

Israel's Year of Killing, Maiming, Starving, and Terrorizing the People of Gaza

Taking stock of the human toll of one year of destruction in the densely packed Gaza Strip.

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Statistics can't tell the story of civilian suffering in Gaza. Physical pain defies easy quantification. Emotional trauma is far more than a number on a psychological distress scale. Still, numbers can be enlightening — and damning. The Intercept has assembled a short primer and accompanying infographics to offer a glimpse of what a year of relentless Israeli attacks — and U.S. military support for Israel — has meant to the people of Gaza.

The Uncountable Dead

On the night of October 7, 2023, Israel bombed a home in the town of Abasan al-Kabira, east of Khan Younis in the southern Gaza Strip. [Eighteen members](#) of one family, including at least five children and four women, were reportedly killed. At least one survivor, 11-year-old Tala Abu Daqqa, was injured. Al Ghad TV, a local television station, reported that around 150 people had been injured in the Abasan area.

The attack, which Israel [launched following raids](#) by Hamas militants that killed Israeli civilians earlier that day, reportedly destroyed five residential buildings. “They hit us with two or three barrels of explosives and brought the entire buildings down,” Mohammad Abu Daqqa, a relative of the family, told CNN.

In the year since that strike, Israeli attacks on Gaza have never ceased. More than 2 million other Palestinian civilians have been killed, wounded, or displaced as a result.

GAZA DEATH TOLL

Gaza Ministry of Health reports almost **42,000 confirmed dead with at least 10,000 missing under rubble**



A group of 99 U.S. health workers **estimates at least 118,900 dead**



Researchers estimate **at least 186,000 dead** from direct and indirect causes



Sources:

- Gaza Ministry of Health
- Appendix to letter of October 2, 2024 re: American physicians observations from the Gaza Strip since October 7, 2023
- The Lancet

Graphic: Fei Liu

Israeli attacks have killed almost 42,000 Palestinians and wounded more than 96,000 others in Gaza since last October, according to the Gaza [Ministry of Health](#). More than [10,000 Palestinians](#) are thought to be buried under the rubble littering the Gaza Strip.

A group of 99 American health workers who served in Gaza estimate the death toll is no less than three times higher than that current official count. In the [appendix to a recent letter](#) sent to the Biden administration, [calling for an arms embargo on Israel](#), they estimated that the death toll is at least 118,908. “It is highly likely that the real number of deaths in Gaza from this conflict is far higher than this most conservative estimate,” they note.

More deaths are sure to come. Researchers, applying a conservative estimate of four indirect deaths — from causes like disease outbreaks, a lack of medical care, and shortages of food, water, and shelter — per one direct death to the 37,396 deaths that had been reported as of July, wrote in [The Lancet](#) that “it is not implausible to estimate that up to 186,000 or even more deaths could be attributable to the current conflict in Gaza.”

America’s Constant Supply of Weapons

As the death toll has risen, the United States has ramped up its support for Israel.

Late last month, Israel announced it had reached a deal with the U.S. for an [\\$8.7 billion aid package](#) to support its ongoing military efforts. In August, the Biden administration approved five major arms sales to Israel, including 50 F-15 fighter aircraft, tank ammunition, tactical vehicles, air-to-air missiles, and 50,000 mortar rounds, among other equipment totaling [more than \\$20 billion](#). While technically “sales,” the cost of these weapons is mostly paid by the United States since Israel uses much of the military aid Congress approves to buy U.S.-made weapons.

“Make no mistake, the United States is fully, fully, fully supportive of Israel,” [said President Joe Biden](#) recently, despite the fact that his administration [acknowledged](#) the [likelihood](#) that Israel has used U.S. weapons in Gaza in violation of international law.

“In the past year, the United States has sent thousands of bombs to Israel. These are the very same weapons that have killed Palestinian children and wiped out Palestinian families month after month,” John Ramming Chappell, an advocacy and legal fellow at the Center for Civilians in Conflict, also known as CIVIC, told The Intercept. “Israeli military attacks, often using weapons made in the United States, have leveled countless homes, destroyed schools and hospitals, and made Gaza all but unlivable.”

Lost Limbs, Bombed Hospitals

For every person killed by the Israeli military and American bombs, many more are suffering injuries, medical deprivation, and malnutrition. As of July, at least one-quarter of those injured in Gaza were estimated to have life-altering traumatic injuries that will require years of rehabilitation, [according](#) to a World Health Organization analysis. The predominant injury, affecting as many as 17,550 people, was severe wounds to limbs.

96,000+ INJURED



Up to **17,550** severe wounds to limbs listed as predominant injury

~4,000 limb amputations

~2,000 spinal injuries and TBIs

~2,000 burn victims



5,968 out of 14,469 wounded approved for medical evacuation

Sources:

- WHO (World Health Organization)
- Gaza Ministry of Health

Graphic: Fei Liu

Between [3,105 and 4,050 limb amputations](#) have also been performed, according to WHO. There have also been around 2,000 spinal cord or traumatic brain injuries and about the same number of major burn injuries. Only [41 percent](#) — 5,968 out of 14,469 — of critical patients who submitted requests for medical evacuation have been approved.

Gaza's health care system had already been [battered](#) by years of occupation and blockade, but the decimation of medical and public health infrastructure has hit unprecedented levels since last October. There have reportedly been [492 attacks](#) on health care facilities in Gaza, killing almost 750 people. Every hospital in Gaza has been affected. Only 17 hospitals are partially functional. Nineteen out of 36 hospitals are completely out of service.

The rate of attacks on health care facilities and personnel in Gaza is higher than in any recent conflict, averaging 73 attacks per month, according to an [analysis](#) by Save the Children. (The next highest, since 2018, are Ukraine at 67 attacks per month and the Democratic Republic of Congo with an average of 11 per month.)

In April, the [Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics](#) reported that [350,000 people](#) in the Gaza Strip — including 225,000 high blood pressure patients, 71,000 people with diabetes, 45,000 cardiovascular patients, in addition to those suffering from cancer and kidney failure — are unable to access necessary health care.

Almost all of the people of Gaza have witnessed or directly experienced unprecedented trauma, including direct violence, repeated displacement, and the loss of family and friends, homes, and belongings, according to a report by [ACAPS](#).

Even before the start of the current war, an estimated [800,000 children in Gaza](#) — about 75 percent of its child population — were already in need of mental health and psychosocial support. The conflict has exposed children in Gaza to [severe psychosocial distress](#) and, as a result, UNICEF estimates that [more than 1 million children](#), effectively every child in Gaza, now needs such services.

Cities Turned to Rubble

A year of relentless bombing, bulldozing, and ground invasion has pushed most of the people in Gaza out of their homes, many of which have been destroyed in the process.

At least 1.9 million people (about [9 in 10](#)) across the Gaza Strip have been driven from their homes, including those who have been repeatedly displaced (some up to 10 times or more), according to the United Nations. Around [86 percent of Gaza](#) remains under Israeli-issued evacuation orders, as of early last month. About [1.3 million Gazans](#) need emergency shelter and essential household items. Those in shelters have far less space than the accepted minimum emergency requirements.

66% OF ALL BUILDINGS DESTROYED

128,000+ structures have been damaged or destroyed



Nearly 228,000 housing units have been damaged



Up to 50% of hospitals are completely out of service



At least 85% of schools have been damaged or destroyed

Sources:

- UN (United Nations)
- WHO (World Health Organization)
- UN via Al Jazeera

Graphic: Fei Liu

Compared with other urban areas attacked in the past 100 years, the Gaza Strip is far more [densely populated](#) — easily besting Dresden, Germany, in 1945; Quảng Trị in South Vietnam in 1968; and Mariupol, Ukraine in 2022. “When explosive weapons are used in densely populated areas, the vast majority of victims are civilians and the effects are felt for decades to come,” said CIVIC’s Chappell. “Palestinian civilians in Gaza have now endured a year of constant bombardment and unimaginable loss. The Israeli military has left nowhere safe for civilians in Gaza.”

Relentless Israeli attacks have led to unprecedented destruction. At least [128,187 structures](#) in the Gaza Strip have been damaged or destroyed, according to a September U.N. satellite analysis. Add in another 35,591 possibly damaged structures, and it represents 66 percent of all buildings in Gaza. Nearly [228,000 housing units](#) have been damaged.

Huge swaths of Gaza resemble post-apocalyptic hellscapes. Israeli bombardment has created more than [84 billion pounds](#) of rubble, according to the U.N. Clearing it may cost as much as [\\$700 million](#) and take around [15 years](#) — a task sure to be complicated by unexploded ordnance. Beyond rubble clearance, making Gaza livable again will be far more

expensive. The price tag could exceed \$80 billion, according to [Daniel Egel](#), a senior economist at the RAND Corporation, a U.S. military-sired, California-based think tank who also cited the incalculable costs. “You can rebuild a building, but how do you rebuild the lives of a million children?” [he told Bloomberg](#).

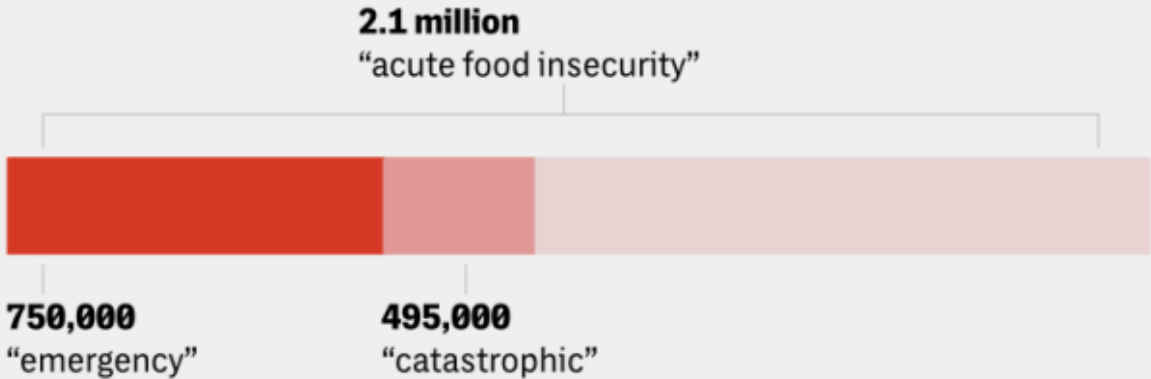
Empty Bellies, Salted Fields, Open Sewers

Most Palestinians in Gaza are at risk of starving. More than [2.1 million](#), virtually the entire population, now face acute food insecurity, including the two most dire levels under universal standards: [745,000](#) at “emergency” status and [495,000](#) facing “catastrophic” or famine levels.

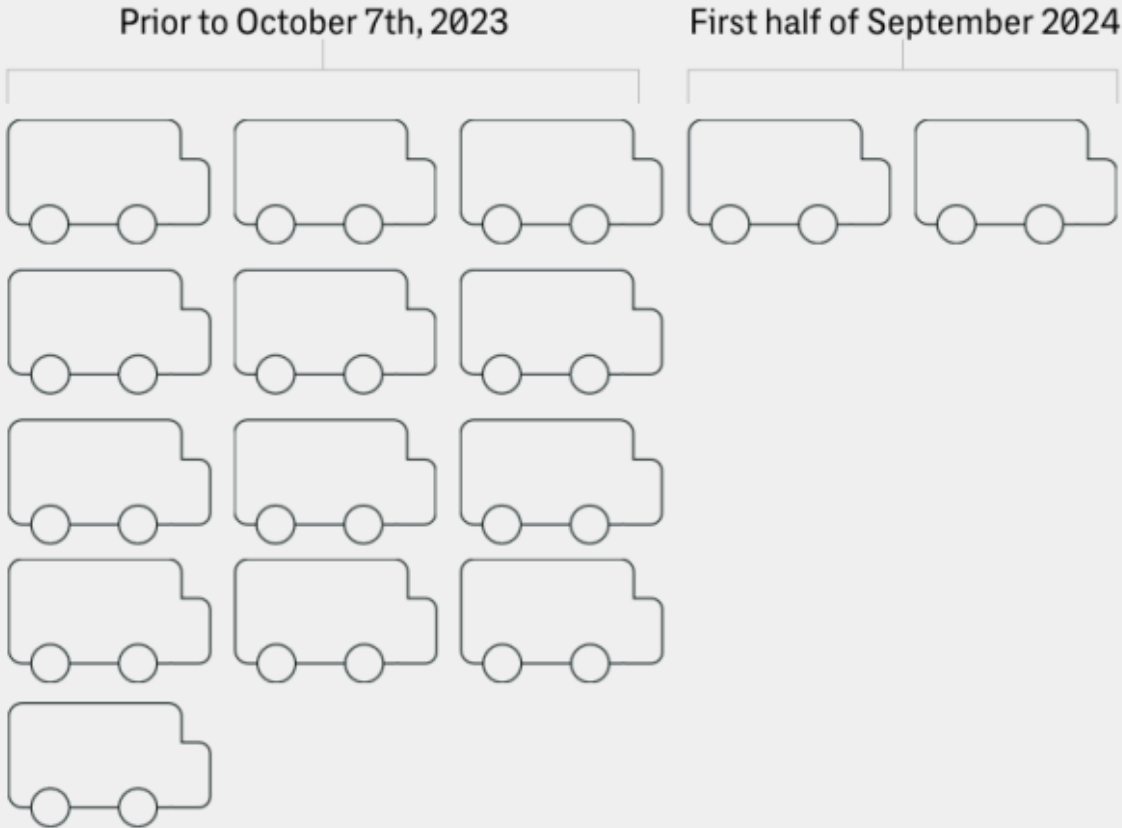
More than [96 percent of women and children](#) aged six months to 2 years old are not meeting minimum nutrient requirements due to lack of diet diversity. During the first half of September, an average of [only 67 trucks with humanitarian aid](#) entered the Gaza Strip per day compared with an average of 500 truckloads of supplies per day prior to last October, according to the [U.N.](#) More than [1.4 million people](#) did not receive their monthly food rations last month.

HUNGER IN GAZA

Nearly the entire population of Gaza faces food insecurity



Prior to October 7th, 2023, **500 daily truckloads** of supplies entered Gaza. In the first half of September 2024, that fell to an average of **67 truckloads per day**.



Around 68% of permanent crop fields destroyed

60%-70% of meat and dairy-producing livestock prematurely slaughtered

150 fishermen killed and 87% of fishing boats have been damaged or destroyed



Less than 5 liters of water per person per day for all uses, significantly below the accepted minimum standard of 15 liters

Sources:

- USAID
- Gaza Ministry of Health
- UN (United Nations)
- Palestinian NGO Network

Graphic: Fei Liu

The agricultural sector, in particular, has been decimated. [Satellite imagery](#) from last month shows that around 68 percent of permanent crop fields in Gaza have seen a “significant decline in health and density,” due to razing, heavy vehicle activity, bombing, and shelling, compared with the average of the previous seven years. In the early spring, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations noted that around [60 to 70 percent of meat and dairy-producing livestock](#) in Gaza had already been either killed or prematurely slaughtered to meet the spiking need for food.

Fishing — which had been a key source of livelihoods and food in Gaza — has also been devastated. Since October 2023, 150 fishermen have been killed and 87 percent of fishing boats have been damaged or destroyed, including 96 motorized boats and 900 unmotorized ones, according to a September [report](#) by the Palestinian NGO Network. Gaza’s port and other key fishing infrastructure have also been destroyed.

Since the war began, Gazans have had access to, on average, less than 5 liters of water per

day for all uses — drinking, cooking, and washing — according to a July [Oxfam report](#). This represents a 94 percent drop in the amount of water available and falls far below the accepted minimum standard of 15 liters of water per person per day for basic emergency survival. By the end of June, Gaza City had lost nearly all its water production capacity, with 88 percent of its water wells, 100 percent of its brackish water desalination plants, and [100 percent of its seawater desalination plants](#) either damaged or destroyed.

The Palestinian economy is “nearing economic freefall, amidst a historic humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip” according to a recent [report](#) by the World Bank. Gaza’s economy contracted by 86 percent in the first quarter of 2024, leaving it on “the brink of total collapse” with the overall gross domestic product in the Occupied Palestinian Territories plummeting by 35 percent, “marking its largest economic contraction on record.” Before the current war, 64 percent of Gaza’s population lived in poverty. That number is now functionally 100 percent.

Even the most basic services have halted. [Throughout the Gaza Strip, 395,000 tons](#) of accumulated solid waste are piling up between tents crowded with displaced people and amid the rubble of collapsed buildings. Two central landfills [remain inaccessible](#). By the end of June, the Israeli military had destroyed 70 percent of all sewage pumps and [100 percent of all wastewater treatment plants](#) in Gaza.

The systematic destruction of Gaza’s water and sanitation infrastructure has left hundreds of thousands of displaced Palestinians crowded into tent camps without clean water or proper [disposal of sewage and garbage](#), sparking a public health catastrophe. There has been, for example, a marked increase in cases of Hepatitis A, a contagious liver disease which is transmitted through ingestion of contaminated food and water. By August, UNRWA shelters and clinics had seen [40,000 cases](#), compared to only 85 in the same period before the beginning of the war.

Sick Children with Nowhere to Go

In August, the aid group Mercy Corps estimated some [50,000 babies born](#) since the war began have not been immunized against polio. That month, health officials in Gaza confirmed the first case of the fatal, highly infectious, paralyzing disease — a [10-month-old child](#) who lost the use of [both of his legs](#) — in a quarter-century. A vaccination campaign has stemmed the tide of a wider outbreak, but other diseases have run rampant. The World Health Organization has [announced outbreaks](#) of scabies, lice, diarrhea, skin rash, and chickenpox. As of July, there were also nearly 1 million cases of acute respiratory infections and close to 600,000 cases of acute watery diarrhea in Gaza, [according](#) to WHO. More than half of the cases of diarrhea are in children under age 5, a rate [23 times higher](#) than in 2022.

The youth of Gaza have been affected in myriad other ways, as well. More than [659,000 children](#) have, for instance, been out of school since the beginning of the war. The ongoing crisis in Gaza will set children’s education back by up to five years and risks creating a lost generation of permanently traumatized Palestinians, [according](#) to a new study by the University of Cambridge, the Centre for Lebanese Studies, and UNRWA.

Most school buildings in the Gaza Strip — at least [477 of 564, or 85 percent](#) — have been damaged or destroyed since last October. Many of these buildings have been attacked while serving as shelters for Palestinians already displaced by the war. Rehabilitating or rebuilding

them will be an expensive, time-intensive process, meaning it could take years before they are usable again. The value of the damaged educational structures, alone, is estimated at more than [\\$340 million](#).

Last year, [images](#) and [video](#) of the survivor of the October 7, 2023, strike in Abasan Al-Kabira, 11-year-old Tala Abu Daqqa, circulated online. In a short video, the young girl — her face peppered with tiny cuts — appears glassy-eyed, broken, shattered. That day, the first of the war, she became one of the now [2.1 million Palestinians](#) in Gaza who have witnessed or directly experienced conflict trauma and one of the 1 million children in need of mental health and psychosocial support. Since the attack, at least 138,000 fellow Gazans have been killed or wounded.

هذي الطفلة اسمها تالا أبو دقة وعمرها 11 عام، هي الناجي الوحيد الباقي على قيد الحياة من عائلتها المكونة من اب وام و3 اخوات، بعد قصف إسرائيل لمنزلهم في غزة اليوم وتوفى الجميع باستثناءها...

لا حول ولا قوة الا بالله ربي يرحمهم وبصبرها يارب pic.twitter.com/F2CY0imE23

— MOATH | معاذ (@M0ATH) [October 8, 2023](#)

Numbers can't tell the full story of the suffering of children and adults living under a year of Israeli bombardment. No matter how accurate, figures can't capture the scope of their sorrow or the depth of their distress. An estimate of how many million tons of rubble Israeli attacks have produced can offer a sense of the scale of destruction, but not the impact of each strike on the lives of those who survived, and the effect on the future of Gaza given how many didn't.

Numbers are wholly insufficient to explain Tala Abu Daqqa's anguish. Statistics can't tell us much about how living through such a catastrophe affects an 11-year-old child. Heartache defies calculation. Psychological distress can't be reduced to the score on a trauma questionnaire. There is no meaningful way to quantify her loss except, perhaps, by offering up two basic, final numbers that will stay with her forever: two parents and three sisters killed.

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[Birds Not Bombs: Let's Fight for a World of Peace, Not War](#)

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