

Responses from Anadolu Agency,

Please find below the answers to your questions -the first two of which were answered by Al-Arini himself:-

- **Can you describe the circumstances in which Al-arini took these photographs? Are there any details you're able to share with us about Muhammad Zakariya Ayyoub al-Matouq and his family?**

(Answered by Al-Arini)

I was walking through the streets of Gaza, exhausted from fatigue and hunger due to the severe food shortage and lack of meals. I saw the tent of the family I photographed and went inside to start taking pictures. It was an incredibly difficult environment in every sense. The space was cramped and uncomfortable, and even the tent didn't belong to them.

The woman in the photo is a widow; she lost her husband in the war. She is trying to raise her two children alone. They are struggling to survive without a bed, pillow, clothing, or a steady food supply.

The photograph is very powerful because hunger is destroying the people of Gaza. The war has deprived them of everything: money, shelter, clothing. Prices are unimaginably high, and the few aid trucks that manage to enter Gaza from time to time are looted. These trucks arrive under the shadow of Israeli tanks and death, and an ordinary person has almost no chance of reaching them. Meanwhile, hunger continues to consume us and our children.

- **We know from Agence France-Presse that its staff are themselves now going hungry. How are the staff of Anadolu faring? How is Ahmed Jihad Ibrahim Al-arini's health, and that of his family?**

(Answered by Al-Arini)

I, too, as a freelance journalist, am experiencing the same conditions. I am suffering from hunger and pain. I fainted three times while taking photos due to hunger and thirst. The lack of transportation and the fact that incoming money is converted to cash with a 40% commission make it difficult for us to find both vehicles and food.

We lost our home, we are displaced, and the children cry constantly from hunger. In recent days, due to the complete collapse of humanitarian aid, I had to get food from one of the few charity kitchens still operating.

Foreign journalists are not allowed to enter Gaza — perhaps because the scene here quite literally resembles hell. The displacement, the fight for survival, and the struggle between life and death experienced by the people here are beyond imagination. Most cities have been completely destroyed, and it's nearly impossible to obtain water or food. The war continues in a way that lacks even the most basic sense of humanity, amid massacre.

- **In your words, why do you believe they carry so much impact?**

Unfortunately, every photograph coming out of Gaza since October 7 carries a story of drama and tragedy. On top of the attacks faced by civilians, the recent humanitarian crisis caused by the blockade has added another layer of suffering. The photo taken by Arini is powerful because it lays bare the humanitarian crisis in Gaza in its purest form. It shows the crisis in its most raw and vulnerable state.

The extreme thinness of Muhammed Zakariya's body, the helpless expression on his face, and the sense of inadequacy conveyed by his mother as she holds him — these elements should touch even the hardest of hearts. Hunger and the deaths of children provoke a deep moral reaction in people, regardless of their political, religious, or regional identities. In that sense, the photo also evokes a universal emotion.

This image also demonstrates how the desperate image of a single child can become a symbol of the entire humanitarian crisis in Gaza.

- **It appears to us that there had been some hesitancy by news organisations around the world about publishing these pictures until Britain's *Daily Express* published them prominently, including on page one. What are your observations?**

As Anadolu Ajansı, we have been documenting and sharing with the world what has happened since October 7, covering both the Israeli and Palestinian sides. During this period, we have published approximately 181,000 photographs — 77,000 of them from Gaza. As an agency, our duty is to report the truth to the world, no matter how difficult that may be. We continue our publications with the responsibility of accurately informing the public and conveying what is happening.

International media outlets, especially in Western countries, implement strict editorial guidelines when it comes to publishing highly disturbing images of children. Because of this, the level of violence in an image, its disturbing nature, or its potential to deeply unsettle viewers can lead editors to act with caution.

After we at Anadolu Ajansı published this photo series, many leading international news outlets also published our photos. Notably, after this, there was a clear increase in coverage related to hunger and food aid. Other news agencies in Gaza also began to focus on visuals highlighting the hunger and food crisis following our publications.

The crisis in Gaza can be a "sensitive topic" for Western media from political and diplomatic perspectives. Unfortunately, some media outlets are unable to remain neutral in recognizing or showing the truth due to potential political or lobbying pressures they might face.

The fact that *Daily Express* ran this photo on its front page served as an “editorial threshold” for other news organizations. This publication legitimized the photo further and gave other outlets the courage to publish it as well.

Finally, you can also find Anadolu’s statement about Israel’s ongoing ban on foreign journalists and photographers entering Gaza below:

<https://www.aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/anadolu-calls-for-global-response-as-gaza-journalists-face-famine-attacks/3639592>