



## **Update on Amgad Al-Mahalawi**

August 20<sup>th</sup> 2024

*Written by*

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I have known Amgad Al-Mahalawi (36) for over decade as he was a staff person for Al-Najd Development Forum, a Palestinian development organisation supported by Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) when I Directed of the MCC UN Office.

**Amgad, his wife Qamar (26) and their two sons, Majd (5) and Ibrahim (3) have been forced from their family near Gaza City when Israel invaded Gaza after the Hamas attack of southern Israel on October 7, 2023.**

**They spent a month moving from house to house** to evade bombing and shelling until they moved into a third-floor classroom in a school near Gaza City.

**In November 2023 Israel attacked the school** and a tank shell exploded in the classroom where his extended family was sheltering, **wounding Amgad's wife and both children while killing his father, sister, brother and 27 other refugees in that school.**

Amgad immediately grabbed his wife and children and ran to find medical assistance.

**For the next two months the family traveled mostly by foot from Gaza City to Rafah** on the Egyptian border sleeping in hospitals, schools or mosques.

**Amgad bought wood and nylon and built a tent for his family in Rafah where they received food and water from the UN Relief and Works Agency and international NGOs.**

Despite the fact that the UN and the World Court had called for a ceasefire, **in May 2024 Israel attacked Rafah, a city of 1.4 million inhabitants, ordered all civilians to leave Rafah.**

**Amgad moved his family to Khan Younis to a section declared safe zone, but a city without international NGOs to assist with food and water, which could only be obtained by purchase in the marketplace.**

Amgad brought the wood from his tent in Rafah and rebuild his tent in Khan Younis.

**On August 17<sup>th</sup> 2024, Israel dropped leaflets notifying Gazans that they would begin bombing a previously "safe zone" very near Amgad's family tent, and a few days later expanded the red zone.**

On the same day, I got this text from him:

Amgad:

*The bombing is very close. Some shrapnel reached us. The sounds are terrifying, the children are screaming.*

*They all time bombing.*

The next day, I got these messages:

Amgad:

*We leave, they shooting and killing people*

*We sleep out in street*

*We don't know where to go...*

The following day I exchanged the following messages with him:

Amgad:

*We left because of the bombing, heavy bombing. We were running under the bullets. The children did not sleep, from fear they wet themselves.*

*We are in the street. My family found a place next to my relatives who sleep on the ground without anything. I arranged for them a blanket, a mattress and a temporary cover for them to sleep in until the situation ends because we do not have a tent*

Doug:

*Where are you now?*

Amgad:

*I just went alone, without the family, to see what happened. I kept far away so that no bullets or shells would be fired.*

*I went to see my things and the tent from a distance because we just ran out with only our clothes. I returned lone to see what happened from the bullets and also for fear of thieves stealing our things.*

Doug:

*How far are you from the fighting and where your tent was?*

Amgad:

*The shooting was less than 100 meters away from us because small armed drones and a helicopter came out carrying bullets and shooting a lot. It shot at all the tents and the tanks were nearby. I left when they withdrew and when they returned, I ran away quickly for fear of the bullets. My tent is now 900 meters away. I try to watch to prevent thieves from stealing. Thieves stole half of our belongings during our escape. We are afraid that they will steal the rest of our belongings. In the evening I will return to the family in the street.*

Doug:

*Will you be able to return to your tent this evening?*

Amgad:

*No, I cannot go back with family*

*They killed my father sister brother last November  
I don't want to see more of my family die*

Doug:

*So the IDF is still in the area of your tent, and you cannot return to your tent*

Amgad:

*No, no one can go back.*

*In the area opposite me, there are all the tanks, snipers, drones armed with guns and shooting at people.*

*We hope and pray for stop war*

Doug:

*Please know that my family and friends are praying for you and working to end the genocide and the occupation*

Amgad:

*I know, thank you so much, brother*

Today's texts:

Amgad:

*When we fled our tent in the middle of the shelling, we left with only the clothes on our backs.*

*Yesterday a relative and I tried to go back to our tent to get food, clothes and a few supplies for my family. An Israeli drone helicopter flew out and shot at us. We quickly ran away, but we could see that they had earlier shot up our tents and burned some of our neighbor's tents.*

*I do not know when it will be safe to go back to the tent. The Israelis never tell us when they leave an area.*

*Here so bad, we need help for stop this war. Only Americans and Europeans can end this war.*

Doug:

*I will write what you have said and will share with my family and friends who will pray for your safety and work to end this war and the occupation.*



The Israeli flyer warning Gazans to leave the red zones even though one of the red zones was in "safe zone" (yellow)