

In the ruins of war Muslim holy month begins

12 March 2024

theday.co.uk/in-the-ruins-of-war-muslim-holy-month-begins-4



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Ramadan in the rubble: Ninety nine percent of Gazans are Sunni Muslims.

Is there a glimmer of hope? The people of Gaza are marking Ramadan, the holiest month in the Muslim calendar. But this year is very different to normal.

What's happening?

Hanaa al-Masry's family normally celebrate **Ramadan** at home. They hang lights and lanterns in the street and make meals of cheese, jam, beans and eggs to eat before the sun comes up and **fasting** begins.

But this year is very different. Hanaa lives in **Gaza**. Her home is now a tent. The streets have been bombed. There is not enough food and almost everyone has lost friends and family.

Find out more

Ramadan lasts for a month. During it, **Muslims** fast, pray and help others. They have a small meal before the sun comes up and another after nightfall. They eat nothing in between.

Nearly two billion people worldwide mark Ramadan. That includes 99% of the two million people who live in Gaza. Their lives have changed dramatically since 7 October last year, when an attack by **Hamas** on **Israel** led to a war breaking out.

Many families are living on boiled weeds and tins of food brought in from Egypt by charities. Milk, fruit and vegetables cost a lot of money and are hard to find.

Lack of food and homelessness are not the only problems. Israel has cut off electricity supplies and bombing has destroyed key buildings.

They do not have enough fuel, so donkey carts are now the main means of transport. On top of that there is fear of the next round of bombings.

Is there a glimmer of hope?

Some say

Yes! The Americans are now planning to bring more **aid** to Gaza by sea. And lots of countries have asked Israel to make sure that ordinary people in Gaza do not suffer.

Some people say

"Hope has two beautiful daughters... Anger and Courage. Anger at the way things are, and Courage to see that they do not remain as they are."

St Augustine (354 – 430), Roman theologian

Empty heading

What do you think?

Others think

No! The war shows no sign of stopping soon. Neither Israel's leaders or the leaders of Hamas, which run Gaza, will want the other side to "win".

Six steps to discovery

1. Connect

How do you feel about this story? - Are you taking part in Ramadan? Do you know someone who is?

2. Wonder

What questions do you have? - For example: What is life like in Gaza at the moment?

3. Investigate

What are the facts? - Pick out one thing we know for certain about this story and one thing we cannot say for sure.

4. Construct

What is your point of view? - You are invited to go and help rebuild Gaza in a few months' time. Think about what you would say.

5. Express

What do others believe? - What can be done to help people in Gaza? Talk about it with your classmates.

6. Reflect

What might happen next? - Imagine that you get a letter from Hanaa and her children. Write one back.

Glossary

Ramadan - The ninth month of the Islamic year, during which Muslims are required to fast from dawn until dusk.

Fasting - Going without food or drink, either for religious or health purposes. You should only fast if it is safe medically.

Gaza - The smaller of two Palestinian territories, home to two million people. It is located on the Mediterranean coast, surrounded by Israel and Egypt.

Muslims - People who follow the religion of Islam.

Hamas - A militant Palestinian organisation, which has controlled the Gaza Strip since 2007. It is listed as a terrorist organisation in the UK.

Israel - A country in the Middle East, and the only Jewish nation in the modern period. It is seen by Jews, Christians and Muslims as the Holy Land.

Lack - Not enough.

Aid - Help or support.