
Israel and Hamas. Sister Saleh from Gaza: “No water or electricity for days. Jesus is our only source of hope and strength”



[Sister Saleh](#), of the Catholic parish in Gaza. She says, disheartened: “People are thirsty. We have been without clean water for days. The situation is getting worse by the hour, hygiene and sanitary conditions are deteriorating. At the moment no aid can reach us. We have no freedom of movement. And there is no electricity.” Contacted by SIR, the nun, a member of the Congregation of the Sisters of the Rosary in Jerusalem, describes the most recent and perhaps most serious days of the war for the more than 600 displaced Christian refugees sheltering in the Catholic parish of the Holy Family in Gaza. On Saturday 16 December, two women, Nahida Khalil Anton and Samar Kamal Anton, mother and daughter, were shot “in cold blood” by Israeli snipers stationed on the rooftops of the buildings surrounding the parish as they were on their way to the convent. “I was right behind them,” recalls Sister Saleh, “when they were shot. Other people were also wounded. The Israeli army targeted defenceless people. There are no fighters here in the convent.” These words were echoed in clear terms by the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem and again on Sunday 17 December by Pope Francis during the Angelus prayer: “In the parish complex of the Holy Family there are no terrorists, but families, children, people who are sick and have disabilities, sisters.” The nun's memories are laced with grief at the loss of human lives, familiar faces who formed part of the small Catholic parish family, just over 100 parishioners, like Ilham Farah, 80, shot by Israeli soldiers in mid-November and left to bleed to death because no one would come to her aid. A former music teacher, she was the parish organist. Now Nahida and her daughter Samar have been killed: Nahida had seven children and 20 grandchildren. Her daughter Samar was a cook at a home for disabled children run by Mother Teresa's nuns.



"Their house was also bombed," says Sister Nabila, "and several rooms were destroyed. More than 50 severely disabled people who were staying there have been relocated, not without difficulty, to narrower and more cramped - but hopefully safer - premises." More than 24 Christians are estimated to have been killed in Gaza during the past months of war, most of them victims of the bombing of the Greek Orthodox Church of Saint Porphyry.



...were celebrated in the church a few hours after their death, "as soon as Israel allowed the removal of their bodies," explains Sister Nabila. They now rest in the small cemetery on the parish grounds. The fear of being attacked has driven almost all Christians to shelter in the inner areas of the church complex: "We sleep in the corridors and on the stairs, many families sit down to rest in the church. We hear the sound of tanks rumbling all around us. No one goes out for fear of being hit by the snipers. At 4 pm, a kind of curfew begins in the parish. The shelling never stops. We don't know what will become of us."

