

Humanitarian crisis worsens in Gaza, as Biden describes civilian casualties as “the price of waging a war”

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With Israel’s savage bombardment of the Gaza Strip continuing unabated, the humanitarian crisis faced by its 2.3 million residents has reached horrendous dimensions. In addition to an official death toll approaching 7,000, over 1.4 million people have been displaced by Israel’s genocidal onslaught, while supplies of food, clean water and fuel are on the verge of expiring.

The global charity Oxfam criticised the Israeli government Wednesday for using “starvation as a weapon of war.” Noting that a mere 2 percent of normal food deliveries had reached the Gaza Strip since October 9, the charity pointed out that local supplies could not be distributed due to a lack of fuel and damaged roads from the Israeli bombardment. Food storage is also proving impossible, since refrigerators are not operating due to the absence of electricity. The lack of power, combined with incessant Israeli air strikes, has forced many bakeries and supermarkets to close, making it even harder to obtain food.

There are only three litres of clean water available per person in the Gaza Strip, just one-fifth of the 15 litres the UN says is the bare minimum necessary for populations facing a humanitarian crisis. The trickle of aid making its way across the Rafah border crossing includes lentils, flour and other dry goods, which are useless for a population lacking the water to prepare them.

Oxfam’s Middle East Regional Director Sally Abi Khalil said, “The situation is nothing short of horrific—Where is humanity? Millions of civilians are being collectively punished in full view of the world, there can be no justification for using starvation as a weapon of war. World leaders cannot continue to sit

back and watch; they have an obligation to act and to act now.”

The “world leaders,” first and foremost US President Joseph Biden, have made it abundantly clear that they fully endorse the Israeli regime’s genocide. Speaking alongside Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese Wednesday, Biden declared, “I have no notion that the Palestinians are telling the truth about how many people are killed. I’m sure innocents have been killed.

“It’s the price of waging a war.”

Responding to Biden’s remarks, Human Rights Watch noted that it believes the more than 6,500 deaths reported by the Palestinian Health Ministry is more or less credible. It noted that over the course of 30 years of work in Gaza, Health Ministry fatality reports have been reliable.

Biden and his European imperialist allies have given the Israeli military carte blanche in Gaza as they prepare for a far broader regional war. Washington has already sent two aircraft carrier battlegroups to the region and is reportedly in the process of deploying 11 missile defence systems to protect troops stationed in Iraq, Syria, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. Their real target is Iran, against which the US is provocatively seeking to trigger all-out war.

Underscoring American imperialism’s backing for Israel’s slaughter in Gaza, the first act of the House of Representatives after electing a new speaker, the Trump ally Mike Johnson, was to pass a resolution in solidarity with Israel. The resolution carried the Orwellian title “Standing with Israel as it defends itself against the barbaric war launched by Hamas and other terrorists.” Haaretz reported that Johnson visited Israel in 2020 on the invitation of a settler-activist and toured

the Temple Mount.

The free hand granted Israel by the imperialist powers in Gaza is producing death and suffering on a horrific scale. In a chilling address to the nation yesterday, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu cited the killing of thousands of “terrorists” by the Israel Defence Forces (IDF), before adding ominously, “And that is only the beginning.” Israel is working to “eliminate Hamas by destroying its military and governing capabilities,” he said, before adding, “All Hamas members are dead men walking—above and below ground, inside and outside Gaza.”

One indicator of the brutality of the onslaught is the number of journalists and media workers who have been killed, which currently stands at 24, according to the Committee for the Protection of Journalists. Wael Dahdouh, the chief of Al Jazeera’s Gaza bureau, lost his wife and two of his children in an Israeli air strike yesterday on the Nuseirat refugee camp. “What just happened is clear—it’s part of the ongoing targeting of women and children in Gaza. I was just reporting on the Israeli strikes that have targeted the Nuseirat area,” he said shortly afterwards.

Dahdouh’s family, like many others, fled south from the northern parts of the Gaza Strip following the Israeli regime’s forced evacuation order. The *World Socialist Web Site* characterised the order at the time as a “death march” for Palestinians, which has been fully vindicated.

Air strikes yesterday hit targets in Khan Younis and Rafah in the far south of the Gaza Strip. A UN Refugee Agency school, where over 4,000 Palestinians were sheltering in Rafah, suffered extensive damage after a bomb landed close by.

The provision of healthcare and other basic necessities is collapsing. The UN Refugee Agency for Palestine reported that it only has a few hours of fuel left, after which it would cease to supply foodstuffs to bakeries and individuals. “If we do not get this shipment of fuel tonight, [by] tomorrow morning, Thursday morning, we are going to take very tough decisions, depriving people, depriving the communities that we serve, from humanitarian assistance,” commented Juliette Touma, director of communications for UNRWA. Since October 7, 38 UNRWA employees have been killed in the air strikes.

Dr. Hussam Al Safiya, speaking from the Kamal

Adwan Hospital in Beit Lahia in northern Gaza, warned that the institution would become “a mass grave” when its fuel supply runs out Thursday. “We are overwhelmed with dozens of wounded, dying and dead children coming in,” he told Al Jazeera. The Al-Wafa hospital in central Gaza is no longer functioning as a medical facility treating patients.

Speaking from Nasser Hospital in Khan Younis, Dr. Mohammed Kandeel described the catastrophic conditions. “Words cannot describe how bad the situation is. Since last night, we have received 300 wounded patients. We received 150 killed. We did Cesarean sections to two severely wounded pregnant women.”

The Israeli military is also stepping up strikes elsewhere. It reportedly struck a Hezbollah command post and several other sites in southern Lebanon yesterday after rockets were fired into northern Israel earlier in the day. Syrian media reported an Israeli bomb attack on Aleppo International Airport. In the occupied West Bank, an air strike was launched in Jenin against a man accused of shooting at Israeli soldiers.



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