

Oxfam report describes Israel's onslaught on Gaza as "deadliest conflict of the 21st century"

Jordan Shilton
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Israel's three-month genocidal onslaught on the Palestinian population in Gaza is the deadliest conflict of the 21st century, according to an OXFAM report. Israel is killing Palestinians at a rate of more than 250 per day, based on a UN reported death toll of 23,074 fatalities in Gaza and 330 in the West Bank between October 7, 2023 and January 7, 2024.

The intensity of the Zionist regime's bombardment has claimed the lives of Palestinians at a pace many times higher than NATO's war on Russia in Ukraine, the Syrian civil war, the US-led wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and wars in Sudan and Yemen. Even allowing for the longer duration of these other conflicts, which reduces the daily rate of casualties somewhat, Oxfam's figures expose the unprecedented savagery of the Israeli state, which enjoys the unrestrained support of US imperialism and its European allies.

"The scale and atrocities that Israel is visiting upon Gaza are truly shocking. For 100 days the people of Gaza have endured a living hell. Nowhere is safe and the entire population is at risk of famine," commented Sally Abi Khalil, Oxfam's Middle East director. "It is unimaginable that the international community is watching the deadliest rate of conflict of the 21st century unfold, while continuously blocking calls for a ceasefire."

The reality is that the "international community," led by US imperialism, is not merely watching the conflict, but supplying Israel with the weaponry it needs to slaughter Palestinian men, women, and children. Moreover, Washington and its British ally have recklessly escalated the conflict with air strikes on the Houthis in Yemen early Friday. This escalation is bound up with US-led plans for a region-wide war with

Iran aimed at consolidating its unchallenged domination over the energy-rich Middle East.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's far-right government believes it can act with impunity due to its alliance with Washington. This fact was underscored as Israel's savage bombing campaign continued unabated even as South African lawyers presented devastating evidence of the Zionist regime's commission of genocide in Gaza. In the first day of hearings at the International Court of Justice, the South African legal team cited the statements of Netanyahu, Defence Minister Yoav Gallant and others to demonstrate the Israeli government's intent to carry out a genocide, and documented the horrific consequences of Gaza's destruction by the Israel Defence Forces.

None of this had an impact on the imperialists' support for Israel. The US State Department described the accusations against Israel as "unfounded." Germany's Economy Minister Robert Habeck declared, "Accusing Israel of genocide distorts the victims and perpetrators."

In Gaza, Thursday saw another air strike on the southernmost city of Rafah, where over a million people, about half of Gaza's pre-war population, are now crowded. The strike on a residential building killed nine people and injured several more. Strikes were also reported in Khan Younis, where IDF ground operations continue alongside the aerial bombardment.

Over the preceding 24 hours, Israeli air strikes killed 112 people and injured 194, according to Gaza's Health Ministry. This took the official death toll to 23,469 and the number injured to 59,604. In addition, around 7,000 people remain missing and are presumed dead under the rubble.

Attacks in central and southern Gaza threaten to lead to the closure of another three hospitals, further restricting the availability of even the most basic medical care to the population. At one of these facilities, Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital in Deir el-Balah in the central Gaza Strip, Israeli forces intensified shelling of the hospital over recent days. One doctor reported a direct attack on the intensive care unit, while civilians sheltering in the vicinity of the hospital were shot at by Israeli helicopters in scenes reminiscent of the storming of the al-Shifa Hospital in northern Gaza.

One strike near the gates of the Al-Aqsa Hospital killed and injured at least 40 people Wednesday. Another strike elsewhere in Deir el-Balah on Wednesday killed six people in a Palestinian Red Crescent Society ambulance. The casualties included four medics and two injured Palestinians being transported to a hospital.

Fighting is also intensifying in Khan Younis, where IDF soldiers are reportedly stepping up above-ground and underground operations in the city's central areas. Hundreds of thousands of people remain trapped in Khan Younis, the largest city in southern Gaza prior to Israel's onslaught.

The Gaza Media Office released a statement declaring that a total of 380 mosques have been destroyed since October 7. Among them are religious sites that have stood for over 1,000 years.

Israel is persisting in its use of food as a weapon of war by deliberately withholding aid supplies. On Wednesday, the World Health Organisation announced the cancellation of the sixth aid delivery to northern Gaza since December 26 because Israel refused to provide assurances of safe passage. Hundreds of thousands of civilians remain trapped in the area, which has no functioning hospitals.

Oxfam's report made dire warnings about an impending famine throughout Gaza if the restrictions placed on aid deliveries persist. There are also shortages of blankets, no fuel for heating, and no hot water under conditions of cold and rainy winter weather. Cases of diarrhea are 40 times higher than they were at the same time last year, although Oxfam acknowledges the figure is likely a vast underestimation of the true number of cases.

Human Rights Watch became the latest human rights organisation to accuse Israel of war crimes in its annual

World Report released Thursday. Israel's moves to cut off essential services like water, electricity, and fuel were "acts of collective punishment that amount to war crimes." The report continued, "Israeli air strikes incessantly pounded Gaza, hitting schools and hospitals and reducing large parts of neighborhoods to rubble, including in attacks that were apparently unlawful. Israeli forces also unlawfully used white phosphorous in densely populated areas."

Beyond Gaza, the IDF continues to provocatively escalate its strikes on southern Lebanon. A strike on a civil defence centre Thursday destroyed an ambulance and killed two medical workers. On Wednesday evening, War Cabinet Minister Benny Gantz made an explicit threat to launch an onslaught on southern Lebanon comparable to the bombardment of Gaza. "If Hizbollah continues," Gantz said, referring to the group's firing of rockets into northern Israel, "we will act in southern Lebanon as we act in the northern Gaza Strip."



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