

Yara Interview transcript:

Note when reading this script. The interviewee refers to any bombings as “boom-boom”. She goes on TikTok live a lot on guest panels and on TikTok you get banned for saying “bomb” so they usually substitute the word with “boom-boom” she must have just gotten used to referring to it this way or she thinks this is the proper way to say it. Also, there are various notes throughout the transcript to assist with cultural references.

Safa: The first question is: What is your name? How old are you? Where are you from and where do you currently live and can you describe a typical day for you when you were in Gaza during the time of the war?

Yara: The day during the war you want me to explain the bombing or how a regular day how it used to be?

Safa: How was your day typically like when you would wake up from your sleep, what was your routine? What was your routine usually? You can include the bombings and everything but what were you doing in your day? Did you used to wake up and have to go get something, do something? Walk me through how your days usually went.

Yara: Okay I am Yara and I am 16 years old. I am from Gaza and I was living in Rafah. So when I was in the war... or in the genocide..let's say.. I was woke up and the first thing we used to do is making fire for baking or even for breakfast and it's not easy. It's really so hard. Like I remember sometimes, or most of the times, when I went to get some water to make tea, to help my mother with baking something I start to cry... Like I am not sensitive at general but like it's hard. It's hard to make the fire.

Anyway, after this I like I started to receiving some friends to charge their phones for us because we had solar energy so we used to help like some people to charging their phones or their batteries because there's no electricity so yeah we was helping them. Everyone was helping each other in Gaza. And after that I started to help my mother and my sisters clean the home, sweeping, tidying because like there wasn't anything to do except for that. There's no internet there's no electricity there's no schools.. I cannot go visit my friends, I cannot hang out there's nothing to do so we was praying to just like make us busy with anything. And After I spend most the time with our displaced neighbors. May god have mercy on them. They martyred. They dead. They boom boomed them. And Also with my cousins in the garden it was a part of our day like spending the time together and making the fire again. To make some tea. Play with joking.. It was like it was tired, not tired it was hard — I don't know how to say it right — like the fire it's not easy but like when we all together meeting, laughing, talking we don't feel about it.

After that when the Maghreb prayer (the prayer at sundown) we all came home. All of us came home because no one go out after Maghreb or even in the garden you cannot stay on the garden you cannot stay on the roof, everyone come to his home. And then we spend some time with my family If there is internet we spend some time

on the phone if there's not we just talking with my cousins, with my family. Because we all was displaced in my grandfather's house so yeah.

And the like routine is changing and everyday it's different. <Incoherent speech: all the days after is before, sorry> For example if my mom want some stuff from the market or something I was going to bring it to her, to buy to her. I was going in foot because there was no cars, it's so rare to find a car in that time and if you found a car it will be so expensive Actually.

And actually, this is like, no one know this but I will tell you about it. In period of time, in that time, in the genocide, in the war I used to selling some bakers that my mom was doing in the schools. You know there wasn't jobs there okay... so like we was like just looking for anyway that help us to get some money and actually that was the only way for us so I was going and selling in the school. It wasn't easy for me. I'm just 15 and I feel embarrassed I feel shame if someone saw me selling and yeah its okay anyways.

If you ask me about a day that I won't forgot it in the genocide I will tell you its the 12 of February when they boom boom next to us. It was 2am like in the time, we woke up suddenly with a lot of boom boom around us. It's the first time that the boom boom are so heavy and in all directions. (Meaning it was basically so strong that the impact was felt all around the home). It was a Friday too. (Friday's are a significant day for muslims like Sunday is for Christians and Saturday for the Jewish). I heard something broke in the kitchen. I called my mom. Everyone woke. Me my parents, my sister, everyone. And we were all standing in the same room together except my father, he was in another room. So I heard something broke in the kitchen and I called my father I said my father something broke in the kitchen opened the windows. Open the windows meaning that if like they boom boom next to us the windows won't broke — but it did. It did break. Suddenly I heard the voice of the missile when its come down.

We hear three voices in Gaza. The Plane voice, the missile voice and the boom boom voice. The plane was there and then the missile so I put my hands on my ears. Oh yeah and My mom went to the living room and she calls like "come here it's safe - it's more safe than your rooms" but no one- no place safe actually. Anyways So I put my hands on my ears so I cannot hear but I did hear. The sky is red, the like the death smell, the blood smell, the destruction smells. I was in room and I don't know how I get out. I really don't know. I just found myself in the living room. There was blood in the land in the ground-I don't know what was the word -anyways it was blood and I screamed "my ears" because I felt something injured my ears. And I think I was right. Anyway, we all was okay, just I injured in my hand actually yeah injure it but I am okay now.

What hurt me is when I know that its our neighbors but what hurt me more that they all dead. 8 members. They was children. 3 Children. Sidra, Suzan, Malik. In the morning we was looking for their pieces. For their hands, for their legs, in our rooms, in our roof. We saw them while they were put it in the bags. While they put them in the bags. It's not easy to see your neighbors, the children that you was used to play it used to be a part of your day... in the bags. You know before some hours than they dead she was in our home: Sidra. She is 4 years old, and she came to take the phones that they

charged in our house. And She told me “I will come here to play tomorrow okay? wait me.” And I told her “okay I will wait you”. But unfortunately I am still waiting here. Yeah that’s it. Thanks so much for giving me the chance to make this interview and I’m really appreciate what you are doing guys for us. Thank you so much for everything.

note the homes in Palestine typically. Have flat roofs so it’s not uncommon for Palestinians to go and sit on the roof, bring some chairs and spend time there. As well as the “garden” being mentioned, It is not like a garden in the US. There is a sitting area outside in almost every Palestinian owned home and it’s most likely referred to as a garden since Palestines plant all around their homes fruit trees, flowers, mints, and a variety of different plants depending on the preferences of the family. There is tiled flooring outside next to the “garden” that makes way for a beautiful sitting area (like a patio). Sitting outside with families and guests especially in the evening when the weather is more cool is extremely common. Most families do this.

Safa: Okay first of all, may god have mercy on them. I don’t think that anyone deserves to go through what you guys went through and what people are still going through today. I think it maybe stressful for you because what you’re describing with the neighbors, it was so close it could have been you guys. I don’t know how you feel about that you can talk about that if you want.

I do have a couple of questions: with your days when you were going out to get water or when you were going out to sell which you should not feel ashamed about at all, because again remember this is not you guys’ fault these are things out of your control. There are a couple of things that I want to know about that — and if you want me to say this in arabic to understand better what I am asking - did you feel like you were not sure if on your way to the water you could run into something unexpected or have something unexpected happen to you. Also do you feel like it would have been helpful if you had some kind of way to get information about where you’re going just to make sure “oh this is safe, everyone that’s there is safe” so if you can explain to me how the safety and security of going to get water or sell, did you feel generally okay during the day or did you feel like at any moment anything could just happen?

note “May God have mercy on them” is an Islamic way of expressing condolences

Yara: About the safety literally there is no safe place in Gaza. Like there is no any safe place. If they told you go to this it is a safe zone or go to this it is a safe zone but no there isn’t . There is no safe zone in Gaza, in rafah in khan younis when I was going out so much to get stuff for my parents. In that time they started the boom boom the schools. So when I was going to sell in the school I was really scared. But I cannot do anything I just hear the boom boom I just feel scared. But I cannot stop it I am just 15 what can I do? I cannot do anything I just hear it, feel scared and that’s it. When I was going to the market to an area called al Balad it is very far from our house. There’s no cars, I went on foot. It’s rare to find cars there as I said. And I was hearing boom boom and the <drones ??> I was there and in that time I am alone in the market and it’s far and they start to boom boom. I was scared so I was trying to get all I want quickly so I can go back home and also my parents would feel so scared if they hear the boom boom and I am out they start to blame themselves like “why did we send her”

Yara: and about the water I will explain it to you in arabic since I cannot explain it in English.

translated speech The water my dad used to heat it not me. Him and my brother. And some

people helped install some water tanks. So my brother fills it now and brings it. Before they did this we used to have to go buy the water so I used to go usually with my cousin. She used to get for her family. We used to find it very challenging to get water because we were by ourselves, there's no cars and we have to walk a lot. They didn't give it to us in a carton they used to give us it in bags so we used to find it very challenging as they were very heavy. But later on it became easier. **end of translated speech**

Safa: I have a question that hopefully you understand in English: How often do you follow the news or keep up with current events. Like in Gaza how often were you able to keep up with the news in Gaza, outside like the world news — how often were you able to keep up with that? Was it hard for you and the people around you?

Yara: about the news for me. Like my school was in another city, it was in Khan Younis and I was in Rafah and so, we had some relatives in Gaza so we were always checking the news so we can check our family. Because there wasn't a way to contact them directly if we have internet they don't have and if they have we don't have. So the news was the only way to check on them for example, when they were posting the names of the martyred I would look through the list name by name, name by name so I can see if my friends are there or not because it was the only way. I was all the time checking the news and also I was seeing what's happening outside of Gaza like what's the voted opinion they were having for us in Gaza. Are they trying to help us. The leaders if they will make a solution for us. I was always checking the news and all of my family as well.

Safa: the next question is if there was a way for you and the people around you to communicate news to each other would you trust that more than the news from public officials and news channels? Would you prefer to share news in your community or do you prefer it with the more official news, from officials outside and representatives amongst you?

Yara: In Rafah it was hard because there wasn't a lot of journalist in Rafah so if there was boom boom somewhere we don't know where they boom-boom and the other news in Khan Younis and Gaza we would know after 5 minutes but in Rafah it was a bit hard because there's not a lot of journalists in Rafah. And if I choose between officials or community and friends I would chose my friends and my people I don't care what the leaders think anymore because I just want to check on my friends and my family. So if I have a way to check on my friends and family directly I would choose it. I don't care about people what they think. I wish I had a way to check on them but for now I don't know any news about some of them. I really don't know. I don't know if they're still alive, if they travelled, if they're still there, I don't know. And I don't know how to know.

Safa: Alright thank you so much for that answer I think it's pretty helpful for us and we talked about this before when I first met you I had told you if there was an app that would allow you to communicate with each other: what would be the problem if we were to give the people in Gaza this app to use in terms of internet access, app size all of those things?

Safa: How do you feel about an app that you would use to communicate with your community like for example if you had an app in Gaza that you can see updates between you and other people all the time. Is that something you would like, something you would need, or something that wouldn't be that helpful?

Safa: And when you were in Gaza how were you guys getting your information in your neighborhoods and your community. Like is there an app that you would use specifically an

app that you would mainly use to keep up with what's going on and what's happening or was there more than one app together?

Yara: Actually it is a great idea wallahi, like it's an amazing idea because we need this in gaza. They need this. Like what I said it's hard to check on friends and family and there's no internet the only ways is the news the martyrs name. So it's a really amazing idea to think about it it's really so smart to think about and god willing it will be successful but as I told you before if it will be successful it will have to be without internet and the appsize cannot be that large because when the app size is too large then they won't be able to download. That's it I really like the idea that's really amazing idea I hope it will work it would be so helpful.

Yara: Actually the only way that we can sometimes call but there would be no signal. For me I would always check my friends on WhatsApp or instagram and for the news we would use instagram and for the news we were using telegram like some general channels I joined and checked the news there because my friends don't have internet so I am sure they are displaced or something so.. for me I was not using any app for checking just calling but it was like when there is a boom-boom near us or near them there is no signal so it was hardtop connect and sometimes we cannot call for days. There was a period of time we lost the signal for three to four days without being in contact even with our relatives in the same city. Even though it's not that far we cannot check on them.

Safa: My last question is if there's an app that you could use that people could change and add to and share news together or put points where there's safe places and not safe. Would that be something you would want to see if there was a way?

Yara: About the locations, honestly people get very scared to share there locations and things of that nature, if you could make it safe 100% they will share their location. If there is no safety they won't . The Zionists can track us in very scary ways. We were told if you check on your friends or family you cannot say "where are you" you shouldn't say "what are you doing, where are you?" You should say "are you alive?" "Okay she's alive she said hello" "how are you — I'm fine" and then close the line. We cannot share our location on the phone or on WhatsApp, instagram or even telegram or in the messages. No it's so dangerous to share it. If you could make it so safe then no problem we can share it.