

# Where Are the Tears that Should be Cried All Around?

Where is the empathy and compassion? Where is the outrage for not only the victims of October 7th, but also for the long-suffering of Palestinians?

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*When Israel's **Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu** boasts of "hellfire" being rained down on Gaza, he is correct. "Hellfire" has rained down on Gaza, creating one of the worst humanitarian crises in recent memory. But what Israel's prime minister gets wrong is that this crisis dates back long before Hamas's Oct. 7 attack. Hell on earth has been the reality in Gaza since 2005, when the territory's population of more than 2 million had its movement and freedom restricted as the Israelis began a blockade of the land that limited the amount of fuel, food, medicine, and water that the Gazans could access.*

The result has been that for nearly two decades, Gaza has become what many now refer to as the largest open-air prison in the world. The depth of the crisis cannot even be imagined by those not living in Gaza; even more perverse is the way so much of the world refuses to even try to understand the historical reality or contemplate the true scope of this crisis. They prefer instead to treat the events since October 7 as the start of a conflict rather than the latest installment in a decades-long struggle for Palestinian survival against one of the world's most powerful nations.

According to a [UN Conference on Trade and Development, or UNCTaD](#), report from 2022, two-thirds of Gaza's population was living in poverty, while its unemployment rate of 45% was one of the highest in the world. Living standards—as measured by gross domestic product per capita—were 27% lower than they were in 2006. An [Amnesty International report](#) in 2017 stated that 90-95% of Gaza's water supply is contaminated and unfit for human consumption.

This is not to dismiss Hamas's horrendous slaughter of civilians on October 7. We grieve and mourn the loss of 32-year-old [Hayim Katsman](#), gardener, scholar, and anti-occupation

activist killed in Kibbutz Holit on Oct. 7. We grieve all deaths. We grieve for 12-year-old Ayham [Mohammad Talal Al-Shafi](#), shot and killed by an Israeli soldier firing live ammunition on Nov. 2 in the West Bank town of Al-Bireh. We grieve and mourn the almost 4,000 Palestinian children killed by U.S.-made Israeli bombs, pulled out from under the rubble of fallen buildings, their hair white from the dust of fallen concrete, their bodies limp from death.

We also grieve with lamentations, all the tears that were not shed, the outrage that was not felt or expressed for the many Palestinian lives in lost in the years and decades before Oct. 7. Is our humanity as people, nations, the world lost?

The colossal proportions of this catastrophe that is Gaza both before and after Oct. 7th can only be addressed when the world community grapples with the humanity of Palestinian people, and begins to understand the length, breadth, and dimensions of the damage done to Gazans since 2005, and overall, against Palestinians for 75 years. That would require a profound act of imagination that much of the world seems incapable of making.

It would require putting ourselves in the experiences of a person living in Gaza for just a second, and try to imagine what the blockage of food, medicine, water, and fuel would feel like.

Imagine how it would feel if the basic necessities of life—healthcare, clean water, education, sanitation—were denied your family and community, not because of any fault of your own, but imposed by the bullying of a powerful and connected neighbor. I am sure that the situation would be defined as abusive and threatening to your very existence.

Imagine that you were one of the 70 cancer patients getting treatment at the Turkish-Palestinian Friendship Hospital—the only hospital offering cancer treatment in the Gaza Strip—[which has just been closed due to lack of fuel](#). Or perhaps your child was one of the [nearly 400 children](#) denied permits to go to the West Bank in the first six months of 2023 for critical healthcare. Approximately two children every day over that time were unable to access to life-saving surgery or urgent medication.

Imagine someone having control over the flow of water into your home, and able to cut it off at their whim.

Imagine what it means to scrounge for food to feed your family.

The movement of Gazans has been restricted and control on land, sea, and air beyond its borders. The media, politicians, and other leaders rarely describe this experience or this history in ways that would help the world understand and enable others to feel the absolute inhumanity of this predicament.

Instead, political leaders in the U.S. and Israel are seeking to camouflage the history and damage of the blockade, and the carnage that Israeli missiles and bombs are raining down on civilian populations. How else can we explain the Israeli government's attempts to shut down *Al Jazeera's* office in Israel or Secretary of State, **Anthony Blinken's** [request to the prime minister of Qatar](#) to tone down *Al Jazeera's* rhetoric on the war in Gaza? When the current situation is billed as Israel against Hamas, or the Hamas War, it avoids the real facts of the dimensions of death, destruction, and displacement that Gazans are really experiencing on the ground. But this is only the latest version of the deadly collective

punishment that has been inflicted by Israel since the start of its blockade and imprisonment.

To date, there have been more than 8,000 deaths in Gaza. Women and children make up more than 62% of the fatalities. The numbers of civilians killed in Gaza grows radically higher every day. Yet, Netanyahu and his government respond:

“This is war!” President Joe Biden, with a cavalier wave of the hand, says he has “no confidence in the number that the Palestinians are using.”

He continues,

“...I have no notion that the Palestinians are telling the truth about how many people are killed. I’m sure innocents have been killed, and it’s the price of waging a war.”

War does not excuse ethics or morality when children and civilians are bombed and killed. Israel, funded by the U.S., callously brushes off the accusations of its war crimes and the grave humanitarian crisis that their continuing tactics have created.

Is this **President Joe Biden** morally apathetic to the death, dying, and suffering where one group is more important, noteworthy, or “strategically valuable” than the deaths of another group of people? Where is the empathy and compassion? Where are the tears that should be cried all around? Where is the outrage for not only the victims of October 7th, but also for the long-suffering of Palestinians? Where have the voices of moral outrage been for 75 years of malignant Israeli apartheid, or the years of containment faced by Gazans.

We implore the President, political leaders in the U.S., world leaders, and all people not just to value the lives of people killed in Israel, but also the innocent Palestinians killed by Israeli policy since 1948 and continues at this very moment in Gaza.

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