

The Human Toll of the Gaza War: Direct and Indirect Death from 7 October 2023 to 3 October 2025

Neta C. Crawford¹

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Summary

The human toll of the ongoing Israeli war in Gaza since 7 October 2023 can be summarized in a few statistics even as the raw numbers cannot do justice to the raw suffering: the Israel Defense Forces have killed and seriously injured more than 10% of the population and, through the destruction of infrastructure — including energy, water, sanitation, agriculture, housing, and healthcare — rendered the conditions of life so difficult as to cause long term harm for the rest of the population.

As of 3 October 2025, according to the Gaza Ministry of Health, 67,075 people have been killed and 169,430 people have been injured out of the approximately 2.2 million people living in the Gaza Strip in July 2023 (not including Israeli military forces).² The total number of Gazans has declined to an estimated 2.1 million people since the start of the war due to death and the exodus of about 100,000 people from the territory.³ The total number of casualties, 236,505 people who have been killed and injured, constitutes more than 10% of the pre-war population of Gaza. That is, if the statistics, from the Gaza Ministry of Health, are complete. Recent analysis by public health experts suggests that the number of fatalities reported by the Gaza Ministry of Health, which faces many obstacles to making a full account of the deaths, may be a significant *undercount* of the violent deaths.

In the West Bank, 1,048 people have been killed and 10,320 people injured from 7 October 2023 to 3 October 2025 by direct violence.⁴ Altogether, the number of residents of Gaza and the West Bank killed and injured in this period is 68,123 people directly killed and 179,750 people injured.

¹ Co-founder, Costs of War, and Montague Burton Professor of International Relations, University of Oxford and Professor of International Relations, University of St. Andrews (neta.crawford@politics.ox.ac.uk; nc35@st-andrews.ac.uk). This report is released by the Costs of War project housed at Brown University's Watson School of International and Public Affairs. Its publication was supported by the Costs of War team (costsofwar@brown.edu).

² Gaza Ministry of Health Data as reported in United Nations, "Palestinian Casualties," <https://app.powerbi.com/view?r=eyJrIjoiODAxNTYzMDYtMjQ3YS00OTMzLTkxMWQ0OTU1NWUwMzE5NTMwLWliwidCl6ImY2MTBjMGJ3LWJkMjQ0NGIzOS04MTBiLTNkYzI4MGFmYjU5MCIslmMiOjh9>. Last accessed 6 October 2025. Pre-war population data from the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 10 July 2023, https://www.pcbs.gov.ps/portals/_pcbs/PressRelease/Press_En_IntPopulationDy2023E.pdf.

³ Population as of mid-2025, estimated by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, "Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) Presents the Conditions of the Palestinian Population on the Occasion of the World Population Day, 11/07/2025," 11 July 2025 https://www.pcbs.gov.ps/portals/_pcbs/PressRelease/Press_En_WPD2025E.pdf.

⁴ Gaza Ministry of Health Data as reported in United Nations, "Palestinian Casualties."

The destruction of food, infrastructure, and medical care, and the denial of adequate amounts of aid has placed the entire remaining population of Gaza at risk for high rates of morbidity and mortality. An additional half a million people, according to the Famine Review Committee, currently face the worst level of food insecurity — “catastrophic” — and an additional 1.07 million people are confronting a food “emergency.”⁵

Approximately 90% of the population of Gaza have been forced to move at least once — most many times — either fleeing the bombardment or Israel’s ground forces, or because the Israeli government ordered the people to evacuate. In mid-August, before the start of the most recent Israeli military offensive in Gaza, about 86% of the Gaza Strip was under militarized zones displacement orders.⁶ Most hospitals and medical centers have been destroyed or damaged. The remaining hospitals are overwhelmed with blast victims and most medicines have run out or are in short supply. The food aid that is reaching Gaza is “largely insufficient to offset the prolonged deficits.”⁷ Even if a ceasefire and an end to the war were declared today, it will be too late for many of those who are already malnourished, needing access to basic healthcare, including pre-natal care, or suffering from diseases that require medicines.

This report focuses on conditions in Gaza from 7 October 2023 to 3 October 2025. Gaza is a tragedy, but it is not a natural disaster: the consequences of the war for the population of Gaza were foreseeable, foreseen, and documented by observers and the Israeli government throughout the war. In May 2024 the International Court of Justice ordered Israel to “halt its military offensive, and any other action in the Rafah Governorate [at the southern tip of Gaza], which may inflict on the Palestinian group in Gaza conditions of life that could bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part.”⁸

On 16 September 2025, the United Nations Human Rights Council concluded that, “The State of Israel bears responsibility for the failure to prevent genocide, the commission of genocide and the failure to punish genocide against the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip.”⁹

⁵ These categories are used by the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification, (IPC), by the IPC Global Initiative. See IPC, “Gaza Strip: Famine Confirmed in Gaza Governorate, Projected to Expand,” 22 August 2025, https://www.ipcinfo.org/fileadmin/user_upload/ipcinfo/docs/IPC_Gaza_Strip_Acute_Food_Insecurity_Malnutrition_July_Sept2025_Special_Snapshot.pdf.

⁶ United Nations, United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, “UN and NGOs warn of Humanitarian Impact of Intensified Gaza City Offensive and Further Mass Displacement,” 18 August 2025. <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/un-and-ngos-warn-humanitarian-impact-intensified-gaza-city-offensive-and-further-mass-displacement>.

⁷ IPC Global Initiative, “Gaza Strip.”

⁸ ICJ Order, Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide in the Gaza Strip (South Africa v. Israel), May 24, 2024. <https://www.icj-cij.org/sites/default/files/case-related/192/192-20240524-sum-01-00-enc.pdf>.

⁹ United Nations Human Rights Council, “Legal analysis of the conduct of Israel in Gaza pursuant to the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide,” A/HRC/60/CRP.3, 16 September 2025. <https://www.un.org/unispal/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/a-hrc-60-crp-3.pdf>.

Context

The current war has deep roots and the choice of where to begin the narrative is consequential. Israel's military occupation of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank began with Israel's military victory against Egypt and Jordan in the June 1967 Six Day War. Since then, Palestinians have peacefully resisted the occupation, taken up arms, most notably in two uprisings, "intifadas" (1987-1993 and 2000-2005), and engaged in nearly continuous small-scale attacks in Israel. Hamas was founded in 1987 with the agenda of regaining all of Palestine for Palestinians, through violence if necessary. Hamas joined the government of Gaza in 2006 after elections in which it won the majority of seats. For a while, Hamas worked in a coalition government with the Fatah party of Gaza. But the two sides could not work together and Hamas took control of the government of the Gaza Strip in 2007 after violently ousting its rivals. The Israeli government designated the Gaza Strip a hostile entity and then tightened its blockade of Gaza, severely restricting and controlling the movement of people and goods to and from Gaza. From 2007 through 2022, Israel and Hamas had four serious conflicts (2008-2009, 2012, 2014, and 2021) where militants fired rockets into Israel and Israel conducted airstrikes into Gaza. Israel Defense Forces also conducted ground operations in Gaza in the 2008-2009 and 2014 conflicts.

On 7 October 2023, Hamas and Islamic Jihad combatants invaded Israel with a force of approximately 5,600 people: the invasion and associated rocket bombardment of Israel killed 1,200 people, mostly civilians. Hamas also injured thousands more and kidnapped 251 people, some of whom have been released, since died, or been killed.¹⁰ As of early September, about 48 hostages are believed to remain alive, 20 of whom were being held by Hamas.¹¹

The Israel security forces responded immediately on 7 October by attacking Hamas in Gaza. On 8 October 2023, Israel declared war. Since then, the fighting has escalated and widened: Israel invaded Gaza; Hamas, Hezbollah, Houthis based in Yemen and Iran conducted thousands of rocket attacks on Israeli cities; and the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) attacked organizations and individuals allied with Hamas in the West Bank, Syria, Lebanon, Iran, and Yemen. The Israeli military operations in Lebanon against Hezbollah, begun in late 2023, included bombardment in Southern Lebanon and the capital Beirut. Despite the ceasefire between Israel and Lebanon in late 2024, the Israeli military continues to target

¹⁰ Nidal Al-Mughrabi and Emma Farge, "How Many Palestinians has Israel's Gaza War Killed," *Reuters*, 30 July 2025. <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/how-many-palestinians-has-israels-gaza-offensive-killed-2025-03-24/>. Of the dead, 314 were soldiers. United Nations, OCHA, "One Year of Unimaginable Suffering Since the 7 October Attack," 7 October 2024 <https://www.unocha.org/news/one-year-unimaginable-suffering-7-october-attack>. Also, Haaretz, "Israel's Dead: The Names of Those Killed in Hamas Attacks, Massacres, and the Israel-Hamas War," *Haaretz*, 19 October 2023, <https://www.haaretz.com/haaretz-explains/2023-10-19/ty-article-magazine/notfe/israels-dead-the-names-of-those-killed-in-hamas-massacres-and-the-israel-hamas-war/0000018b-325c-d450-a3af-7b5cf0210000>.

¹¹ Stav Levaton, Lazar Berman, Nurit Yohanan, "IDF Chief: War 'Will Not Stop' Until Hamas is Defeated; PM Says 'Decisive Stage' Starting," *The Times of Israel*, 2 September 2025. <https://www.timesofisrael.com/idf-chief-war-will-not-stop-until-hamass-defeat-pm-says-decisive-stage-starting/>.

Hezbollah in Lebanon with air strikes.¹² Hezbollah continues to fire rockets at Israeli territory. In June 2025, the IDF attacked Iranian nuclear and military targets for 12 days. Iran's military responded by launching missiles at Israel. The Israeli military also attacked a member of Hamas' negotiating team in Doha, Qatar on 9 September 2025.¹³ On 15 September 2025, they attacked newspapers in Yemen. All of these operations have caused injury, death, displacement, and the destruction of homes and life-sustaining infrastructure across the region. This report does not include an estimate of the total additional deaths and injuries in Israel, Iran, Lebanon, Syria, Yemen, and Qatar.

The primary focus of the current report is on direct war deaths in the Gaza Strip since the war began — that is, those deaths caused by bombs, bullets, and the fires that erupt as the consequence of an explosion. It also discusses the indirect death toll, that is, those additional deaths that have resulted from military activity, and the conditions that will cause suffering even after a ceasefire. The Costs of War report on the human toll in 2024 included more data on the West Bank than is summarized here.¹⁴ In the West Bank, as of 3 October 2025, 1,048 people have been killed and 10,320 people injured by the Israeli military, police, and settlers.¹⁵ All told, 68,123 Palestinians in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank have been killed since 7 October 2023.

Reported Death and Injury in Gaza

As of 3 October 2025, nearly two years into the war in Gaza, according to Gaza Ministry of Health data as reported by the United Nations, 67,075 people have been killed and 169,430 people injured out of the 2.23 million people living in Gaza before Israel's invasion.¹⁶ In nearly all wars of any significant duration, there are varying estimates of the number killed and wounded, and often disputes about whether those killed were combatants or non-combatants, and disputes about who killed them. This is the case with the war in Gaza. Some of these disputes are due to the fact that in every war it is sometimes difficult to retrieve bodies, and the governmental and nongovernmental organizations which could verify and classify the dead are either not on the ground, or their resources are extremely stretched and stressed. The death toll in Gaza as reported by the Ministry of Health is thus likely the minimum number killed. As discussed in greater detail below, hospitals have been overrun, bodies have not been retrieved, or in some cases, are unrecognizable.

¹² Niha Masih, and Cate Brown, "With Qatar Attack, Which Countries Has Israel Struck Since October 2023," *The Washington Post*, 10 September 2025, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2025/09/10/countries-israel-attacked-qatar-doha/>; Mallory Moench and Hugo Bachega, "Israeli Air Strike Hit Southern Lebanon," *BBC News*, 18 September 2025. <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/ckgedgid6480>

¹³ Masih and Brown, "With Qatar Attack, Which Countries Has Israel Struck Since October 2023."

¹⁴ See Sophia Stamatapoulou-Robbins, "The Human Toll: Indirect Deaths from War in Gaza and the West Bank, October 7, 2023 Forward," 7 October 2024. https://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/files/cow/imce/papers/2023/2024/Costs%20of%20War_Human%20Toll%20Since%20Oct%207.pdf.

¹⁵ Gaza Ministry of Health Data as reported in United Nations, "Palestinian Casualties."

¹⁶ Gaza Ministry of Health Data as reported in United Nations, "Palestinian Casualties." Population figures are drawn from the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 10/07/2023, https://www.pcbs.gov.ps/portals/_pcbs/PressRelease/Press_En_IntPopulationDy2023E.pdf.

Table 1, below, compares the killing in Gaza and the West Bank to the killing in the recent U.S.-led war in Afghanistan (2001 – 2021) and the ongoing war in Ukraine.

Table 1. Direct Deaths in Gaza and the West Bank, in Comparative Perspective

War	Reported Total Killed	Average Rate of Killing/ Month	Estimated % Civilians Killed ¹⁷
People killed in Hamas attack on Israel, 7 October 2023, (including 815 civilians killed). ¹⁸	1,195		68%
Gaza residents reported killed in the Gaza Strip during Israeli military operations, 7 October 2023 – 3 October 2025. (Not including IDF killed; see next row.) ¹⁹	67,075	c. 2,806/month	c. 80% ²⁰
All people killed in post-10/7 war in Gaza, including 466 Israel Defense Forces reported killed, since the IDF ground invasion. ²¹	67,541	c. 2,826/month	c. 80%
People killed in the West Bank, 7 October 2023 – 3 October 2025 ²²	1,048	c. 44/month	unknown
Afghanistan, 2001 – 2021 ²³	176,218	c. 772/month	26%
Ukraine, February 2022 – July 2025 ²⁴ (including c. 13,883 civilians; 250,000 Russian military).	c. 323,000	c. 7,690/month	4%

¹⁷ It is sometimes very difficult to determine who is a combatant or noncombatant and these determinations are often disputed.

¹⁸ United Nations Human Rights Council report, A/HRC/56/CRP.3. “Detailed Findings on Attacks Carried Out On and After 7 October in Israel,”

<https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/sessions-regular/session56/a-hrc-56-crp-3.pdf>. See Israeli government list of Israelis and foreign nationals killed by Hamas:

<https://www.gov.il/en/pages/swords-of-iron-civilian-casualties>.

¹⁹ Gaza Ministry of Health Data as reported in United Nations, “Palestinian Casualties.” Accessed 6 Oct. 2025.

²⁰ Through May 2025, assuming that the Israeli count of 8,900 Hamas and other combatants dead or probably dead out of a total of about 53,000 total killed as reported by the Gaza Ministry of Health in mid-May was correct. Emma Graham-Harrison and Yuval Abraham, “Revealed: Israeli Military’s Own Data Indicate Civilian Toll Death Rate of 83% in Gaza War,” The Guardian, 21 August 2025.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/ng-interactive/2025/aug/21/revealed-israeli-militarys-own-data-indicates-civilian-death-rate-of-83-in-gaza-war>.

²¹ The number of Israeli soldiers killed in the “Gaza maneuver” whose “names were allowed to be published,” from 27 October 2023 through 5 October 2025. IDF Personnel Directorate, <https://www.idf.il/160590>. Also see IDF,

<https://www.idf.il/%D7%A0%D7%95%D7%A4%D7%9C%D7%99%D7%9D/%D7%97%D7%9C%D7%9C%D7%99-%D7%94%D7%9E%D7%9C%D7%97%D7%9E%D7%94/>. Accessed 6 October 2025.

²² Gaza Ministry of Health Data as reported in United Nations, “Palestinian Casualties.” Accessed 6 Oct. 2025.

²³ Costs of War, “Human Cost Of Post-9/11 Wars: Direct War Deaths In Major War Zones, Afghanistan & Pakistan (Oct. 2001 – Aug. 2021); Iraq (March 2003 – March 2023); Syria (Sept. 2014 – March 2023); Yemen (Oct. 2002-Aug. 2021) And Other Post-9/11 War Zones,”

<https://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/figures/2021/WarDeathToll>.

²⁴ “Number Of Civilians Killed And Injured In Ukraine Reaches Three-Year Monthly High In July 2025, UN Human Rights Monitors Say,” <https://ukraine.ohchr.org/en/Number-of-civilians-killed-and-injured-in-Ukraine-reaches-three-year-monthly-high-in-july-2025-UN-human-rights-monitors-say>; Seth G. Jones and

The rate of killing and the percentage of civilians killed in Gaza is comparatively high. As shown in Table 1, above, the U.S.-led war in Afghanistan from 2001 – 2021 killed about 770 people per month, and 26% of those killed were civilians. The ongoing war in Ukraine has killed a large number of people, and has a very high average monthly rate of killing; however, the vast majority of the deaths in the war are among the invading Russian military forces, not Ukrainian military or civilians. In contrast to both the wars in Afghanistan and in Ukraine, during the 7 October 2023 Hamas-led attack on Israel, the majority of people killed were civilians (68%). Similarly, since the Gaza war began, the majority of those killed in Gaza have been civilians. In the post-Oct. 7 war in Gaza, counting combatants from all forces in Gaza and civilians, more than 2,800 people are dying per month in Gaza, and approximately 80% are civilians.

There is much greater certainty about the number of Israeli combatants killed and wounded in Gaza during the war. The IDF reports 466 “soldiers killed during combat in the Gaza Strip” since the start of ground operations there on 27 October 2023. The IDF also reports 2,952 people injured (not including those harmed in accidents) since ground operations began in the Gaza Strip.²⁵

As discussed above, Israel’s government has widened the war to include attacks on armed forces and militant organizations in Lebanon, Yemen, and Iran. As of 5 October 2025, the IDF listed 913 Israel Defense Forces killed and 6,313 wounded in the region during operation “Swords of Iron.” This Swords of Iron total includes the IDF soldiers and reservists killed and wounded from 7 October 2023 to 5 October 2025 in Israel, and in IDF military operations in the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, and Lebanon.²⁶

Although not the focus of this paper, it is important to note that the larger regional conflict begun after 7 October 2023 has killed and injured many thousands more people. The Israeli bombardment of Lebanon, begun in late 2024, injured 16,638 people and killed 4,047 people before a ceasefire was concluded in November 2024, and displaced hundreds of thousands of people.²⁷ More than 100 people in Israel were killed, and an estimated 63,000 people in northern Israel were displaced, by unguided and indiscriminate rockets and mortars fired from Lebanon by Hezbollah in late 2024. Hamas, Iran, Hezbollah, and the Houthis continue to fire rockets against Israel and Israelis faces ongoing suicide and other

Riley McCabe, “Russia’s Battlefield Woes in Ukraine,” CSIS Briefs, June 2025. https://csis-website-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/2025-06/250603_Jones_Battlefield_Woes_0.pdf?VersionId=swtz75pqU3Del_5mBFQfV5dYKCS8J_gz.

²⁵ Last updated by the IDF on 5 October 2025. IDF Personnel Directorate, <https://www.idf.il/160590>. Accessed 6 October 2025. The list of IDF killed in Operation Swords of Iron includes about 12 people killed in the West Bank Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “Swords of Iron: IDF Casualties,” <https://www.gov.il/en/pages/swords-of-iron-idf-casualties>.

²⁶ These fatalities include soldiers killed by Hezbollah and Iran. Some of these 913 fatalities were reported to have occurred in Gaza and those are included in Table 1, above.

²⁷ Reuters, “Israeli Attacks Have Killed 4,047 people in Lebanon, Lebanese Minister Says,” *Reuters*, 4 December 2024, <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/israeli-attacks-have-killed-4047-people-lebanon-lebanese-minister-says-2024-12-04/>.

terror attacks by militant organizations and individuals.²⁸ Some of those displaced in Israel and Lebanon have not been able to return home. Israel's attacks in Syria, Iran, Yemen and Qatar have also killed and injured people.

Journalists and Humanitarian Workers Killed

Israel's government has blocked almost all outside access to Gaza. Specifically, international media have been barred by Israel, and humanitarian workers, who could bring eyewitness accounts to the rest of the world, have had limited access to Gaza since the start of the war. Nonetheless, journalists and humanitarian workers are working in Gaza, at the risk of injury, death, or imprisonment, in their efforts to verify accounts of the dead and injured and distribute assistance.

More humanitarian workers have been killed in Gaza over two years than through the course of the entire nearly 20 years of the U.S.-led war in Afghanistan. According to data from the Aid Worker Security Database, 554 aid workers were killed in Gaza during the war from 7 October 2023 to late September 2025. Of these, eight international aid workers have been killed; thus, about 99% of the humanitarian workers killed in Gaza are Palestinian. A high proportion, 73%, of all humanitarian workers killed in Gaza died as the result of bombardment and 9% were killed by shelling. One humanitarian worker in Gaza, detained by the Israeli forces, was killed in custody. An additional five humanitarian workers were killed in the West Bank by various means.²⁹

Hundreds of journalists and media workers have also already been killed in Gaza. According to a Costs of War report by Nick Turse, "Thirty-seven journalists were slain in the Gaza Strip during the first month" of the war, "making it the deadliest month documented by the Committee to Protect Journalists since it began collecting data in 1992."³⁰ As Table 2 indicates, journalists and humanitarian workers in Gaza have been killed at higher rates than in other recent conflicts.³¹

²⁸ Amnesty International, "Israel: Hezbollah's Use of Inherently Inaccurate Weapons to Launch Unlawful Attacks Violates International Law," 20 December 2024, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2024/12/israel-hezbollahs-use-of-inherently-inaccurate-weapons-to-launch-unlawful-attacks-violates-international-law/>. Human Rights Watch, Tirana Hassan, "Israel and Palestine: Events of 2024," <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2025/country-chapters/israel-and-palestine>.

²⁹ Aid Worker Security Database, 1997-Present. <https://www.aidworkersecurity.org/incidents>. Last accessed 30 September 2025.

³⁰ Nick Turse, "News Graveyards: How Dangers to War Reporters Endanger the World," Costs of War, 1 April 2025, p. 6, https://costsofwar.watson.brown.edu/sites/default/files/papers/Turse_Costs-of-War-The-Reporting-Graveyard-4-2-25.pdf. Turse also notes that there are different counts of journalists and media workers killed in Gaza.

³¹ For a comparative discussion, see Turse, "News Graveyards."

Table 2. Journalists and Humanitarian Workers Killed in Gaza, Afghanistan, and Ukraine Wars³²

War	Committee To Protect Journalists Estimates of Journalists/Media Workers Killed	Aid Worker Security Database Report of Humanitarian Aid Workers Killed in Gaza, October 2023 - September 2025
Israeli Military Operations in Gaza, 2023- 28 September 2025	195 (-248)*	554
Afghanistan, 2001-2021 ³³	74	446
Ukraine, February 2022- August 2025	19	32

* The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) is investigating additional cases of journalists being killed.³⁴ The higher end estimate (248) is from the UN Human Rights Office.

The rate of killing of journalists in Gaza has declined over the course of fighting. Using data collected by the Committee to Protect Journalists, an average of about 8 journalists have been killed each month in Gaza since 7 October 2023. But there are higher counts of the number of journalists and media workers killed in Gaza. The Gaza Media Center says 238 journalists have been killed and the UN Human Rights Office reports that 248 journalists have been killed since the start of the war, an average of about 10 per month. In comparison, over the course of nearly 20 years of the U.S.-led war in Afghanistan, an average of less than one journalist was killed per month.

Journalists have been killed accidentally while reporting in many wars and this has certainly happened in Gaza. In addition, the Israeli government has said that it is targeting combatants who are operating under cover as journalists. However, journalists based in Israel have uncovered a special unit of the IDF — the “legitimisation cell” — charged with the job of “identifying reporters it could smear as undercover Hamas fighters, to target them and to blunt international outrage over the killing of media workers.”³⁵ Of those who

³² Sources: Committee to Protect Journalists, Journalist Motive Confirmed and Media Workers Motive Confirmed and Unconfirmed, retrieved from <https://cpj.org/> and Committee to Protect Journalists, Israel-Gaza War, <https://cpj.org/full-coverage-israel-gaza-war/>. Aid Worker Security Database, 1997-Present.

³³ Costs of War, <https://costsofwar.watson.brown.edu/costs/human>.

³⁴ United Nations, Human Rights, Office of the High Commissioner, “States Must Stop Israel Before All Journalists in Gaza are Silenced: UN Experts,” United Nations, 4 September 2025. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2025/09/states-must-stop-israel-all-journalists-gaza-are-silenced-un-experts>. Annie Kelly, “The Deadly Toll on Journalists in the Gaza War,” *The Guardian*, 1 September 2025, <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/ng-interactive/2025/sep/01/israel-gaza-war-media-palestinian-journalists-killed-cpj>.

³⁵ Emma Graham-Harrison, “Israel Unit Tasked with Smearing Gaza Journalists as Hamas Fighters – Report,” *The Guardian*, 15 August 2025, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/aug/15/israeli-military-unit-reportedly-tasked-with-linking-journalists-in-gaza-to-hamas>.

have died, “To date, CPJ has determined that a total of 59 journalists and media workers were directly targeted and killed by Israeli forces, cases that CPJ classifies as murders.”³⁶

August 2025 was a particularly deadly month for journalists in Gaza. On 11 August 2025, the Israeli government said it targeted a correspondent for Al Jazeera, Anas Al-Sharif who was at the time working in a tent with other journalists outside al Shifa Hospital in Gaza city. The strike killed a total of four Al Jazeera journalists and two freelancers. Israel made the strike because it said Sharif was Hamas, a claim that Sharif disputed before his killing and that his news organization *Al Jazeera* had said was “baseless.”³⁷ On 25 August 2025, strikes at Nassir Hospital killed five journalists and 17 other people.³⁸ While Netanyahu said the that Israel “deeply regrets the tragic mishap,” IDF Israeli officials said they targeted Nasser hospital because one of the cameras there may have been providing information to about the “activity of IDF troops” Hamas.³⁹ On 31 August, Islam Abed, a correspondent for *Al Quds Today TV*, was killed at home in Gaza City with her husband and one of her children in a drone strike on her apartment complex.⁴⁰

Further, the Israeli government has attacked and killed journalists outside Gaza. The Committee to Protect Journalists has noted that Israeli forces killed six Lebanese reporters in Lebanon from 2023-2025 and three Iranian reporters in Iran in 2025.⁴¹ On 1 September 2025, more than 200 media outlets across the globe joined a call organized by Reporters without Borders to protect journalists and grant their access to Gaza.⁴² On 10 September 2025, Israel attacked two newspaper offices in Yemen that Israeli officials accused of distributing “psychological terror.” The attack killed 31 journalists and media workers, and at least four other people, including one child. The attack also wounded 22 other journalists.⁴³ After the attack, the Committee to Protect Journalists Regional Program

³⁶ Committee to Protect Journalists, “Journalists Casualties in the Israel Gaza War.”

³⁷ Sara Jabakhanji, “Al Jazeera Calls Israeli Army claims ‘baseless’ After IDF Accuses 6 Journalists of Being Militants,” CBC, 24 October 2024, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/world/israel-gaza-al-jazeera-journalists-1.7361844>.

³⁸ Kelly, “The Deadly Toll on Journalists in the Gaza War.” Reuters, “Israel Hits Gaza Hospital, Killing at Least 20 People, Including Five Journalists,” *Reuters*, 25 August 2025. <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/israel-hits-gaza-hospital-killing-least-20-people-including-five-journalists-2025-08-25/>. Human Rights, Office of the High Commissioner, “States Must Stop Israel Before All Journalists in Gaza are Silenced: UN Experts,” 4 September 2025, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2025/09/states-must-stop-israel-all-journalists-gaza-are-silenced-un-experts>.

³⁹ Merlyn Thomas, Benedict Garman and Sebastian Vandermeersch, “New Footage Shows Israel Struck Gaza’s Nasser Hospital Four Times,” *BBC News*, 29 August 2025, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cly6lxn114po>.

⁴⁰ Hosni Nedem and Rania Abu Shamala, “1 More Palestinian Journalist Killed in Israeli Strike on Gaza,” *AA*, 31 August 2025, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/1-more-palestinian-journalist-killed-in-israeli-strike-on-gaza/3674605#>.

⁴¹ Committee to Protect Journalists, “Journalists Casualties in the Israel Gaza War,” updated 19 September 2025, <https://cpj.org/2023/10/journalist-casualties-in-the-israel-gaza-conflict/>.

⁴² Aya Batrawi, “Media Outlets Demand Israel Grant Access to Gaza, Halt Attacks on Journalists There,” *National Public Radio*, 1 September 2025, <https://www.npr.org/2025/09/01/nx-s1-5521944/news-outlets-call-for-safety-of-journalists-covering-the-war-in-gaza>.

⁴³ David Gritton, “Israeli Strikes in Yemen Kill 35 People, Houthi Say,” *BBC News*, 11 September 2025, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c179e5v552ko>. Mohamed Mandour, “Israel’s Killing of 31 Yemeni Journalists Marks Deadliest Global Attack in 16 years,” Committee to Protect Journalists, 19 September 2025,

Director, Sarah Qudah, said, “Since October 7, 2023, Israel has emerged as a regional killer of journalists, with repeated incidents in Gaza, Lebanon, Iran, and now Yemen confirming Israel’s longstanding pattern of labeling journalists as terrorists or propagandists to justify their killings.”⁴⁴

Gaza Ministry of Health Data Disputed But Used by Israel and NATO

With limited outside access to Gaza, observers rely on the Gaza Ministry of Health, which, since the start of the war, is the only organization on the ground keeping a record of the people killed in Palestine. Between 26 October 2023 and 4 August 2025, the Gaza Ministry of Health has released 11 lists of the people it has identified as killed, including their sex, names, and ages. The Gaza Ministry of Health data does not distinguish combatants from noncombatants. These lists can be accessed online.⁴⁵ The United Nations reports updates of aggregate figures from the Gaza Ministry of Health every few days.⁴⁶

The Gaza Ministry of Health recording of deaths and injuries has been done at some risk; several of the officials recording the deaths have themselves been killed while doing their work. Thus, as the scholar Mike Spagat notes, “It is unlikely that the MoH now possesses death records for the full course of the war even remotely close in quality to those it compiled during the first month.”⁴⁷ Unsurprisingly, given the conditions under which it is produced, flaws and inconsistencies in Gaza Ministry of Health data have been identified and there are some errors in the UN reporting of those figures. For example, the ages and sexes of those killed have sometimes been changed or corrected by the Gaza Ministry of Health. And the Ministry has also made announcements of the number of the dead, only to revise them downward.⁴⁸ Further, because the Gaza Ministry of Health is run by Hamas, it has been criticized as biased and accused of manipulating fatality numbers.⁴⁹

On the other hand, independent scholars have found the methods used by the Gaza Ministry of Health to be reliable, even as it modifies them to take account of changed

<https://cpj.org/2025/09/israels-killing-of-31-yemeni-journalists-marks-deadliest-global-attack-in-16-years/>.

⁴⁴ Qudah quoted in Mandour, “Israel’s Killing of 31 Yemeni Journalists Marks Deadliest Global Attack in 16 Years.”

⁴⁵ “List of identified victims, as published by the Palestinian MoH in Gaza.” Airwars.

<https://airwars.org/moh-list/>.

⁴⁶ Gaza Ministry of Health data reported by the United Nations, “Palestinian Casualties.”

⁴⁷ Mike Spagat, “Quality Data Recording in Gaza, Potentially Evidencing Genocide, Frustrated by Israeli Strikes — Contravening International Court of Justice Orders,” Action on Armed Violence, 19 February 2024, <https://aoav.org.uk/2024/quality-data-recording-in-gaza-evidencing-potential-genocide-frustrated-by-israeli-strikes-contravening-international-court-of-justice-orders/>.

⁴⁸ Gabriel Epstein, “Gaza Fatality Data has Become Completely Unreliable,” *Policy Watch 3851*, The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 26 March 2024. <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/gaza-fatality-data-has-become-completely-unreliable>.

⁴⁹ Gabriel Epstein, “How Hamas Manipulates Gaza Fatality Numbers: Examining the Male Undercount and Other Problems,” *Policy Notes*, No. 144. The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 25 January 2024. <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/how-hamas-manipulates-gaza-fatality-numbers-examining-male-undercount-and-other>.

conditions on the ground.⁵⁰ Further, despite assertions that the Gaza Ministry of Health has been exaggerating the death toll, Israel's own intelligence service has determined that Gaza Ministry of Health figures are reliable. Indeed, the Gaza Ministry of Health data are being used in official briefings in Israel.⁵¹ According to an unnamed Israeli official, "The numbers are heavily relied up[on] for official briefings on civilian casualties because with the exception of strikes on high-value targets, where senior officials are briefed on collateral damage, no civilian casualty figures or estimates are collected" independently by Israel.⁵² Officials from NATO countries also acknowledged using the Gaza Ministry of Health data.⁵³ On 9 September 2025, Herzl Halevi, the former Chief of Staff of the Israel Defense Forces told an audience of Israelis that, "There are 2.2 million people in Gaza, over ten percent were killed or injured," a number that is consistent with the Gaza Ministry of Health figures for killed and injured.⁵⁴

Undercounting

The current Gaza Ministry of Health figures may in fact be a significant undercount of the number of violent war deaths. There are two reasons. First, as is the case in most wars, the public health infrastructure in Gaza necessary for the reporting and analysis is badly damaged. Most Gaza Ministry of Health data before the war came from hospital records. A study published in the British medical journal *The Lancet*, in February 2025, noted that the war had disrupted and impeded the ability of the Ministry of Health in Gaza to collect data from hospitals and other health care facilities: "The escalation of Israeli military ground operations and attacks on health-care facilities severely disrupted the latter's ability to record deaths electronically."⁵⁵ From 7 October 2023 to 11 June 2025, there were 735 attacks on healthcare facilities and "at least 1,580 health workers killed."⁵⁶

⁵⁰ Michael Spagat and Daniel Silverman, "Is the Hamas-run Ministry of Health Data on Fatalities in Gaza to be Trusted," Action on Armed Violence, 1 November 2023, <https://aoav.org.uk/2023/are-the-gazan-casualty-figures-being-reported-reliable-two-conflict-experts-compared-the-numbers-to-previous-attacks-and-conclude-they-are-credible/>. Assma Maad, "Why the Gaza Health Ministry's Death Count is Considered Reliable," *Le Monde*, 13 October 2024.

⁵¹ Mitchel Prothero, "Israeli Intelligence has Deemed Hamas Run Health Ministry's Death Toll Figures Generally Accurate," *Vice*, 25 January 2024. <https://www.vice.com/en/article/israeli-intelligence-health-ministry-death-toll/>.

⁵² Israeli official, quoted in Prothero, "Israeli Intelligence has Deemed Hamas Run Health Ministry's Death Toll Figures Generally Accurate."

⁵³ Prothero, "Israeli Intelligence has Deemed Hamas Run Health Ministry's Death Toll Figures Generally Accurate."

⁵⁴ Halevi quoted in Roni Green Shaulov, "Helevi to Residents in the Envelope: 'The Concept has Collapsed. No One Said 'do this and that' and Went Back to Sleep.'" *Ynet*, 10 September 2025. <https://www.ynet.co.il/news/article/h1i4qhyjlx>.

⁵⁵ Zeina Jamaluddine, Hanan Abukmail, Sarah Aly, Oona Campbell, Francesco Chechi, "Traumatic Injury Mortality in the Gaza Strip from Oct 7, 2023, to June 30, 2024: A Capture-recapture Analysis," *The Lancet*, 8 February 2025, [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(24\)02678-3/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(24)02678-3/fulltext).

⁵⁶ United Nations Human Rights, "UN Experts Appalled by Relentless Israeli Attacks on Gaza's Healthcare System," Office of the High Commissioner, 13 August 2025, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2025/08/un-experts-appalled-relentless-israeli-attacks-gazas-healthcare-system>; United Nations UN News, "Health and Aid Workers Targeted in Conflicts Around the World, UN Agency Says," 23 August 2025, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2025/08/1165710>.

Second, many of the bodies of those killed by bombardment have not been found. Indeed, no reliable figures are currently available for the number of people in Gaza whose bodies are yet to be recovered. In January 2025, at the start of the short ceasefire, the Civil Defence Agency in Gaza estimated that there were more than 10,000 people whose bodies remained buried in the rubble.⁵⁷ Since early 2025, the Gaza Ministry of Health no longer estimates the number of those whose bodies have not been recovered. As one NATO official said, “Of course the true casualties are higher than any health ministry figures because there’s unrecovered bodies, half the strip is flattened by air strikes and there’s more dead under that rubble.”⁵⁸

During the January to March 2025 ceasefire, several hundred bodies were recovered. However, “the lack of equipment to move large masses of rubble — exacerbated by IDF airstrikes on construction vehicles Israel identified as having been used in the October 7 attack — along with the need to avoid unexploded ordnance likely point to significant numbers of unrecovered bodies.”⁵⁹ Thus, as one UN observer noted, “the unmistakable smell of death is everywhere – a grizzly reminder that the ruins lining the streets hide the remains of mothers, fathers, children.”⁶⁰ As discussed below, in the areas where it operates, Israel’s military has demolished and bulldozed away many partially destroyed buildings and some bodies may never be recovered.

Two separate independent scholarly analyses of the number of people killed in Gaza suggests that the Gaza Ministry of Health figures may be a *significant undercount* of the number of violent deaths.⁶¹ The first, a report published in *The Lancet* in February 2025 concluded that “Our analysis supports the accuracy of the MoH reported mortality figures but suggests that these are to be treated as a minimum estimate subject to considerable under-reporting.”⁶² The second analysis, based on a Gaza Mortality Survey, also concluded that the Gaza Ministry of health data was an undercount: “Our findings suggest that violent mortality has significantly exceeded official figures.”⁶³ The Gaza Mortality Survey estimated

⁵⁷ Joel Gunter, “‘In Every Street There are Dead’: Gaza Rescuers Reckon with Scale of Destruction,” *BBC News*, 20 January 2025. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cn8x00mgjxmo>.

⁵⁸ Quoted in Prothero, “Israeli Intelligence has Deemed Hamas Run Health Ministry’s Death Toll Figures Generally Accurate.”

⁵⁹ Gabriel Epstein, “Assessing the Gaza Death Toll After Eighteen Months of War,” *Policy Notes*, No. 158. The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, May 2025. <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/sites/default/files/pdf/PolicyNote158Epsteinv3.pdf>.

⁶⁰ Olga Cherevko, “When Gaza burned, children starved, hospitals collapsed – did you act?” Briefing by Olga Cherevko, OCHA Spokesperson in Gaza, to journalists in UN Headquarters in New York,” United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 12 September 2025, [https://www.ochaopt.org/content/when-gaza-burned-children-starved-hospitals-collapsed-did-you-act?_gl=1*1241pod*_ga*MTUyNzI1MzUzLjE3NTc5MzMzMTE.*_ga_E60ZNX2F68*cze3NTc5MzMzMTEkzbEkZzEkdDE3NTc5MzMzMzMDIkajYw\[Gww\]\[Ggw\]](https://www.ochaopt.org/content/when-gaza-burned-children-starved-hospitals-collapsed-did-you-act?_gl=1*1241pod*_ga*MTUyNzI1MzUzLjE3NTc5MzMzMTE.*_ga_E60ZNX2F68*cze3NTc5MzMzMTEkzbEkZzEkdDE3NTc5MzMzMzMDIkajYw[Gww][Ggw]).

⁶¹ Jamaluddine, Abukmail, Aly, Campbell, Chechi, “Traumatic Injury Mortality in the Gaza Strip from Oct 7, 2023, to June 30, 2024.”

⁶² Jamaluddine, Abukmail, Aly, Campbell, Chechi, “Traumatic Injury Mortality in the Gaza Strip from Oct 7, 2023, to June 30, 2024,” p. 476.

⁶³ Michael Spagat, Jon Pedersen, Khalil Shikaki, Michael Robbins, Eran Bendavid, Håvard Hegre, Debarati Guha-Sapir, “Violent and Nonviolent Death Tolls for the Gaza War: New Primary Evidence,” 22 July 2025, p. 2. <https://www.medrxiv.org/content/10.1101/2025.06.19.25329797v4.full-text>.

“75,200 violent deaths . . . between October 7, 2023, and January 5, 2025.”⁶⁴ In the same period, through January 2025, the Gaza Ministry of Health reported about 45,650 deaths.⁶⁵

The Ratio of Noncombatant to Combatant Deaths

In assessing the human toll, there is the question of how many of the dead are civilians and how many are combatants. As noted above, the Gaza Ministry of Health does not distinguish the number of killed by their combatant or noncombatant status. The Israeli military has emphasized that it targets Hamas and other combatants. On 12 October 2023, Israeli President Isaac Herzog said, “We are targeting the enemy . . . We are very cautious in the way we operate. The IDF uses all the means at its disposal in order to reduce harm to the population. For example, many resources are invested in gathering intelligence to locate the enemy separately from civilian population, in evacuating the civilian population from the centre of the battle, warning citizens, and monitoring humanitarian situation.”⁶⁶ Israeli spokesperson Major Karen Hajioff said in December 2023, “as a military committed to international law and a moral code of conduct, we are devoting vast resources to minimizing harm to the civilians that Hamas has forced into the role of human shields. Our war is against Hamas, not against the people of Gaza.”⁶⁷ Yet, it would be hard for the Israeli military, by its own admission, to assess their targeting. As one Israeli intelligence official stated in 2024, “A lot of targets have been hit without prior analysis or estimates and there’s never any follow up collection.”⁶⁸

The data that Israel’s government itself has provided suggests a high rate of civilian casualties. In early December 2023, Israel said it had killed about 5,000 members of Hamas, and that the ratio of killing was two civilians for every combatant in Gaza. An Israeli “senior military” official said, “I’m not saying it’s not bad that we have a ratio of two to one.”⁶⁹ He continued, “I can assure you that we’re doing everything in our power to reduce civilian casualties. But this is part of the consequences of war.”⁷⁰ If that was indeed the ratio of noncombatant to combatant death, an Israeli official was acknowledging that about 66% of those killed were civilians.

⁶⁴ Their range, with a 95% confidence interval, for the total number of deaths in that period was 63,600–86,800 deaths. Spagat, Pedersen, Shikaki, Robbins, Bendavid, Hegre, Guha-Sapir, “Violent and Nonviolent Death Tolls for the Gaza War,” p. 4.

⁶⁵ Gaza Ministry of Health Data as reported in United Nations, “Palestinian Casualties.”

⁶⁶ Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “President Herzog Holds Briefing for International Media,” 12 October 2023, <https://www.gov.il/en/pages/president-herzog-holds-briefing-for-international-media-12-oct-2023>.

⁶⁷ Natasha Bertrand and Katie Bo Lillis, “Exclusive: Nearly Half of The Israeli Munitions Dropped On Gaza Are Imprecise ‘Dumb Bombs,’ US Intelligence Assessment Finds,” *CNN*, 14 December 2023. <https://edition.cnn.com/2023/12/13/politics/intelligence-assessment-dumb-bombs-israel-gaza/index.html>.

⁶⁸ Prothero, “Israeli Intelligence has Deemed Hamas Run Health Ministry’s Death Toll Figures Generally Accurate.”

⁶⁹ AFP and Times of Israel Staff, “IDF officials: 2 civilian deaths for every 1 Hamas fighter killed in Gaza,” *The Times of Israel*, 5 December 2023. <https://www.timesofisrael.com/idf-officials-2-civilian-deaths-for-every-1-hamas-fighter-killed-in-gaza/>.

⁷⁰ AFP and Times of Israel Staff, “IDF officials.”

Further, Israeli statements have consistently *overestimated* the number of combatants the IDF has killed, and hence underestimated the number of civilians they have killed. At the start of the war, the IDF web site had tallies of “terrorists” killed in Gaza. Starting in 2024 the IDF said that it had killed about 17,000-18,000 Hamas operatives in Gaza.⁷¹ These and similar estimates of the number of Hamas and other combatants killed had been cited in disputes about the number of civilians killed as a way of suggesting that Israel’s military was killing fewer civilians than some had charged.⁷² For example, in December 2024, Andrew Fox disputed the Gaza Ministry of Health reports and media estimates of the number of civilians killed, saying “more than 17,000 Hamas combatants are estimated to have been killed, yet these figures are largely excluded from global reporting.”⁷³

Given the intense scrutiny of IDF actions, Israel has an incentive to say they had killed a large percentage of Hamas. Yet, in late August 2025, *The Guardian* reported that Israeli military intelligence have, for months, believed that the IDF had not killed as many combatants as the Israeli government had been publicly asserting. Israeli military intelligence had in fact counted, as of May 2025, 8,900 militants “dead or probably dead,” far fewer than previously reported by the government of Israel.⁷⁴ In other words, taking into account the Israeli government’s internal use of Gaza Ministry of Health figures, and their own estimate of combatants killed, Israeli intelligence officials likely understood that more than 80% of the more than 50,000 people killed at that point were civilians.⁷⁵

The Bombing: “Maximum Damage”

In asserting that Hamas is responsible for the deaths of civilians by turning them into human shields, specifically by hiding behind and locating their infrastructure in civilian areas, the IDF has not taken into account how its own tactics, weapons choices, and beliefs about the acceptability of civilian casualties have affected the civilian population in Gaza.⁷⁶

⁷¹ Jacob Magid, “Netanyahu Lashes Foreign Press for ‘False’ Reporting Regarding Gaza Humanitarian Situation,” *The Times of Israel*, 4 September 2024. https://www.timesofisrael.com/liveblog_entry/netanyahu-lashes-foreign-press-for-false-reporting-regarding-gaza-humanitarian-situation/.

⁷² See Ros Atkins, “Israel’s War in Gaza and Proportionality,” *BBC News*, 12 September 2025, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cr5r76e127do>.

⁷³ Andrew Fox, “Questionable Counting: Analyzing the Death Toll From The Hamas-Run Ministry Of Health In Gaza,” Henry Jackson Society, December 2024. <https://henryjacksonsociety.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/HJS-Questionable-Counting-%E2%80%93-Hamas-Report-web-v2.pdf>. P. 5.

⁷⁴ Harrison and Abraham, “Revealed.”

⁷⁵ Harrison and Abraham, “Revealed.”

⁷⁶ Peter Beaumont, “What is a Human Shield and how Has Hamas Been Accused of Using Them?” *The Guardian*, 30 October 2023, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/oct/30/human-shield-israel-claim-hamas-command-centre-under-hospital-palestinian-civilian-gaza-city>. The Israeli government has investigated reports that its own soldiers are using Palestinians as shields by sending them ahead of Israeli forces into buildings and tunnels.; Lorenzo Tondo, “Israel Investigates Use of Palestinians as Human Shields by its Forces in Gaza,” *The Guardian*, 24 May 2025, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/may/24/israel-investigates-use-of-palestinians-as-human-shields-by-its-forces-in-gaza>.

The current Gaza war has had several phases. In response to the Hamas attack, there was an initial bombardment of targets in Gaza by the IDF, which began immediately on 7 October 2023, followed by a ground invasion on 27 October and occupation.⁷⁷ There have been surges of Israeli bombardment and ground force operations as Israel's military destroys or occupies different portions of Gaza. There was a short ceasefire from mid-January to mid-March 2025. Immediately after the ceasefire ended, Israel's government resumed heavy bombardment of Gaza. Israel also blocked all humanitarian aid from March through April 2025. Another surge in Israeli military operations in Gaza began in August 2025.

As is the case in several recent wars, the bombardment in the first few weeks, before the ground invasion, was particularly intense and this was the quarter with the highest number of deaths and injuries. The high level of fatalities and injuries in the early weeks and months of the war were foreseeable and likely foreseen given the number of bombs used and Gaza's small size. The entire area of the Gaza Strip is 25 miles long, and between 3.7 and 7.5 miles wide, a total area of 141 square miles (365 km²). By comparison, Las Vegas is about the same size and Philadelphia just slightly smaller than the Gaza Strip.

Israeli military bombardment in the first weeks targeted urban areas, first, the town of Beit Hanoun and Gaza City, which before the bombardment began, had a population density greater than New York City. Israeli targeting then focused on cities further south, including the cities Deir al Balah, Khan Younis and Rafah.

During the first five days of the war, before the ground invasion which began on 27 October, according to the Israeli Air Force, the IAF dropped about 6,000 bombs in Gaza on Hamas targets, an average of 1,000 per day.⁷⁸ The non-governmental organization Airwars documented, in the period between 7 October 2023 to the end of October 2023, "at least 65 incidents in which a minimum of 20 civilians were killed in a single incident. This is nearly triple the number of such high-fatality incidents in the deadliest month previously documented by Airwars, which were recorded in Iraq in March 2017."⁷⁹ The Airwars analysis of harm found "at least 5,139 civilians were killed in Gaza between October 7th through the 31st. This number is only a minimum, with the maximum number of civilians killed reaching 6,668."⁸⁰ Figures 1 and 2, respectively, illustrate the quarterly toll in Gaza of deaths and of injuries, according to the Gaza Ministry of Health as reported by the UN.

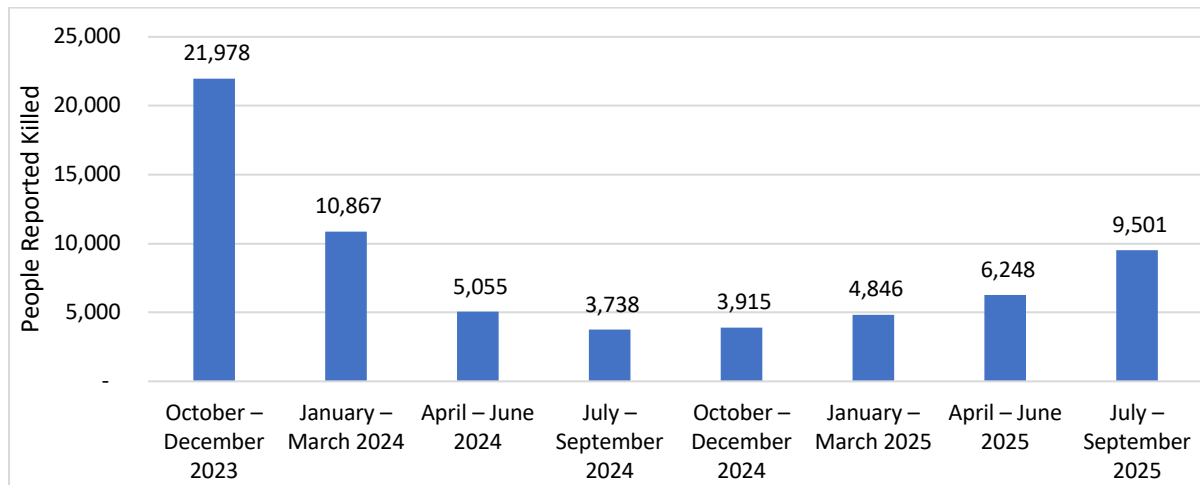
⁷⁷ James Mackenzie and Maayan Lubell, "Israel Launches Gaza War's Second Phase With Ground Operation, Netanyahu Says," *Reuters*, 28 October 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/eu-calls-humanitarian-pauses-gaza-aid-israel-raids-enclave-2023-10-26/>.

⁷⁸ Israeli Air Force, <https://x.com/IAFsite/status/1712484101763342772>. Also see Philip Webber and Stuart Parkinson, "Gaza: One of the Most Intense Bombardments in History?" *Responsible Science Journal*, no. 7, 13 March 2024, <https://www.sgr.org.uk/resources/gaza-one-most-intense-bombardments-history>.

⁷⁹ Ryan Geitner, et al, "Patterns of Harm Analysis, Gaza, October 2023," Airwars, December 2024, p. 6. <https://gaza-patterns-harm.airwars.org/assets/Airwars%20Patterns%20of%20harm%20analysis%20-%20Gaza%20October%202023.pdf>.

⁸⁰ Geitner, et al, "Patterns of Harm Analysis, Gaza, October 2023," p. 5.

Figure 1. Gaza Ministry of Health Data on the Number of People Killed in Gaza Each Quarter (October 2023-September 2025)⁸¹



Another analysis of the data, by public health scholars Jamaluddine, Abukmail, Aly, Campbell, and Chechi, using more sources than the Gaza Ministry of Health, found that from 7 October 2023 to 30 June 2024, “the majority of deaths (59.1%) occurred among women, children, and older people, groups considered particularly vulnerable in conflict-affected settings and less likely to be combatants.”⁸²

Because these Gaza Ministry of Health figures are, as discussed above, likely an undercount of the total killed, the numbers are used here as a means of illustrating trends in the killing and injury over the course of the war. These quarterly totals also illustrate that both deaths and injuries have been higher in recent months than before the ceasefire ended in March 2025, tracking the uptick in Israeli operations.

The high level of civilian casualties compared to other recent wars is also a result of a change in Israeli military targeting doctrine. As Israel’s Defense Minister, Yaov Gallant said early in the war, “I have lowered all the restraints — we will kill everyone we fight against, we will use every means.”⁸³ Rear Admiral Daniel Hagari, an IDF spokesperson said, “While balancing accuracy with the scope of damage, right now we’re focused on what causes maximum damage.”⁸⁴

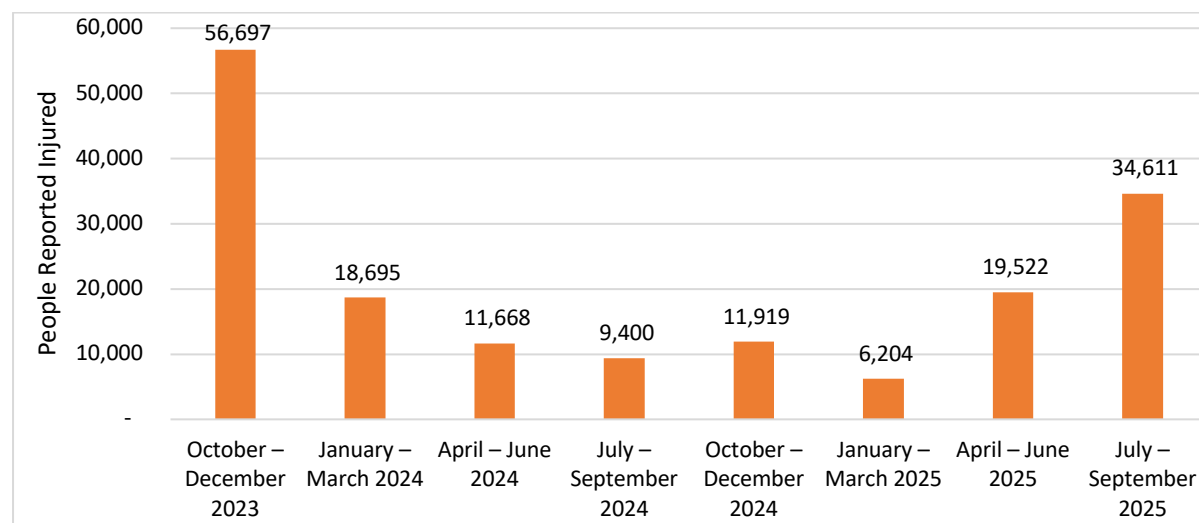
⁸¹ Source: Gaza Ministry of Health Data as reported in United Nations, “Palestinian Casualties.”

⁸² Jamaluddine, Abukmail, Aly, Campbell, and Chechi, “Traumatic Injury Mortality in the Gaza Strip from Oct 7, 2023, to June 30, 2024,” p. 475.

⁸³ Quoted in Yagil Levy, “The Israeli Army Has Dropped the Restraint in Gaza, and the Data Shows Unprecedented Killing,” *Haaretz*, 9 December 2023, https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2023-12-09/ty-article-magazine/.highlight/the-israeli-army-has-dropped-the-restraint-in-gaza-and-data-shows-unprecedented-killing/0000018c-4cca-db23-ad9f-6cdae8ad0000?_gl=1*1lu7c11*_gcl_au*MzQwOTE5MzYuMTc1ODM3MjQ2Ng..

⁸⁴ Bethan McKernan and Quique Kierszenbaum, “‘We’re Focused on Maximum Damage’: Ground Offensive in Gaza Seems Imminent,” *The Guardian*, 10 October 2023, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/oct/10/right-now-it-is-one-day-at-a-time-life-on-israels-frontline-with-gaza>.

Figure 2. Gaza Ministry of Health Data on the Number of People Injured in Gaza Each Quarter (October 2023-September 2025)⁸⁵



Specifically, in the first two weeks of fighting, using loosened rules of engagement that gave IDF officers the authority to risk killing up to 20 civilians per airstrike, the Israeli military struck more than 7,000 targets.⁸⁶ As *The New York Times* reported, this authority was apparently a departure from previous Israeli military guidance. The *Times* found that, “In previous conflicts with Hamas, many Israeli strikes were approved only after officers concluded that no civilians would be hurt. Sometimes, officers could risk killing up to five civilians and only rarely did the limit rise to 10 or above, though the actual death toll was sometimes much higher.”⁸⁷ IDF criteria for targeting were loosened later in the war as well, allowing Israel to target homes, schools, and hospitals that might be used by Hamas.⁸⁸

The high civilian toll is also in part a consequence of the choices that the IDF has made to use unguided and very large weapons in civilian areas. These include the unguided 2,000-pound (900 kg) Mark-84 (M-84) or nearly identical BLU-117 bombs supplied by the United States. M-84 weapons can be used with and without precision guidance. Whether or not they are fitted with guidance, the M-84 bombs are reportedly “capable of forming a crater 50 feet (15.2 m) wide and 36 ft (11.0 m) deep.”⁸⁹ The Mark-84 can “penetrate up to

⁸⁵ Source: Gaza Ministry of Health Data as reported in United Nations, “Palestinian Casualties.”

⁸⁶ Patrick Kingsley, “Israel’s Strikes on Gaza Are Some of the Most Intense This Century,” *The New York Times*, 26 October 2023. <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/10/25/world/middleeast/israel-gaza-airstrikes.html>. ; Patrick Kingsley et al, “Israel Loosened Its Rules to Bomb Hamas Fighters, Killing Many More Civilians,” *The New York Times*, 26 December 2024. <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/12/26/world/middleeast/israel-hamas-gaza-bombing.html?searchResultPosition=1>.

⁸⁷ Kingsley, et al, “Israel Loosened Its Rules to Bomb Hamas Fighters, Killing Many More Civilians.”

⁸⁸ Harry Davies, “Israel Strikes on Gaza Schools Used as Civilian Shelters Are Part of a Deliberate Strategy, Say Sources,” *The Guardian*, 2 June 2025, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/jun/02/israel-strikes-gaza-schools-strategy>. Yuval Abraham, “Israel is Falsely Designating Gaza Areas as Empty in Order to Bomb Them,” *+972 Magazine*, 4 June 2024, <https://www.972mag.com/israel-gaza-empty-neighborhoods-airstrikes/>.

⁸⁹ “Mark 84 bomb” <https://mapsairmuseum.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Mark-84-Bomb.pdf>.

15 inches (381.0 mm) of metal or 11 ft (3.4 m) of concrete, depending on the height from which it is dropped, and causes lethal fragmentation to a radius of 400 yards (365.8 m).⁹⁰ From October 2023 to mid-2024, the U.S. had transferred, “at least 14,000 of the MK-84 2,000-pound bombs, 6,500 500-pound bombs, 3,000 Hellfire precision-guided air-to-ground missiles, 1,000 bunker-buster bombs, 2,600 air-dropped small-diameter bombs” that Israel used.⁹¹

An analysis of Mark-84 bomb craters for bombs dropped near hospitals in Gaza between 7 October and 17 November 2023 found that, “84% of all hospitals were within 800 m, the ‘damage and injury’ range, of at least one M-84 bomb detonation, and 25% of all hospitals were within 360 m, the ‘lethal’ range.”⁹²

On 31 October 2023, Israel’s government, which said it was targeting underground tunnels and Hamas fighters, attacked Jabalya refugee camp. The attack may have used at least two 2,000-pound bombs.⁹³ The United Nations Office of the High Commissioner said, “At around 1420 hours, the IDF struck a residential block in densely populated Jabalya Refugee Camp. The strike completely flattened an area of at least 2,500 square metres, destroying 10 structures. It impacted across an approximate diagonal span of 75 metres, causing damage to at least 10 more buildings.” The Office of the High Commissioner “verified 56 people killed, including 12 women and 23 children, with information of an additional 43 fatalities.”⁹⁴

The Biden administration paused the transfer of Mark-84 bombs in early May 2024, over concerns that they were being used in densely populated areas. As Biden said in an interview with *CNN*, “Civilians have been killed in Gaza as a consequence of those bombs and other ways in which they go after population centers.”⁹⁵ The Biden administration’s review of “Safeguards and Accountability With Respect to Transferred Defense Articles” found that, “given Israel’s significant reliance on U.S.-made defense articles, it is reasonable to assess that defense articles covered under NSM-20 have been used by Israeli security

⁹⁰ “Mark 84 bomb.”

⁹¹ Humeyra Pamuk and Mike Stone, “Exclusive: US has Sent Israel Thousands of 2,000-lb bombs Since Oct. 7,” *Reuters*, <https://www.reuters.com/world/us-has-sent-israel-thousands-2000-pound-bombs-since-oct-7-2024-06-28/>.

⁹² Dennis Kunichof, et al., “Are Hospitals Collateral Damage? Assessing Geospatial Proximity Of 2000 lb Bomb Detonations to Hospital Facilities in the Gaza Strip from October 7 to November 17, 2023,” *PLOS Global Public Health*, 10 October 2024. <https://journals.plos.org/globalpublichealth/article?id=10.1371/journal.pgph.0003178#pgph.0003178.ref011>.

⁹³ Christoph Koettl, Ainar Tifenthaler, Haley Willis, and Alexander Cardia, “Israel Used 2,000-Pound Bombs in Strike on Jabaliya, Analysis Shows,” *The New York Times*, 3 November 2023. <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/11/03/world/middleeast/israel-bomb-jabaliya.html>.

⁹⁴ United Nations, “Thematic Report, Indiscriminate and Disproportionate Attacks During the Conflict in Gaza (October -December 2023)”, United Nations Human Rights, p. 6. <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/countries/opt/20240619-ohchr-thematic-report-indiscrim-disprop-attacks-gaza-oct-dec2023.pdf>.

⁹⁵ Joseph Biden quoted in Kevin Liptak, “Biden Says He Will Stop Sending Bombs and Artillery Shells to Israel if it Launches Major Invasion of Rafah,” *CNN*, 9 May 2024, <https://edition.cnn.com/2024/05/08/politics/joe-biden-interview-cnntv>.

forces since October 7 in instances inconsistent with its IHL obligations or with established best practices for mitigating civilian harm.” The U.S. intelligence community also found that while there was “no direct indication of Israel intentionally targeting civilians Israel could do more to avoid civilian harm.”⁹⁶ The Trump administration resumed the shipment of these weapons in February 2025, even though a ceasefire was then in effect.⁹⁷ The Trump administration notified Congress on 28 February 2025 that it would transfer more than 35,500 Mark-84 bomb bodies, 3,450 Mark-84 bombs, and 3,450 guidance kits for those bombs.⁹⁸

Attacks on hospitals in Gaza continue. For example, an Israeli missile attack on Nasser Hospital, the only remaining hospital in southern Gaza, on 25 August 2025, hit the emergency department and the surgery as well as inpatient portions of the hospital. The initial strike injured several people and collapsed a portion of the roof of a staircase, and then 10 minutes later another strike with two more missiles killed and injured some those who had rushed to assist the wounded. All told, 20 people, including five journalists, were killed. On the day of the attack Benjamin Netanyahu called it a “tragic mishap.” The next day, however, the IDF said that it was targeting a camera being used from the hospital to view IDF operations and that six “terrorists” had been killed.⁹⁹ Assuming that six of the 20 people killed that day were combatants (albeit, not actively fighting at the time, since there was no weapons fire coming from the hospital at the time of the attack), 70% of those killed were civilians.

States can choose to be more or less careful about measures taken to minimize risks to civilians, including not only where and when to use force, but also whether or not to use precision-guided weapons. Indeed, although precision-guided weapons have been available, because the U.S. had provided them, Israel has often not used them. According to a U.S. intelligence assessment, 55-60% of the 29,000 bombs used by Israel through mid-December 2023 were precision-guided, and 40-45% of the munitions were unguided,

⁹⁶ Antony Blinken, “Report to Congress under Section 2 of the National Security Memorandum on Safeguards and Accountability with Respect to Transferred Defense Articles and Defense Services (NSM-20)” 10 May 2025, <https://www.justsecurity.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/Report-to-Congress-under-Section-2-of-the-National-Security-Memorandum-on-Safeguards-and-Accountability-with-Respect-to-Transferred-Defense.pdf>.

⁹⁷ Reuters, “Israel Receives Shipment of Heavy Bombs Cleared by Trump,” *Reuters*, 16 February 2025, <https://www.reuters.com/world/israel-receives-shipment-heavy-bombs-cleared-by-trump-2025-02-16/>. Action on Armed Violence, “US Ships 1,600 MK-84 Heavy Bombs to Israel Amid Concerns of Resurgent Conflict,” *AOAV*, <https://aoav.org.uk/2025/us-ships-1600-mk-84-heavy-bombs-to-israel-amid-concerns-of-resurgent-conflict/>.

⁹⁸ Defense Security Cooperation Agency, News, “Israel — Munitions and Munitions Support,” Department of Defense, 28 February 2025, Transmittal No. 25-34. <https://www.dsca.mil/Press-Media/Major-Arms-Sales/Article-Display/Article/4088258/israel-munitions-and-munitions-support>.

⁹⁹ Reuters, “Israel Hits Gaza Hospital, Killing at Least 20 People, Including Five Journalists.” Megan Fisher and Emir Nader, “Israeli Double Strike on Gaza Hospital — What We Know,” *BBC News*, 25 August 2025, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c80d2zrdj7vo>. Abeer Salman, Laurent Kent, Thomas Bordeaux, Gianluca Mezzofiore, and Sarah El Sirgany, “New Video Reveals Third Strike in Deadly ‘Double-Tap’ Attack on Gaza Hospital,” *CNN*, 28 August 2025, <https://edition.cnn.com/2025/08/27/middleeast/gaza-nasser-hospital-israel-attack-three-strikes-intl>.

“dumb” bombs.¹⁰⁰ By comparison, in Afghanistan from 7 October to 23 December 2001, the U.S. military made 6,546 strike sorties where at least one weapon was released, and dropped about 17,500 weapons, an average of about 220 weapons per day. About 57% of those munitions were precision-guided.¹⁰¹ Although the “coalition air campaign essentially ended on December 18, 2001,” Carl Connetta estimates that about 1,000-1,300 Afghan civilians were killed in U.S. air strikes through 1 January 2002.¹⁰² In Iraq, from 19 March to 18 April 2003, the U.S. dropped 29,199 guided and unguided weapons in about 17,000 strike sorties where at least one weapon was released. This was an average of about 940 weapons per day. About 68% of the weapons released were precision-guided.¹⁰³

Table 3. Bombing Rates During Air-War Phases of Recent Wars¹⁰⁴

War	Time Period	Approximate Number of Bombs/Missiles Dropped	Average Number of Bombs Dropped/Day
U.S.-led War in Afghanistan	7 October – 23 December 2001	c. 17,500	c. 224 per day
U.S. War in Iraq	19 March -18 April 2003	29,199	c. 942 per day
Israel’s War in Gaza	7-12 October 2023	c. 6,000	c. 1,000 per day

In the post-9/11 wars, the U.S. had a “Non-Combatant Casualty Cut-Off Value”, or NCV, a threshold above which the U.S. would hesitate to strike because there was a likelihood that too many civilians would be killed or injured. The NCV value is set by the President or Secretary of Defense, to reflect the “cultural, geographical, operational progress, host nation views and domestic political considerations in the area of

¹⁰⁰ Natasha Bertrand and Katie Bo Lillis, “Exclusive: Nearly Half of the Israeli Munitions Dropped on Gaza are Imprecise ‘Dumb Bomb,’ US Intelligence Assessment Finds,” *CNN*, 14 December 2023, <https://edition.cnn.com/2023/12/13/politics/intelligence-assessment-dumb-bombs-israel-gaza#:~:text=The%20assessment%2C%20compiled%20by%20the,guided%20munitions%2C%20the%20assessment%20says..>

¹⁰¹ Benjamin S. Lambeth, *Air Power Against Terror: America's Conduct of Operation Enduring Freedom* (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 2010) p. 248, figure 6.1.

¹⁰² Air Force Historical Support Division, “2001 — Operation Enduring Freedom,” <https://www.afhistory.af.mil/FAQs/Fact-Sheets/Article/458975/2001-operation-enduring-freedom/>. Carl Conetta, “Operation Enduring Freedom: Why a Higher Rate of Civilian Bombing Casualties,” Project on Defense Alternatives, 18 January 2002, revised 24 January 2002). <http://www.comw.org/pda/0201oef.html>.

¹⁰³ United States Air Force, Lt. General T. Michael Moseley, “Operation IRAQI FREEDOM — By The Numbers,” 30 April 2003, Unclassified, https://media.defense.gov/2013/Jun/13/2001329960/-1/-1/0/uscentaf_oif_report_30apr2003.pdf. Anthony Cordesman, *The Iraq War: Strategy, Tactics, and Military Lessons* (Westport: Praeger, 2003) p. 143.

¹⁰⁴ Calculated from sources noted in the text above.

operations.”¹⁰⁵ The number itself is usually secret. It has been reported that in 2005, the NCV in Iraq was 30.¹⁰⁶ In 2016, U.S. “senior defense officials” acknowledged that while the NCV had previously been zero for operations in Syria, the threshold had been raised: “Up to 10 civilians may be killed, if it is deemed necessary in order to get a critical military target.”¹⁰⁷ In late 2022, the Biden Administration apparently set an NCV of zero — “Near certainty that non-combatants will not be injured or killed in the operation” — for uses of force against terrorists.¹⁰⁸

U.S. military officials sometimes complained during the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq that the rules of engagement, or the NCV set by civilian officials, were too restrictive because they were intended to minimize civilian harm.¹⁰⁹ By contrast, the former Israeli General Herzi Halevi, the Chief of Staff of the IDF from January 2023 until March 2025, said, “Not once has anyone restricted me. Not once. Not the military AG [advocate general Yifat Tomer-Yerushalmi] who, by the way, hasn’t the authority to restrict me.” Rather, Halevi said, “There are legal advisers who say: We will know how to defend this legally in the world, and this is very important for the state of Israel.”¹¹⁰

The data shows that Israeli government assertions of care, legality, and legal defensibility aside, the numbers of civilians killed has been high throughout the war. The most recent list of fatalities by age and sex released by the Gaza Ministry of Health at the time of this writing covers the period from 3 October 2023 through 31 July 2025. The Gaza Ministry of Health does not distinguish between combatants and noncombatants in their reports. These reports enumerate names, age, and sex of those killed.

As Figure 3 shows, children comprise a significant portion of those killed. This is unsurprising since 47% of the population is under age 18.¹¹¹ The Palestinian Bureau of Statistics noted in mid-2025 that, “A fundamental shift is expected in the age and population pyramid of Gaza Strip population due to the deliberate targeting by the Israeli

¹⁰⁵ Scott Graham, “The Non-Combatant Casualty Cut-Off Value: Assessment of a Novel Targeting Technique in Operation Inherent Resolve,” *International Criminal Law Review*, vol. 18, no. 4, (2018) pp. 655-685: 679.

¹⁰⁶ Annex E (Consolidated ROE) SECRET//REL TO USA, IRQ, MCFI/20151003, (2005) p. E-1-9. http://wikileaks.org/wiki/US_Rules_of_Engagement_for_Iraq. This document was unclassified by a leak in 2008. It was not an officially declassified document.

¹⁰⁷ Lolita C. Baldor, “New War Rules Emphasize Need to Avoid Civilian Casualties,” *Military Times*, 13 December 2016. Also see Tom Vanden Brook, “New Rules Allow More Civilian Casualties in Air War Against ISIL,” *USA Today*, 19 April 2016, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2016/04/19/new-rules-allow-more-civilian-casualties-air-war-against-isil/83190812/>.

¹⁰⁸ Joseph R. Biden, “Presidential Policy Memorandum Governing Direct Action Counterterrorism Operations Outside Areas of Active Hostilities,” p. 11. The definition of near certainty is redacted. <https://www.aclu.org/documents/biden-administrations-presidential-policy-memorandum-governing-direct-action-counterterrorism-operations-outside-areas-of-active-hostilities>.

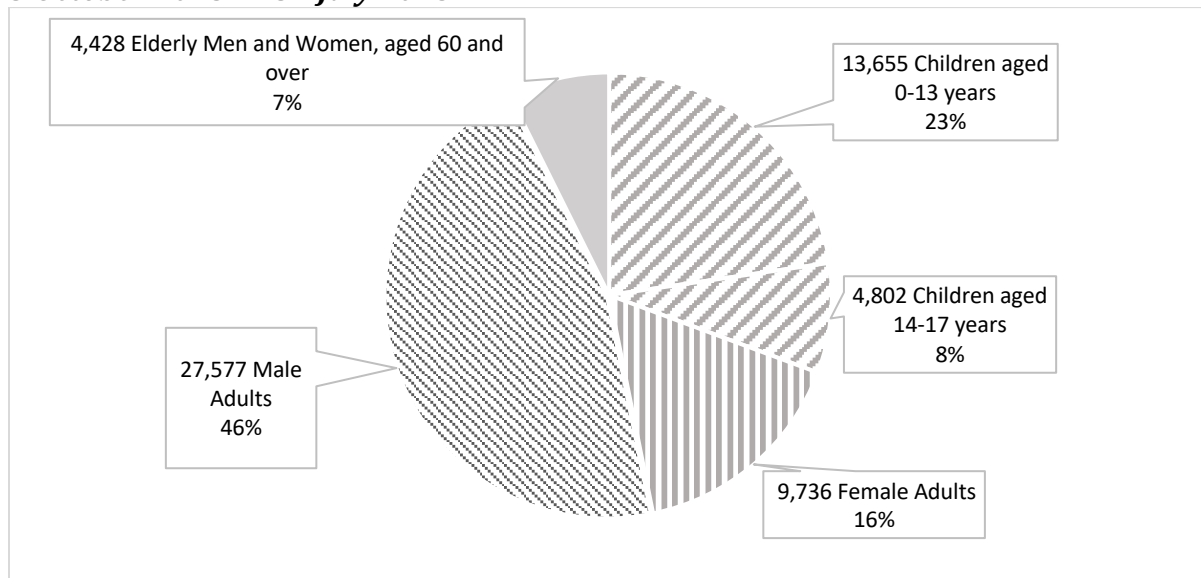
¹⁰⁹ Neta C. Crawford, *Accountability for Killing: Moral Responsibility for Collateral Damage in America's Post-9/11 Wars* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

¹¹⁰ Julian Borger, “‘We Took the Gloves Off’: Ex-IDF Chief Confirms Gaza Casualties Over 200,000,” *The Guardian*, 12 September 2025. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/sep/12/israeli-ex-commander-confirms-palestinian-casualties-are-more-than-200000?CMP=Share_AndroidApp_Other.

¹¹¹ Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, “Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) Presents the Conditions of the Palestinian Population on the Occasion of the World Population Day, 11/07/2025,” p. 3.

army of younger age groups—particularly children and youth.”¹¹² Further, the Palestinian Bureau of Statistics noted that, “The loss of a significant portion of men and women of reproductive age is likely to lead to a future decline in birth rates. This will contribute to a growing demographic gap at the base of the population pyramid and will affect the population structure for decades to come.”¹¹³

Figure 3. Gaza Ministry of Health Figures on Traumatic Fatalities by Age and Sex, 3 October 2023 — 31 July 2025¹¹⁴



Immediate and Long-Term Indirect Harm

In addition to those deaths and injuries caused by the trauma of bombs, bullets, and fire (direct death), there is indirect (or non-traumatic) harm, due to the destruction of infrastructure (water, sanitation, and medical services), economic disruption, displacement, and starvation caused by war. In all wars, indirect deaths and disease occur long after the fighting stops, even after reconstruction.¹¹⁵

As public health scholars have noted, “accurately measuring indirect mortality during an ongoing war is fraught with challenges and limitations.” In this case, “Although a ground survey could yield robust estimates, the highly unsafe conditions for humanitarian

¹¹² Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, “Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) Presents the Conditions of the Palestinian Population on the Occasion of the World Population Day, 11/07/2025,” p. 2.

¹¹³ Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, “Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) Presents the Conditions of the Palestinian Population on the Occasion of the World Population Day, 11/07/2025,” p. 2.

¹¹⁴ Gaza Ministry of Health Data 31 July 2025 list as supplied by Mike Spagat. Also see “List of identified victims, as published by the Palestinian MoH in Gaza” <https://airwars.org/moh-list/>

¹¹⁵ See Stephanie Savell, “How Death Outlives War: The Reverberating Impact of the Post-9/11 Wars on Human Health,” *Cost of War*, 15 May 2023. <https://costsofwar.watson.brown.edu/sites/default/files/papers/How-Death-Outlives-War.pdf>.

and health workers inside Gaza and access constraints currently make it unfeasible.”¹¹⁶ A survey of Gaza coordinated by public health experts in early 2025 estimated that there had already been between 4,540 and 12,500 indirect deaths between 7 October 2023 and 5 January 2025.¹¹⁷ But here again, the estimates may be low. “Non-trauma mortality in the Gaza Strip is likely underreported due to collapsed monitoring systems.”¹¹⁸ Morbidity is also likely underreported for the same reasons. The World Health Organization reported in May 2025 that the hospital system in Gaza was near “the breaking point.” In May, WHO counted 19 of the 36 hospitals in Gaza to be functioning in some capacity.¹¹⁹ As of August 2025, 18 hospitals were functioning — “1 fully and 17 partially.”¹²⁰ In late September 2025, Doctors Without Borders (or Medecins Sans Frontieres) suspended operations in Gaza City stating that, “The relentless Israeli offensive in Gaza City, Palestine, has forced Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) to suspend vital medical activities in the area due to the rapidly deteriorating security situation. The situation includes continued airstrikes and advancing tanks less than one kilometre from our healthcare facilities. The escalating attacks from Israeli forces have created an unacceptable level of risk for our staff, forcing us to suspend lifesaving medical activities.”¹²¹

The scale of devastation in Gaza likely means that the future indirect death toll will be extremely high, even if the war ended today. The vast majority of Palestinians in Gaza have nowhere safe to live and basic public infrastructure has been gutted. In late February 2024, the UN had estimated that 35% of structures in Gaza had been destroyed; as of 8 July 2025, 78% of all structures had been destroyed or damaged. The situation for housing is worse. More than 90% of housing is damaged or destroyed.¹²² In July 2025, Save the Children and more than a dozen other humanitarian organizations reported that, “Palestinians continue to be squeezed into smaller, overcrowded areas that lack the resources to support human life.”¹²³ In areas that are under Israeli control, the IDF and private contractors are destroying the remaining buildings. Most recently, as Israel has

¹¹⁶ Jamaluddine, Abukmail, Aly, Campbell, Chechi, “Traumatic Injury Mortality in the Gaza Strip from Oct 7, 2023, to June 30, 2024,” p. 475.

¹¹⁷ Spagat, Pedersen, Shikaki, Robbins, Bendavid, Hegre, and Guha-Sapir, “Violent and Nonviolent Death Tolls for the Gaza War,” p. 4

¹¹⁸ IPC, “Gaza Strip,” p. 1.

¹¹⁹ World Health Organization, “Health System at Breaking Point as Hostilities Further Intensify in Gaza, WHO Warns,” 22 May 2025. <https://www.who.int/news/item/22-05-2025-health-system-at-breaking-point-as-hostilities-further-intensify--who-warns#:~:text=Of%20the%2019%20hospitals%2C%2012.Strip%20are%20damaged%20or%20destroyed.>

¹²⁰ United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, “Reported Impact Snapshot, Gaza Strip (3 September 2025).”

¹²¹ Medecins Sans Frontieres, “MSF Forced to Suspend Gaza City Activities Amid Intensified Israeli Offensive,” MSF Press Release, 26 September 2025. <https://www.msf.org/msf-forced-suspend-activities-amid-israeli-offensive-gaza-city>.

¹²² UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, “Reported Impact Snapshot, Gaza Strip (3 Sept. 2025),” <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/reported-impact-snapshot-gaza-strip-3-september-2025>.

¹²³ Save the Children, “Gaza Humanitarian Snapshot,” 15 July 2025. <https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/pdf/Gaza-Humanitarian-Snapshot-15-July.pdf>.

taken over Gaza City, it has blown up and then bulldozed individual homes and even entire neighborhoods.¹²⁴

Healthcare is thus unavailable or inadequate for most people. The remaining hospitals are overwhelmed and functioning without crucial supplies. Dr. Rik Peeperkorn, the World Health Organization Representative for the West Bank/Gaza, reported in August 2025 that, “52% of the medicines and 68% of consumables [are] at zero stock.”¹²⁵ All these conditions create the perfect storm for cases of meningitis, which are spiking in Gaza. “The spread of meningitis in Gaza reflects the collapse of core public health protections. Hospitals are non-functional, staff are overwhelmed, and basic supplies are cut off. This outbreak, similar to those seen in conflict-affected settings such as South Sudan or Syria, underscores the devastating impact of displacement and water, sanitation, and hygiene failures; however, Gaza's isolation and long-term siege make the crisis even more acute.”¹²⁶

As the Gaza War approaches the two-year mark, nearly the entire population faces conditions of a food crisis or worse. The capacity to produce food in Gaza is nearly zero, with only 1.5% of cropland undamaged and accessible for cultivation as of late July 2025 according to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.¹²⁷ With the agricultural sector almost completely destroyed by the Israeli military, Gaza thus necessarily relies on food imports. As UNICEF reported in August 2025, “By the end of September, more than 640,000 people will face Catastrophic levels of food insecurity – classified as IPC Phase 5 – across the Gaza Strip. An additional 1.14 million people in the territory will be in Emergency (IPC Phase 4) and a further 396,000 people in Crisis (IPC Phase 3) conditions. Conditions in North Gaza are estimated to be as severe – or worse – than in Gaza City.”¹²⁸ As the UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres said in late August 2025, “Famine is no longer a looming possibility — it is a present-day catastrophe.”¹²⁹

The number of indirect deaths is difficult to estimate and predict. Research on recent wars has found that the ratio of direct-to-indirect deaths has varied, depending on conditions. According to the Geneva Declaration Secretariat, “Between three and 15 times as many people die indirectly for every person who dies violently.”¹³⁰ This is obviously

¹²⁴ Sebastian Vandermeersch and Matt Murphy, “Israel Destroys Dozens of Buildings in Gaza City as New Offensive Intensifies,” *BBC News*, 5 September 2025.

¹²⁵ United Nations, “Gaza health system ‘catastrophic’ with hospitals overwhelmed and medicines running out, WHO warns,” *UN News*, 12 August 2025. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2025/08/1165631>.

¹²⁶ Samer Abuzerr, Hanin Hamdan and Jinan Charafeddine, “Paediatric Meningitis Outbreak in Gaza Amid Health System Collapse,” *The Lancet*, 16 August 2025. [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(25\)01520-X/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(25)01520-X/fulltext).

¹²⁷ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, “Land Available for Cultivation in the Gaza Strip as of July 2025,” *FAO*, <https://openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/c93215e8-2ac0-4e36-a82b-25ee66fa80b7/content>.

¹²⁸ UNICEF, “Famine Confirmed for First Time in Gaza,” Press Release, 22 August 2025, <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/famine-confirmed-first-time-gaza>.

¹²⁹ United Nations, “Gaza Death and Destruction ‘Without Parallel in Recent Times’: Guterres,” *UN News*, 28 August 2025, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2025/08/1165734>.

¹³⁰ Geneva Declaration Secretariat, *Global Burden of Armed Violence*. Geneva, 2008. <https://www.refworld.org/reference/research/gds/2008/en/64390>.

quite a range and depends on many factors, including the scale of humanitarian assistance and the rate of infrastructure repair.

One analysis of mortality in Gaza, published in July 2024, used the Geneva Declaration Secretariat range as a starting point and then suggested that indirect death in Gaza could be as high as four times the number of direct deaths.¹³¹ Shortly afterwards, the civilian casualty expert Michael Spagat argued that this figure needs to be grounded in more evidence. “Gaza is a densely populated area with substantial international attention. This focus can potentially mitigate the worst outcomes seen in more isolated conflicts.”¹³² However, if anything, the deterioration of conditions in Gaza since 2024 suggests that the ratio of indirect to direct deaths will be on the high end. As noted, some aid is reaching Gaza. However, the destruction of infrastructure continues and the aid is inadequate to make up for the losses. Israel is in complete control of all access to Gaza from outside and, as of September 2025, about 82% of the territory “was within the Israeli militarized zone, under displacement orders, or where those overlap.”¹³³

The UN relief agency for Palestinians (UNRWA) had been providing education, health, and housing for hundreds of thousands of people in Gaza. In December 2024, UNRWA had been providing shelter for nearly 400,000 internally displaced persons.¹³⁴ UNRWA also operated 400 relief distribution sites in Gaza before they were barred by Israel in January 2025.

Israel completely halted the delivery of aid to Gaza in March 2025 and for 11 weeks, no food, fuel or medicine was allowed into Gaza. Some aid from humanitarian organizations began to be distributed 27 May 2025 through the U.S. and Israeli-run Gaza Humanitarian Foundation (GHF) which was created in February 2025. In May 2025, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu faced domestic criticism from the right-wing for sending any aid to Gaza. Netanyahu said “only minimal” aid would be allowed into Gaza. Netanyahu said, “Our best friends in the world – senators I know as strong supporters of Israel – have warned that they cannot support us if images of mass starvation emerge. We

¹³¹ Rasha Khatib, Martin McKee, and Salim Yusuf, “Counting the Dead in Gaza: Difficult but Essential,” *The Lancet*, 20 July 2024, 404, 237–238 (2024). [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(24\)01169-3/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(24)01169-3/fulltext).

¹³² Michael Spagat, “A critical analysis of The Lancet’s letter ‘Counting the Dead in Gaza: Difficult but Essential’.” Professor Spagat reviews the claim the total Gaza death toll may reach upwards of 186,000,” *Action on Armed Violence*, 10 July 2024. <https://aoav.org.uk/2024/a-critical-analysis-of-the-lancets-letter-counting-the-dead-in-gaza-difficult-but-essential-professor-mike-spagat-reviews-the-claim-the-total-gaza-death-toll-may-reach-upwards-of-186000/>.

¹³³ United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, “Reported Impact Snapshot | Gaza Strip (10 September 2025)” <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/reported-impact-snapshot-gaza-strip-10-september-2025>.

¹³⁴ UNRWA is the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. UNRWA, “UNRWA in Gaza” Fact Sheet. https://www.unrwa.org/sites/default/files/content/resources/unrwa_the_backbone_of_the_humanitarian_response_-_factsheet_en2.pdf.

must avoid famine, both for practical reasons and diplomatic ones. Without international backing, we won't be able to complete the mission of victory.”¹³⁵

Since May 2025, the GHF has operated four distribution sites in Gaza — three in southern Gaza, and one in central Gaza. On 5 Aug 2025, UN experts citing the poor record of aid distribution under the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation called for it to be dismantled and for previously functioning aid agencies to be granted full access to Gaza.¹³⁶ The next day representatives of aid agencies met with GHF officials to discuss ways to distribute aid.¹³⁷

Aid agencies continue to report that Israel has made it difficult or impossible for them to transport and distribute aid into Gaza. Israel must facilitate *all* entry into Gaza. As the data in Table 4 shows, the flow of aid to Gaza has waxed and waned since the end of the ceasefire in March 2025. Specifically, from the end of the ceasefire on 18 March 2025 through 9 September 2025, the Israeli government, through the Israeli Coordination and Liaison Administration, has facilitated 39% of requests to facilitate the distribution of humanitarian assistance by humanitarian organizations. However, the Israelis have denied 35% and impeded an additional 17% of those requests during this period. Thus, little food, fuel, medicine, or medical equipment has reached the territory since the start of the war.

Table 4. Outcome of Humanitarian Organizations’ Requests to the Israeli Coordination/Liaison Administration for Access to Distribute Aid to Gaza in 2025¹³⁸

Request	18-31 March	1-30 April	1-31 May	1-30 June	1-30 July	1-31 August	1-9 September	Total
Total Requests	106	200	276	393	341	356	148	1,820
#Withdrawn*	1	8	14	50	47	28	19	167
% Withdrawn	1	4	5	13	14	8	13	9%
# Denied	75	105	156	174	69	28	24	631
% Denied	71	53	57	44	20	8	16	35%
# Impeded	6	8	33	38	85	108	40	318
% Impeded	6	4	12	10	25	30	27	17%
# Facilitated	24	79	73	131	140	192	65	704
% Facilitated	23	40	26	33	41	54	44	39%

¹³⁵ Noa Shpigel, “‘We’re Destroying Gaza’: Netanyahu, Smotrich Rush to Soothe the Right’s Fears Over Aid Renewal,” *Haaretz*, 19 May 2025, <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2025-05-19/ty-article/.premium/were-destroying-gaza-netanyahu-smotrich-rush-to-soothe-fears-over-aid-renewal/00000196-e7b4-d93f-a3b6-fff77c780000>.

¹³⁶ United Nations, “UN Experts Call For Immediate Dismantling of Gaza Humanitarian Foundation,” Press Release, 5 August 2025. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2025/08/un-experts-call-immediate-dismantling-gaza-humanitarian-foundation>.

¹³⁷ Tammam Aloudat and Philip Kleinfeld, “International Aid Agencies Hold Secret Collaboration Meeting with the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation,” *The New Humanitarian*, 8 August 2025. <https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/news/2025/08/08/international-aid-agencies-hold-secret-collaboration-meeting-gaza-humanitarian>.

¹³⁸ * *Withdrawn due to logistical, operational or security reasons.* Source: United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, “Reported Impact Snapshot | Gaza Strip (10 September 2025).”

Those Palestinians in Gaza who attempt to receive aid from the GHF distribution sites have been shot at by private contractors and the Israeli military. A Medecins Sans Frontier report in August 2025 noted that it even though MSF was not set up to receive trauma patients, because two of their primary care facilities were located near two GHF distribution sites in Rafa, they had received 1,380 casualties from GHF sites, including many people with gunshot wounds.¹³⁹

As of 3 October 2025, out of the total casualties reported in Gaza, 2,603 people had been killed, and 19,034 people had been injured at aid waiting areas and GHF distribution points, according to the Gaza Ministry of Health.¹⁴⁰ The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) counts similar numbers of casualties at the distribution sites and notes that among harmed, the victims are “mostly young men and boys, seeking assistance” near what it calls militarized supply sites and along convoy supply routes. In mid-September 2025, OCHA said that of those harmed seeking aid, “210 were killed in the first two weeks of September. While most casualties are reportedly the result of live fire, over the past week, at least nine Palestinians were killed in an airstrike while seeking aid near As Sudaniya area, in western North Gaza, on 11 September.”¹⁴¹

There is also significant invisible harm. Prior to the start of the war, the mental health status of the residents of Gaza was extremely challenging, with young people already exposed to violence and other stressors.¹⁴² It has been difficult for outsiders to assess the state of mental health among Gaza’s residents since October 2023. However, one study, a survey of 339 medical students published in 2024, found that “97.05% of participants suffered from mild depression or higher; and 84.37% and 90.56% reported mild anxiety and mild stress symptoms or higher, respectively.”¹⁴³ UNICEF estimates that over one million children need mental health and psycho-social support.¹⁴⁴ About half of Gaza’s entire population is children. Before they were banned from Gaza, UNRWA had been providing mental health and psychosocial support for over 520,000 children.¹⁴⁵

¹³⁹ Medecins San Frontier, “This is Not Aid. This is Orchestrated Killing” Medecins San Frontier, August 2025. <https://www.msf.org/not-aid-orchestrated-killing>.

¹⁴⁰ Gaza Ministry of Health Data as reported in United Nations, “Palestinian Casualties.” Accessed 6 Oct. 2025.

¹⁴¹ United Nations, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, “Humanitarian Assistance Update #323: Gaza Strip,” 18 September 2025, <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/humanitarian-situation-update-323-gaza-strip>.

¹⁴² Abdallah Abudayya, et al., “Consequences of war-related Traumatic Stress Among Palestinian Young People in the Gaza Strip: A Scoping Review,” *Mental Health & Prevention*, 32, (December 2023). <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2212657023000478>.

¹⁴³ Belal Aldabbour, et al., “Psychological impacts of the Gaza war on Palestinian young adults: a cross-sectional study of depression, anxiety, stress, and PTSD symptoms,” *BMC Psychology*, 12, (2024). <https://bmcp psychology.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s40359-024-02188-5>.

¹⁴⁴ United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs “Reported Impact Snapshot | Gaza Strip (10 September 2025).”

¹⁴⁵ United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, “UNRWA Response in the Gaza Strip,” <https://www.unrwa.org/resources/reports/unrwa-situation-report-190-situation-gaza-strip-and-west-bank-including-east-jerusalem>.

Finally, the environmental consequences of the war, and their health consequences, must also be noted. In 2024, the UN Environment Program (UNEP) preliminary assessment of the impact of the war said that, “The conflict in Gaza has interrupted almost all environmental management systems and services (including ecosystems services) while creating new environmental hazards.”¹⁴⁶ Among other problems, there is toxic contamination of the air and ground water from fires and disrupted sanitation systems.¹⁴⁷ This is not to mention the fact that the need to avoid and then dispose of unexploded ordnance will slow clean-up and recovery.

Over the long run, this war has also exacerbated climate change. The poor people in the world, and those who lack basic infrastructure, including Gazans, are most vulnerable to increased global temperatures. The war has exacerbated global warming in several ways. There are increased military greenhouse gas emissions by the combatants and Israel’s allies, who have transported of arms and other equipment to the region. The war has also decreased the sequestration of carbon through the destruction of farmland and climate change will make it difficult for Gaza to recover from the destruction of its agricultural resources. Further, while “up to 25% of Gaza’s electricity was generated through PV [solar] panels prior to the war, representing one of the world’s highest shares,” the destruction of solar energy generation facilities in Gaza has decreased Gaza’s energy independence and increased local air pollution as Gazans use non-renewable energy sources to generate heat and electricity.¹⁴⁸ Reconstruction will also entail huge carbon emissions as debris is removed and as homes, hospitals, schools and businesses are rebuilt.¹⁴⁹

Conclusion

This report summarizes *some* of the existing understanding of conditions for humans in Gaza since October 7, 2023. The main findings are well known. The scale of the human costs is much deeper and broader than this report has been able to convey. Even taking the uncertainty about the total number killed and injured into account, if we put the Gaza War in context, the direct and indirect cost in lives makes it one of the worst in recent memory.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁶ UN Environment Program, “Environmental Impact of the Conflict in Gaza: Preliminary Assessment of Environmental Impacts,” 2024. <https://wedocs.unep.org/20.500.11822/45739>.

¹⁴⁷ Fadwa Hodali, Krishna Karra, Caroline Alexander, and Denise Lu, “An Environmental Crisis Haunts the Ruins of Gaza,” *Bloomberg Green*, 24 July 2025. <https://www.bloomberg.com/graphics/2025-gaza-war-environmental-disaster/?embedded-checkout=true>.

¹⁴⁸ Benjamin Neimark, Frederick Out-Larbi, Reuben Larbi, Patrick Bigger, Linsey Cotrell, Lennard de Klerk, and Mykola Shlapak, “War on the Climate: A Multitemporal Study of Greenhouse Gas Emissions of the Israel-Gaza Conflict,” Social Science Research Network, posted 30 May 2025, https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=5274707.

¹⁴⁹ Nina Lakhani, “Carbon Footprint of Israel’s War on Gaza Exceeds That of Many Entire Countries,” *The Guardian*, 30 May 2025. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/may/30/carbon-footprint-of-israels-war-on-gaza-exceeds-that-of-many-entire-countries>.

¹⁵⁰ The 1994 genocide in Rwanda, where about 800,000 to 1 million mostly Tutsi people were killed in 100 days, is the most intense slaughter in the last four decades.

If this report does anything, it underscores three conclusions: First, international humanitarian law enjoins combatants to minimize harm to civilians and to care for those in occupied zones.¹⁵¹ Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said in January 2024 that, "Israel's commitment to international law is unwavering."¹⁵² The IDF told the BBC reporter Ros Atkins that it is "committed to mitigating civilian harm during operational activity" and that it "makes great efforts to estimate and consider potential civilian collateral damage in its strikes."¹⁵³ However, as General Herzi Halevi acknowledged, the IDF has "not once" been constrained by international law.¹⁵⁴ The fact that the Israeli government has made it extremely difficult to get any aid to Gaza only exacerbates the misery, ill health, and starvation faced by most Palestinians in Gaza.

Second, as a direct result of the Israeli military conduct in the war, more than 10% of the pre-war population of Gaza has been killed and injured. While the Gaza Ministry of Health data is not perfect, their reports of direct traumatic death are almost certainly not an exaggeration of the total number killed. Rather, Gaza Ministry of Health reports should be understood as a starting point to our understanding of mortality in the war. Further, most of the direct traumatic death and injury has been among civilians. The evidence shows that despite its earlier assertions of care to preserve civilian life, the IDF has known operations have killed more civilians than they previously asserted.

Finally, the deaths that have and will result from the destruction of infrastructure, the denial of humanitarian medicines and food, and the starvation caused by the Israeli bombardment and blockade, are also likely underestimated. Unless humanitarian assistance is immediately and dramatically increased, the conditions are such that, given the scale of destruction of Gaza's infrastructure, and the ongoing famine, indirect deaths are likely to exceed the number of people killed directly in the war.

¹⁵¹ While it is a party to the four 1949 Geneva Conventions, Israel is not a party to Additional Protocol I of the Geneva Conventions, which specifies the obligations of states toward noncombatants. However, as noted above Israel has said it recognizes customary international law.

¹⁵² Prime Minister's Office, "PM Netanyahu's Comments on the Decision of the International Court of Justice in The Hague," <https://www.gov.il/en/pages/spoke-hague260124>.

¹⁵³ See Atkins, "Israel's War in Gaza and Proportionality."

¹⁵⁴ Quoted in Borger, "'We Took the Gloves Off.'"