and Fear, April.

## 2.6. Building a Future: Education and Empowerment in Gaza's Refugee Camps

In the wake of loss—whether it be a husband, brother, or father—many Palestinian women expanded their caretaking responsibilities to include grandchildren and relatives left vulnerable. Some women have stepped into the role of caretaker for their daughters and their grandchildren, particularly for those who have lost their husbands. Additionally, remarkable resilience is displayed through establishing educational and recreational centres in refugee camps, where women help foster learning and provide Qur'an memorisation classes for children. This commitment to education is a form of defiance against oppression and a beacon of hope for future generations. Buheji (2024e)

Canon (2024) mentioned that the subsequent war in Gaza has triggered horrendous suffering, especially for women and girls. Twelve months of relentless bombing has killed more than 41,600 people and injured 96,000 so far, with most of those killed women and children. Palestinian women and girls from Gaza have reportedly been subjected to horrific levels of sexual violence, including while in detention.

An estimated 46,300 pregnant women in Gaza are now facing crisis levels of hunger. Some 155,000 pregnant and breastfeeding women face critical challenges in accessing antenatal and postnatal care. Unaffordable transportation and a lack of ambulance services hinder hospital access, most of which are only partially functioning, Canon (2024). Only around 11 per cent of the Gaza Strip has not been placed under evacuation orders since October 2023. Around 1.9 million of Gaza's 2.1 million people – 9 out of 10 – have been internally displaced, many multiple times. An estimated 43,580 pregnant women cannot always flee on short notice.

Displaced Palestinian women have to go through lakes of sewage, piles of trash and mountains of rubble, unable to access essential services for survival, including medical facilities, shelter, water and vital supplies. Women have lived in overcrowded shelters, coupled with the sanitation disaster and a scarcity of soap and hygiene products. This is making women and girls more vulnerable to violence, infections and disease. One in four women has reported skin infections, twice as many as men, and women account for most cases of hepatitis A and gastrointestinal diseases. Buheji (2024c)

In Gaza, 50,000 women are currently pregnant. Almost 160 women will give birth every day amid the violence. Most are unable to access health services, UNFPA (2023). UN Women (2024) published five series of gender alerts on the war in Gaza, exploring how the conflict has affected women's physical and mental health and is intended to support evidence-based advocacy and services.

More than 162,000 women suffer from or are at risk of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) such as hypertension, diabetes mellitus, cardiovascular disease and cancer. Women, in particular older women, in Gaza have historically been at a higher risk of NCDs.<sup>10</sup> There are over 30,841 women at risk of diabetes, 107,443 women at risk of hypertension, 18,583 women at risk of cardiovascular diseases, and 5,201 women with cancer.<sup>11</sup> Disruption in primary care for these diseases can result in long-term complications or death. UN Women (2024), Barr (2023)

Severe overcrowding in shelters and insufficient water and sanitation have led to hundreds of thousands of cases of acute respiratory infections, jaundice, diarrhoea and skin rashes. Women and girls face a heightened risk of exposure due to their disproportionate role in caring for sick family members. Twice as many women as men reported having skin infections, and women accounted for more than two-thirds of cases of gastrointestinal diseases and hepatitis A. UN Women (2024)

An estimated 155,000 pregnant and breastfeeding women confront obstacles to antenatal and postnatal care.<sup>12</sup> Among pregnant women interviewed, almost all experienced challenges related to nutrition. Some 69 per cent had experienced complications such as urinary tract infections, anaemia, pre-term labour and hypertensive disorders.

In a survey carried out by UN Women (2024), around 75 per cent of women stated they regularly feel depressed; 62 per cent often cannot sleep, and 65 per cent frequently feel nervous and have nightmares. UN Women (2024)

## **2.7. The Unyielding Spirit: Struggles of Palestinian Women**

The struggle of Palestinian women is a testament to resilience amidst unrelenting hardship. These women confront their circumstances with unwavering patience, coping with relentless suffering and profound sacrifices. In the face of staggering challenges, they strive to educate and raise their children under conditions that can only be described as harsh, Migdad and Buheji (2024c). The commitment of Gazan women to provide for their children and meet the aspirations of a nation grappling with conflict is a story that deserves to be told. Buheji and Mushimiyimana.

## **3. METHODOLOGY**

This study employs a qualitative narrative research design to explore and document the stories of resilience from women in Gaza. The aim is to capture the complexities of their experiences and highlight the values and strengths that emerge in the face of adversity. This design allows for an in-depth understanding of personal narratives and the contextual factors influencing these women's lives during the war on Gaza that started in October 2023.

Participants were selected through purposive sampling to ensure a diverse representation of Gaza women who were impacted by the conflict. The inclusion criteria focused on Women aged 18 and above who resided in Gaza during the ongoing war on Gaza. Women from a range of backgrounds, including mothers, students, healthcare workers, and activists, were included. The focus would be on those willing to share their stories and experiences regarding resilience and coping mechanisms.

Approximately 15 women were interviewed in in-depth narrative semi-structured interviews. Each interview lasted about 60 to 90 minutes and focused on open-ended questions to elicit detailed stories about their experiences, coping strategies, and sources of resilience.

In addition to the stories, observational fieldwork was conducted in various areas of the Gaza Strip, such as refugee camps, schools, and displacement areas. The researchers documented interactions, communal activities, and women's daily lives, enriching the understanding of their resilience in context.

Thematic narratives were constructed using participant quotes and critical insights, weaving individual stories into broader themes highlighting collective experiences. To enhance the credibility of the findings, selected participants reviewed the constructed narratives to ensure their stories were accurately represented and that the interpretation aligned with their experiences.

All participants gave their ethical approval. This study's potential limitations included the access challenges within conflict zones, which hindered participant focus, recruitment, and data collection.

## **4. STORIES OF RESILIENCE CREATED BY GAZAN WOMEN**

### **4.1 Story 1: Gazan Women as Symbol of Sacrifice and Survival**

Life in a tent starkly contrasts the comforts of home, as women are forced to leave behind everything familiar. They transition into makeshift shelters composed of cloth or tarps, subjecting themselves to the elements without adequate protection from the scorching sun or biting cold. Gazan women encounter extreme hardships, including harsh living conditions rife with insects and inadequate resources. Despite these challenges, they adapt, engineering their tents to create spaces for cooking and sleeping.

A poignant story emerges of Umm Alaa, who, despite enduring shrapnel wounds while inside her tent during Ramadan, displayed unwavering faith and resilience, pleading for justice and mercy in her suffering. Even amid the chaos of war, Palestinian women like Umm Alaa work diligently to sustain the teachings and learning for the Gazan students despite the overwhelming tragedies surrounding them. Their capacity to endure loss is profound as they face the challenge of maintaining familial patience during harrowing times. These women manage the household, constantly seeking alternatives in a world of deprivation. From sourcing food from limited aid supplies to creatively utilising canned goods, they assume the responsibility for family stability amidst societal turmoil.

**Figure (4)** A Palestinian Woman Teaching her Children and Some of the Neighbours in the Tent in the Displacement Camps of Mawasi Khan Yunis



**Source:** Authors

#### **4.2. Story 2- Gaza's Women's Role in Family Stability Amidst Turmoil**

The adverse effects of loss since October 2023 can be profound, but the Palestinian woman endures, working to mend the family unit in the aftermath of tragedy. Many widows assume the dual roles of nurturer and provider, stepping up to meet the demands placed upon them after losing their husbands. They wrap their arms around their remaining children, offering love, support, and a semblance of normalcy amidst chaotic living conditions.

Umm Muhammad, for instance, gathers the camp children—many of whom have also lost their fathers—to create moments of joy and respite through play. She tells stories from Islamic traditions, reminding them of their heritage and relevance to being tolerant and resilient to their fate while weaving joy into their daily lives amidst the remnants of heartache.

Resourcefulness is critical in these challenging times. Gazan women like Umm Muhammad have ingeniously repurposed materials within their environment, such as cutting sponges to fashion pillows and bedding to comfort their families. These small acts of ingenuity enhance their living conditions and reinforce a sense of community and shared resilience among the women of Gaza.

In these tents, the brutal realities of life leave women like Umm Muhammad grappling with insufficient necessities. Essential items like detergents, soaps, and grooming supplies for their children are luxuries they can no longer afford. Many women, forced to cut their hair, adapt to their new normal in a world where even the simplest comforts have been stripped away. Clothing, once abundant, is replaced by tattered garments salvaged from used clothing bales, painstakingly mended by hand.

As days stretch into months and what began as a temporary dislocation evolves into a protracted reality, the scarcity of supplies compounds the suffering of Umm Muhammad and other Gazan women. Their suffering is alarming as prices soar while essential hygiene products become unreachable. In this unforgiving landscape, women improvise, substituting sea water for washing powders and sand for cleaning.

**Figure (5)** A picture of a Palestinian woman wrapping the bedding and sewing clothes in the absence of alternatives in the shadow of war and the tent



**Source:** Authors

### **4.3 Story 3- Creative Survival: Gazan Women's Resourcefulness Amidst Crisis**

The war on Gaza has transcended mere destruction; it has become an economic battleground, tightening the siege on its resilient people. As months passed, basic staples such as flour became scarce in households. Gazan women navigated this crisis by replacing bread with alternatives like rice and bulgur. However, as the prices of these items escalated and availability dwindled, these women resorted to the rare flour they managed to obtain, dividing it among family members so that everyone received a portion—though hardly sufficient. Migdad et al. (2024a)

In one illustration of hardship, a displaced woman, Umm Salim, recounted her husband's triumphant return with a bag of flour he purchased for three hundred dollars. The family celebrated, only to discover their host devouring a scoop of the precious flour. This single bag was woefully inadequate, with up to forty people in the household. As the situation worsened, families often fasted for days, with evenings marked by the scarce options of canned peas and beans. Gazan women creatively repurposed these staples into falafel or omelettes, demonstrating remarkable adaptability in adversity. Migdad and Buheji (2024a)

### **4.4 Story 4 - Gazan Woman as an Educator in Adversity**

Desperate to ensure that education continues amid chaos, a Gazan woman named Fatima transformed her home into a makeshift classroom after the conflict escalated in October 2023. While many schools had been damaged or repurposed as shelters, Fatima gathered the neighbourhood children to teach them basic subjects and instil a sense of normalcy in their lives.

Despite limited resources, she utilised materials from her home and encouraged children to share their stories and dreams, fostering a supportive environment. Her passion for education became a beacon of hope, inspiring other women in the community to join her efforts and creating an informal network of educators dedicated to keeping the spirit of learning alive. Migdad et al. (2024c)

This task of Fatima would be highly appreciated if we knew that she is like other Gazan women who would have to feed their families. It became daunting as gas supplies became scarce and even wood burned. Women like Fatima, who once relied on stoves, find themselves preparing meals over open flames, a technique unfamiliar to many. As they spend long hours tending to fires, the increasing cost of bread forces families to forage for alternative fuels like dry leaves and cardboard, demonstrating the extreme lengths these mothers will go to for their families. At the same time, they stay committed to their community.

#### **4.5 Story 5 - Gazan Women as an Innovative Entrepreneurs**

After destroying local businesses, Leila, a widow with three children, quickly adapted to the challenging economic landscape by starting her home-based bakery. With little more than a clay oven and some essential ingredients salvaged from aid packages, she began baking traditional Palestinian pastries and bread to sell in her neighbourhood. Her determination provided sustenance for her family and helped support neighbours struggling to make ends meet. As word of her delicious goods spread, Leila gained a following, allowing her to involve other women who shared her entrepreneurial spirit, creating a small but thriving cooperative that empowered them to contribute economically while building a sense of community.

The air is thick with the smoke of burning plastic, a harsh reminder of the compromises they must make, yet women like Leila embody patience and resilience, fortified by their strong faith in God and the visualisation of the results of their sacrifice. A picture emerges of strength, hope, and an unbreakable spirit in the face of adversity as they strive to create a semblance of normalcy within the tent—a temporary kitchen that reflects their endurance and unwavering dedication to their families. Buheji (2023)

#### **4.6 Story 6- Gazan Woman as Emotional Anchor**

Aisha became a cornerstone of emotional support for her family following the loss of her husband in the conflict. With five children to care for, she focused on creating a nurturing environment during their times of mourning. Aisha organised family gatherings, where they would recount stories and share their feelings, allowing each member to express their grief and find solace together. Her resilience manifested in encouraging her children to participate in community activities and cultural practices, fostering a sense of continuity and belonging amidst their turmoil. Aisha's ability to maintain familial bonds and emotional stability empowered her children to navigate their grief and find strength in unity, showcasing the vital role of women as emotional anchors in times of crisis.

Yet, the Palestinian woman stands as a beacon of strength and resilience, channelling her grief into a source of inspiration for others, as per the study of Buheji. and Ahmed (2018). As a model of patience and perseverance, she personifies the spirit of a nation that refuses to be defeated. Even when her family bears the burden of loss, Gazan women embody resilience, teaching their children to draw strength from their unwavering resolve. One example is the emotional exchange with Umm Ahmed, who expressed her despair after losing family members. Umm Ahmed was an anchor for her son, reminding him that her strength and patience would guide him through their shared sorrow. Such narratives are familiar among Gazan women, who express their grief not through mourning but by celebrating the lives of their loved ones and encouraging others to find solace in their legacy.

#### **4.7 Story 7- Women of Gaza as a Health Advocate**

In the midst of a health crisis exacerbated by the conflict, Mariam, a nurse, stepped up to serve her community amidst shortages of medical supplies and access to care. Following the escalation in violence, she operated a makeshift clinic in her home, providing essential medical care to neighbours, including tending to injuries from bombardments and treating common ailments. Knowing the importance of maternal and child health, Mariam also organised health workshops, advising families on hygiene practices and nutrition using readily available resources. Her dedication to improving health outcomes for her community not only alleviated immediate suffering but also instilled a sense of hope and resilience. Mariam's tireless efforts reflect Gazan women's crucial role as caregivers, healers, and advocates for their families amidst ongoing challenges.

#### **4.8 Story 8- Strength in Family: The Role of Women in Extended Networks**

Umm Abdul Rahman, a 54-year-old mother of nine children, embodies the strength and fortitude of Gazan women. Displaced from her home in Gaza to Rafah, Umm Abdul Rahman faces the daunting task of providing for her family while nurturing her daughters' children in the shadow of loss. With one daughter mourning her husband and another unable to leave due to imprisonment, Women like Umm Abdul Rahman take on an invaluable role as the emotional and logistical support for her extended family.

Women like Umm Abdul Rahman in Gaza invest time encouraging their grandchildren to memorise the Quran and providing for their pregnant daughter's needs. Despite her exhausting day spent walking to visit family—many of whom have suffered the loss of their homes—she remains committed to uplifting those around her. Whether it involves comforting a grieving sister or planning for the arrival of her grandchild, Umm Abdul Rahman's efforts reflect women's vital role in fostering resilience and cohesion within their families and communities. Migdad and Buheji (2024b)

#### **4.9 Story 9- Resilient Spirits: Women's Contributions to the Gaza Economy**

Palestinian women have historically shouldered family responsibilities, with many engaged in education, nursing, and other essential professions. The war has not deterred them; instead, they have stepped into roles as primary breadwinners in the absence of their husbands, providing for their families while maintaining their dignity and honour. To combat soaring prices and inflation, some Gazan women like Umm Muath have opted to sell their jewellery and embrace entrepreneurial ventures, including baking and crafting.

After flour supplies became available, women began producing pastries and sweets and selling them on the streets. The risks are high—mothers send their children out to sell these goods, aware that each outing could bring danger. Mothers like Umm Muath send their sons every day to sell pastries. Recently, one of them returned injured, one in critical condition. In the absence of medical care, she improvises with herbal remedies, highlighting the extraordinary resilience of Gazan women who continue to navigate a life fraught with danger and scarcity. Migdad et al. (2024b)

## **5. OBSERVATIONS COLLECTED FROM THE FIELD DURING WAR ON GAZA 2023/2024**

### **5.1. A Struggle for Survival: The Daily Realities of Gazan Women**

In the sweltering heat of July and August, when temperatures soar to forty degrees Celsius, the anguish of inadequate drinking water becomes palpable. The absence of electricity renders refrigeration impossible, leaving families without even a sip of cool water to refresh their spirits. In response to these harsh conditions, women have ingeniously devised methods to keep water cool by wrapping bottles in cloth—a testament to their resourcefulness and resilience in adversity.

### **5.2. Empowerment Through Education: Women as Pillars of Society**

Central to women's role in Palestinian society is the vital task of education. They face the dual challenge of raising the next generation while combating efforts by the occupying forces to undermine education and corrupt young minds. Recognising that the Gazan women are the backbone of society—raising future generations—they commit themselves to this critical role. Moreover, they actively counter the propaganda and misinformation propagated as a war strategy, using their position to foster unity and resilience within their communities.

Through educational programs and initiatives developed by the Gazan women, they effectively address recurring issues children face in their communities, creating safe spaces for learning amidst the chaos of displacement. Migdad and Buheji (2024a)

### **5.3. Resilience in Faith: The Role of Women in Preserving Heritage**

Palestinian women maintain a deep commitment to their religious heritage, exemplified by their dedication to Islam and the issue of Palestine Freedom. Despite their overwhelming challenges, women in Gaza continue to inspire their children to pursue this goal. Women of all ages, from the elderly to the young, gather in solidarity, dedicating time to the spiritual sustenance of their community.

In the face of war, the women of Gaza strive to transform their trials into opportunities for spiritual growth, fostering optimism for a brighter future. Many pursue higher education online despite limited resources, echoing the sentiment of defiance embodied in their mantra, “No to the impossible.”

### **5.4 Strength in Adversity: The Impact of Loss on Gazan Women**

The Al-Aqsa Flood War has marked a devastating chapter in Gaza's history, with countless lives lost and entire families torn apart. The statistics are staggering, with estimates suggesting over two hundred thousand martyrs, wounded or missing. Women, like their male counterparts, have suffered greatly, with many enduring the loss of loved ones, including husbands and children.

### **5.5 Finding Joy in Adversity: Gazan Women and Holiday Traditions**

As Ramadan approached, celebrations were overshadowed by the grim realities of war. Where once families exchanged gifts of fruits and sweets, deprivation reigned supreme. The customary joys of the holy month were replaced with an urgent quest for sustenance, where simple sweets made from leftover bread and sugar syrup became the norm.

During Eid al-Fitr, the absence of traditional festivities heightened the responsibility of Gazan women. As many Gazan children were deprived of new clothes and treats, they still clung to the hope of celebration. With their unwavering spirit, Gazan women sought to revive the essence of Eid, crafting alternatives such as canned sardine dishes to offer a taste of normalcy amidst hardship. Their resilience defined the holiday spirit, reflecting their commitment to preserving cultural traditions despite profound challenges. Buheji (2024d)

As Eid al-Adha approached, the situation worsened. Families remained dispersed, and the traditional sacrifice became an unattainable dream in a landscape marred by destruction. Nevertheless, Gazan women creatively transformed their circumstances, using canned mushrooms and finding joy in improvised dishes, all while holding steadfast to their faith and optimism for the future.

**Figure (6)** A picture of a Palestinian woman patching up a tent to protect the family from rain and wind.



**Source:** Authors

### **5.6 Weathering the Storm: Gaza's Women in Winter Conditions**

As winter storms batter the makeshift tents of displaced families in Gaza, the unwavering spirit of Palestinian women shines brightly. This persistence is exemplified by a woman diligently patching her family's tent, fiercely protecting them from the harsh elements, including rain and wind. Her actions symbolise the broader resilience of women who continuously strive to provide safety and comfort amidst chaos. As winter envelops Gaza, the plight of families living in makeshift tents becomes dire. Heavy rains and strong winds threaten to dismantle fragile shelters, leaving women and children exposed to living without shelter.

## 6. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the narratives presented in this study reveal the profound resilience of women in Gaza, who navigate the harrowing challenges of conflict and displacement with unwavering strength and determination. Despite the overwhelming adversity they face—ranging from the loss of loved ones to the erosion of fundamental rights—these women emerge as vital pillars of support within their families and communities. Their roles as caregivers, educators, and leaders underscore women's essential contributions in sustaining hope and solidarity amidst despair.

This research highlights the collective values of solidarity, resourcefulness, and compassion characterising Gazan women's experiences. By sharing their stories, these women document their struggles and illuminate pathways of resilience that inspire and empower others within their communities.

The methodology employed in this study was designed to effectively capture and analyse the personal stories of resilience from women in Gaza, providing insights into their lived experiences amidst conflict. Moreover, this study's implications extend beyond Gaza, shedding light on the broader dynamics of women in conflict zones worldwide. It calls for a transformative understanding of women's roles in peacebuilding and recovery efforts, advocating for their recognition as critical stakeholders in shaping the future of their communities.

As policymakers and humanitarian organisations strive to support those affected by the War on Gaza, it is crucial to integrate women perspectives into interventions that promote resilience. Empowering women and amplifying their voices will be instrumental in fostering community cohesion in the coming stage in Gaza and driving further sustainable development in post-conflict settings. Ultimately, the strength and spirit of Gazan women serve as a testament to the indomitable human capacity for endurance, reminding us that even in the darkest times, hope and resilience can prevail.

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