



The Mood in Gaza on the First Anniversary of the Gaza Strip War

December 8, 2024

Overview¹

- ▶ A year after the October 7, 2023 Hamas attack and massacre, and the outbreak of the Gaza Strip War, the Gazans' euphoria has been replaced by despair over the heavy destruction, the displacement from homes and the high death toll.²
- ▶ The main criticism on Palestinian social networks in Gaza focuses on the hardships of life amid the ongoing war, uncertainty about the future, hunger, high food prices and difficulties in finding shelter and food.
- ▶ Considerable criticism is also directed at Hamas, particularly its "external" leaders who do not live in Gaza and are perceived as disconnected from the growing suffering of the residents. Since the death of Yahya al-Sinwar, head of the Hamas political bureau in the Gaza Strip, who was seen as the "architect" of the October 7, 2023 attack, Khaled Mashal, head of the "external" Hamas leadership, has become the primary target of Gazan anger.
- ▶ In addition to the criticism on social media, feelings of despair and anger toward Hamas are reflected in public opinion polls, which show low support for the possibility of Hamas' continuing to rule Gaza after the war, as well as low approval for the October 7 attack and the continuation of "armed resistance" against Israel.
- ▶ **Despite criticism and frustration, there has not yet been a broad public protest against Hamas in Gaza, most probably because of fear of retaliation, especially in light of Hamas efforts to maintain its power on the ground, including through the Interior Ministry's Sahem Unit, which theoretically operates against looters and disorderly conduct. Despite internal criticism of the leadership in Gaza, Israel is still perceived as the primary enemy and is described as "cruel and genocidal."**

¹ Click <https://www.terrorism-info.org.il/en> to subscribe and receive the ITIC's daily updates as well as its other publications.

² For further information, see the November 2023 ITIC report, "[The price Gazans pay for criticizing Hamas](#)," and the December 2023 report, "[Rifts between Gazan civilians and the Hamas leadership, and increasing public criticism of the organization](#)."

Anger and Desperation

►The Hamas terrorist attack and massacre of Israelis on October 7, 2023, initially sparked feelings of euphoria and pride among Palestinians, particularly in the Gaza Strip, over the perceived victory over the "Israeli enemy." However, after a year of intense Israeli strikes and fighting, with more than 40,000 deaths (according to Hamas-controlled ministry of health in Gaza), extensive destruction, and hundreds of thousands of residents displaced from their homes, criticism of the war is becoming increasingly apparent on social media, combining despair at continued fighting, frustration with the residents' situation and anger at Hamas:

- ◆ Ahead of the anniversary of the Hamas attack, Bassem Othman, a resident of northern Gaza, posted, "As a Gazan, how do you feel about October 7?!" The post was shared 12,000 times and received about 18,000 comments. Kareem Jawdah, a Palestinian from the Jebalya refugee camp who was displaced at the start of the war, wrote, "Maybe the best thing today was Bassem Othman's post, which for the first time presented the true opinion of Gazans to the Arab community." Muhammad Samson wrote, "Anyone vile enough to be proud of October 7 is betraying the blood of our children." Yasser Abu Ghalion wrote, "A dark day for us that destroyed our lives, leaving no relatives or loved ones. May Allah settle accounts with Hamas." Wissam Waleed Masharawi wrote, "I swear to Allah we have started to hate the entire month of October because of this black date." Muhannad Hamad wrote, "An act of betrayal" (Bassem Othman's Facebook page, October 6, 2024).
- ◆ A resident of northern Gaza recorded his anger with Hamas, the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) and "resistance" operatives. He wrote, "What have we gained from October 7 other than destruction and death? Give me one thing we gained." He repeated that several times before launching into a series of curses (yohommalali's X account, September 4, 2024).



A northern Gaza Strip resident vents his frustration and anger (yohommali's X account, September 4, 2024)

- ◆ In a video of a refugee convoy leaving northern Gaza, one of the displaced persons shouted at the photographer, "This is the achievement? This is the achievement, Hamas? May Allah settle accounts with you for displacing the people in this way" (Abu al-Hassan's X account, November 20, 2024).
- ◆ Om Ahmad, a resident of Abasan in the Khan Yunis area, said, "Our children are hungry; they want cookies, bread, food. How do children feel when you tell them there's no bread? Isn't it enough that my children became orphans after losing a father who provided them with everything?" She continued, "Allah, have mercy on us, end this cursed war. We can't provide diapers or milk or flour" (madlean om ahmad's Facebook page, November 24, 2024).
- ◆ In a video aired on al-Arabiya TV, a woman standing in the middle of the rubble shouted, "Allah Himself said to avoid confronting the enemy, and the Prophet ensured the preservation of believers' lives. Even at the Battle of Badr,³ the Prophet kept the fighting away from the well so people would have water. We have no lives, no homes, no memories. As long as the Muslim Brotherhood is satisfied and Hamas is happy – Allah will settle accounts with you" (al-Arabiya, November 26, 2024).
- ◆ In another video, a resident lamented, "I had a 280-square-meter house, four floors. I was one of Gaza's largest merchants, and now I'm in a collapsing tent. Stop the war" (Hamza al-Masri's Instagram account, November 25, 2024).
- ◆ The despair felt by many in Gaza was well described by Islam al-Astal in her blog. She wrote, "We are heading toward the inevitable end. Even if we are breathing, I don't think any of us are truly alive. Sometimes I feel we've simply turned into machines, seeking

³ The Battle of Badr between the army of Muhammad and the army of the Quraish was fought in the Arabian Peninsula in 634 C.E.

ways to provide food, water and a tent with a roof that doesn't leak when it rains. We are used to standing in lines which humiliate us, one for water, one for the toilet, one for bread and another to fill a pot with beans or pasta from the camp or neighborhood soup kitchen. There are lines in front of the doctors' offices in hospitals and government clinics, others at the pharmacy for medicine when it's available, another for blood tests. There are thousands of us and each one has a hundred and one stories to tell. What's the point? Will the situation really change?" (Islam al-Astal's blog, within the Noy Network, the Women's News Network, November 24, 2024).

► However, there were also rare expressions of support for the October 7, 2023, attack, even after a year of massive destruction. Abd al-Hamid Hamayed wrote, "Honestly, despite everything we've been through, I feel proud." Sara Abd al-Nasser wrote: "A great day when we showed the occupation the power of Allah and the courage of the people" (Rahma Ashraf's Facebook page, October 12, 2024).

Criticism of the Hamas Leadership

► After October 7, 2024, most of the Gazans' criticism of the Hamas leadership was directed at Yahya al-Sinwar, head of the Hamas political bureau in the Gaza Strip, at the time of the attack and was appointed head of the entire Hamas political bureau in September 2024 following the death of Isma'il Haniyeh. However, after Sinwar's death on October 16, 2024, a significant portion of the criticism shifted toward Hamas' "external" leader, Khaled Mashal. Mashal's speech on October 7, 2024, in which he referred to the loss of life in Gaza as "only a tactical loss," provoked outrage and deepened frustration toward the Hamas leadership, particularly those living in luxury abroad:

- ◆ "Mashal is the Pharaoh of our time. Gaza has been completely destroyed, and of course, he doesn't care because he's staying in a five-star hotel with his family, receiving a monthly salary from the Muslim Brotherhood and following on Iran's instructions to serve its agenda, betraying the Palestinian people and cause under the guise of resistance" (al-Arabiya, October 7, 2024).

- ◆ "Hamas and Mashal, enough with the lies. You are the reason for Gaza's disasters because of your loyalty to Iran, your recklessness and your inability to foresee the consequences of the attack you call Operation al-Aqsa Flood" (al-Arabiya, October 7, 2024).

- ◆ "They're not ashamed to lie. Hezbollah lost all its leaders, Hamas lost its military strength, and then the lying Muslim Brotherhood member comes and tells you "Tactical" and we are winning" (al-Arabiya, October 7, 2024).
 - ◆ A responder named Saleh Iyad quoted Mashal and added curses. "Everything that happens to us, the [Palestinian] people, is 'tactical losses,' but what happens to them, to Israel, is 'strategic losses.' May Allah take revenge on you, Khaled Mashal" (Hamza al-Masri's Telegram channel, October 10, 2024).
- Criticism of Hamas and the decision to launch the October 7, 2023, attack and massacre also had religious aspects. Professor Salman al-Dayya, a lecturer and dean at the Hamas-affiliated Islamic University, issued a fatwa stating that the conditions required to justify jihad were not met in the October 7 attack. He argued that politicians should have avoided actions likely to result in the loss of life and that the heavy civilian casualties in Gaza, extensive infrastructure destruction, and severe humanitarian crisis showed that the attack on October 7, 2023, contradicted both religious principles and the interests of the people (Independent, November 16, 2024).

The Plight of the Gazans

- The economic and humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip is a central topic in local Gazan public discourse. Social media posts have harsh criticism of Hamas' civilian governance and the struggles residents face due to shortages of basic goods and the high cost of living:
- ◆ Ahmed Abu Uday Tabeuni, a resident of northern Gaza, said, "Everything has been destroyed. In Gaza, there are no homes, no hospitals and not even food. Prices are skyrocketing." He said he had gone to the market and could not buy anything because prices were so high. He blamed the merchants for exploiting the people and called on residents to seize food from warehouses (Hamza al-Masri's Telegram channel, November 23, 2024).



Ahmed Abu Uday Tabeuni (Hamza al-Masri's Telegram channel, November 23, 2024)

- ◆ Lubna Amer, displaced from her home in northern Gaza, said, "We bought bread from peddlers in the camp, and when we ate it, it smelled bad, the flour was spoiled and moldy. But people bought it because there was no other food." She added, "Yesterday, a merchant arrived with six sacks of flour and offered to sell each one for 160 shekels [about \$40] before the police came and forced him to sell them for 50 shekels. People rushed to buy the sacks to feed their families, only to discover that all the flour was moldy" (Quds Agency, October 28, 2024).
- ◆ Mahmoud Khudair, a resident of Khan Yunis living in the humanitarian area in al-Mawasi, said, "I went to the only bakery in al-Mawasi and stood in line with thousands of people. The price of a single loaf of bread [pita] reached one shekel, and small bakeries are selling it by weight, where the price of seven loaves reaches nine shekels." He added, "Even alternatives are a disgrace; all vegetables and basic goods are priced outrageously. There are days when I can only eat a small crumb of bread to be able to satisfy my children's hunger" (Quds, October 28, 2024).
- ◆ A user named Madlean Om Ahmed complained in a video circulated on Facebook, "The merchants raised the price of diapers to maintain their price monopoly. How can I afford a pack of diapers for 250 shekels? It's not enough that you've turned half of Gaza's children into orphans, now even the price of diapers is beyond belief. May Allah take revenge on you" (Madlean Om Ahmed's Facebook page, October 11, 2024).
- ◆ Salwa al-Masri, displaced from Beit Hanoun and residing in a camp for displaced persons in Deir al-Balah, complained about the suffering inside the tents during winter. She described how the tents flooded and how her children suffered from severe illnesses brought on by the intense cold (Filastiniyat X account, November 27, 2024).



Salwa al-Masri (Filastiniyat X account, November 27, 2024)

- ◆ Salem al-Ghamri, 45 years old, from Rafah, said his family had been left with nothing. "We are refugees, repeatedly displaced from our home." Nevertheless, he said he was determined to remain in Gaza (Filastiniyat X account, November 27, 2024).



Salem al-Ghamri (Filastiniyat X account, November 27, 2024)

No oversight of aid distribution

►A significant topic on social media was the accusations of the theft of humanitarian aid and Hamas' role in it. In Gaza there is widespread public anger at merchants who exploit the population and at those accused of stealing food. The frustration and outrage intensified significantly after three women were crushed to death while waiting in line for bread. Many expressed anger and frustration with the Hamas leadership in Gaza, accusing them of exploiting residents, stealing resources and creating artificial crises to profit from the public's suffering. The accusations included the humiliating of women, widespread poverty, and a lack of bread, alongside calls for action for change and the resolution of the crises. Gazan activist's Hamza al-Masri's Telegram channel, with more than 811,000 followers, had the following comments (Hamza al-Masri's Telegram channel, November 29–30, 2024):

- ◆ Ahmed: "The police themselves steal the bread and then give it to whoever they want."

- ◆ MSH HSM: "May Allah punish those who brought Gaza to this state, filthy blood merchants and traitors."
- ◆ Hamed Fugu: "Shameful and disgraceful. Sadly, they want the crisis to continue to gain media sympathy. The crisis is deliberate and everyone is complicit, from UNRWA to the thugs who own the bakeries. All of this is just to profit at the expense of the citizens' suffering."
- ◆ Khaled Jamal: "Those who can't manage a line at a bakery and deliberately create a crisis, how can they manage a just cause and a sacred state? How did we get here? Who is responsible? Where are those with wisdom? The north and the south have turned into pits of suffering. Why insist on portraying us to the world as barbaric and ignorant?"
- ◆ Many commenters also directed criticism at the Hamas leadership. "The leaders fill their pockets with millions of dollars taken from the mouths of the hungry and the weak." "The women of Gaza stand for hours in humiliating, disgraceful lines at bakeries, sometimes until their death... If you can't put an end to this, step aside for those who understand what true leadership is."

Gazan Self-Criticism

▶ Alongside criticism of the Hamas leadership, frustration with the humanitarian situation and the ongoing war, residents also expressed discontent over the lack of social unity and the rise of home break-ins, looting and theft of humanitarian supplies. Such events have led residents of Gaza examine themselves regarding the moral decline of the local population, even accusing themselves as being partially to blame for the current situation:

- ◆ A Gazan named Yusuf Jiab responded to criticism directed at aid organizations in the Strip, writing, "Be thankful that the World Food Programme brings you flour. It's not the organization's fault if the people behave barbarically and half of them are bread merchants. They need strict discipline. Yesterday, I saw merchants shoving outside the al-Safraa bakery, it was shocking. The government needs to stop the chaos at bakeries, especially among women, who are the main source of disorder and bread trading. There are families there acting like gangs" (al-Nuseirat refugee camp Telegram channel, November 29, 2024).
- ◆ A Gazan calling himself "Pray to the Prophet" wrote, "We are a people who deserve the punishment we're getting. Our silence allows everyone to exploit us. Only the people of Gaza themselves can stop the war, because the leaders who live in hotels are just

inflating their bank accounts. The leaders in Gaza won't end the war, because they enjoy the power" (Hamza al-Masri's Telegram channel, November 30, 2024).

◆ Ihsan Ashour, the Mufti of Khan Yunis district, was also sharply critical of the Gazans, claiming they were "fertile ground for immoral merchants" who exploited civilians by stealing humanitarian aid and food and selling them in markets at exorbitant prices. Ashour, who enjoys public trust in Gaza, condemned the "dirty" trade policies based on hoarding food, creating an artificial shortage and exploiting the local market (Independent, November 17, 2024).

Public Opinion Polls Reflect the Gazans' Mood

► Public criticism of Hamas, along with frustration and pessimism over the continuation of the war and uncertainty about "the day after," were also reflected in public opinion polls conducted among Gazans by Palestinian research institutes.

Arab World for Research and Development (AWRAD) public opinion polls

► In August 2024, a survey was conducted examining public attitudes in Gaza regarding the war, "the day after," the peace process with Israel, internal Palestinian reconciliation, and the role of the Palestinian Authority. Key findings included (AWRAD website, September 8, 2024):⁴

- ◆ 98% reported being displaced from their homes due to the war, with 58% of the displaced forced to leave their original districts in Gaza.
- ◆ 60% estimated the war would last no more than three more months; 17% believed it would last up to a year; 7% said it would last over a year but less than three years.
- ◆ 39% stated that Hamas was taking negotiations for a ceasefire seriously, compared to 1% who expressed a similar opinion about the Israeli government; 20% said Hamas was not serious, compared to 74% who said the same about the Israeli government.
- ◆ 70% supported the withdrawal of Israeli forces from densely populated areas as a first step to allow residents to return to their homes; 52% supported an agreement involving the release of several hostages, including women, the elderly and the wounded, in exchange for the release of hundreds of Palestinian prisoners.

⁴ The poll was conducted in phone conversations with 538 Gazans living in five districts between August 8 and 17, 2024. The poll had an accuracy of 95% with a 4.2% margin of error.

- ◆ 1% expressed trust in Hamas institutions regarding the distribution of humanitarian aid, compared to 79% who trusted UN agencies and 5% who trusted the Palestinian Authority's offices and agencies.
 - ◆ 1% trusted Hamas to lead initial reconstruction efforts in Gaza, while 63% expressed trust in the UN, 16% trusted Arab states, and 7% trusted the Palestinian Authority.
 - ◆ 71% supported a Palestinian government to govern Gaza after the war. Among them, 40% wanted the Palestinian Authority to lead, 36% supported a unity government, and only 6% supported a Hamas-led government.
 - ◆ 49% said the top issue concerning them regarding the war was not being displaced again, while 21% cited the need to secure adequate food and water.
 - ◆ 6% said they would vote for Hamas in general elections, compared to 47% who said they would vote for Fatah.
- In October 2024, another survey revealed further weakening support for Hamas (AWRAD website, November 13, 2024):⁵
- ◆ 84% said the situation in "Palestine" was heading in the wrong direction, compared to 10% who said it was moving in the right direction, up from 77% in August 2024 and 71% in May 2024. Additionally, 54% reported feeling more pessimistic about the future, compared to 43% who expressed optimism.
 - ◆ 63% supported a Palestinian-led government after the war. Of them, 51% trusted a unity government, 31% supported a Palestinian Authority-led government, and only 3% expressed confidence in a Hamas-led government.
 - ◆ 46% were very dissatisfied with the performance of international aid agencies in distributing aid, 31% were somewhat satisfied, and 15% were somewhat dissatisfied.
 - ◆ Regarding elections to the Palestinian Legislative Council, 11% said they would vote for Hamas, compared to 31% who said they would vote for Fatah.
 - ◆ 74% supported a two-state solution, while only 11% supported establishing a state in all of "historic Palestine." 15% supported "armed resistance" to establish a Palestinian state (compared to 37% in Judea and Samaria), while 64% supported political negotiations.

⁵ The poll was conducted with 391 Gazans (184 in phone conversations, 207 conducted face to face) and 681 Palestinians in Judea and Samaria between October 6 and 17, 2024. The poll had an accuracy of 95% with a 3.2% margin of error.

Khalil Shkaki's Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research poll

► In September 2024, the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research (PCPSR), headed by Dr. Khalil Shikaki, published the results of its quarterly survey among residents of Gaza, Judea and Samaria. The survey revealed, for the first time since October 7, 2023, a significant decline in support for Hamas' attack on Israel, alongside reduced expectations of a Hamas victory in the current war. The findings also showed a moderate decline in support for Hamas, particularly in Gaza, where there was a decreased preference for Hamas governance "the day after." Nevertheless, Hamas remained the most popular faction among Palestinians compared to other groups. There was a notable rise in support for a two-state solution, a decline in preference for armed "struggle" [sic], and increased support for negotiations as a means to end the Israeli occupation (PCPSR website, September 17, 2024):⁶

- ◆ Support for Hamas remained stable compared to the pre-war period, 35% vs 38% before the war.
- ◆ Support for the attack and massacre of October 7, 2023 in Gaza stood at 39%, an 18% decline from support for the attack on Israel, which was 57% in June 2024 and 71% in March 2024. By comparison, 64% of respondents in Judea and Samaria expressed support for the October 7, 2023 attack in the September 2024 survey.
- ◆ 57% reported that one or more family members had been killed in the war, and 69% reported that one or more family members had been injured. When combining responses and removing overlaps, 78% reported having family members killed or injured, while only 22% reported no casualties in their family.
- ◆ 28% of Gaza residents believed that Hamas would win the war, compared to 57% who expressed the same view in March 2024.
- ◆ 37% estimated that Hamas would continue to govern Gaza after the war, compared to 70% of respondents in Judea and Samaria. In the June 2024 survey, 46% of Gaza residents believed Hamas would remain in power after the war.

⁶ The poll was conducted among 410 Palestinians in 41 communities in the Gaza Strip and 790 respondents in Judea and Samaria, between September 3 and 7, 2024. The margin of error was 3.5%.

- ◆ 40% supported political negotiations to establish a Palestinian state, up from 24% in the June 2024 survey.
- ◆ 36% supported "armed resistance," compared to 56% in June 2024. By comparison, 56% of respondents in Judea and Samaria supported "armed resistance" in the September 2024 survey.