

Gaza Baptists ‘no longer have the energy to suffer’

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GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip (BP)—Baptists sheltered in the remnants of Gaza Baptist Church are so worn out they “no longer have the energy to suffer,” a leader there told the Christian Mission to Gaza.

“We are very tired,” the mission quoted Shady Al-Najjar, a Gaza church leader, in its March 27 newsletter. “Our days are useless, our children are collapsing in fear, without education, and life has become very difficult.

“We no longer have the energy to express or explain what is happening in our country,” Al-Najjar said. “We are surprised by the silence of the world, but we are optimistic about God’s mercy and love.”

Israel Defense Forces have decreased their attacks on Gaza, where IDF leaders have “dismantled” but not destroyed 20 of Hamas’ original 24 battalions, IDF officials told the *Washington Post*.

Rather, despite the United Nations Security Council’s call for an immediate cease-fire, Israel is eyeing Rafah, where Hamas’ four remaining battalions are housed. Israel’s military believes, according to the *Washington Post*, thousands of Hamas fighters and sought-after commanders are stationed in tunnels alongside perhaps 100 remaining hostages.

Also in Rafah are 1.4 million displaced Palestinian civilians, whose lives would be most vulnerable in any Israeli attack there. The United States and others have worked to provide humanitarian aid to the refugees living in tents along the Egyptian border.

Christian Mission to Gaza continues to serve

CM2G, led by former Gaza Baptist Church Pastor Hanna Massad, has continued to deliver food and hot meals to Baptists and other Christians still in Gaza five months into the war. Christians numbered only 1,000 in Gaza before the war began in October, a scant minority in the city of mostly Sunni Muslims.

“We continue to hold the people of Gaza in our prayers, asking for God’s peace, mercy, and comfort to prevail in their lives,” Massad wrote in the newsletter. “We remain committed to serving them in whatever way we can and continue to provide hot meals.”

Famine is imminent, the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification system said in its monthly report through March 15. At least 70 percent of the people in Gaza City and North Gaza—210,000 people—are facing catastrophic hunger, with the 2.2 million people in the Gaza Strip facing high levels of food insecurity.

Continued war, including an assault on Rafah, would leave half of Gaza’s population suffering catastrophic hunger, the IPC’s most severe classification.

“There are many, many words that I cannot express about our psychological and spiritual situation,” Al-Najjar told the mission. “Food is at ridiculous prices, even if it is available in the market, and a lot of food has run out from the market.”

Gaza Baptist Church, the only Baptist congregation in Gaza City, has been heavily damaged in the war, as has St. Porphyrios Greek Orthodox Church. Nearly 20 Christians died when the IDF attacked the Greek Orthodox church in October. The three congregations are the only Christian churches

in the city.

The International Court of Justice and the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs are among those calling on Israel to stop blocking the land delivery of food and other humanitarian aid to Gaza, with food air drops inefficient and costly.

The death toll to date includes more than 32,000 Palestinians, with nearly 75,000 injured, the Hamas-run Health Ministry said March 28. But the death toll is suspected to be much higher than numbers publicized, The Washington Institute, a think tank on U.S. Middle Eastern policy, reported March 26. The Health Ministry, the institute said, no longer has a reliable mechanism to tabulate a death toll since hospitals have shut down.

More than 1,139 Israeli residents and others died in Hama's Oct. 7 attack on Israel that launched the current war.