

Imperialist-backed Israeli mass murder in Gaza: Lancet medical journal estimates Palestinian death toll at 186,000

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The Israeli regime has killed 186,000 people in its nine-month genocide against the Palestinians in Gaza, far more than the total publicized in the corporate media, according to an analysis by the peer-reviewed medical journal *The Lancet*.

The horrific figure means that some eight percent of the enclave's prewar population has been slaughtered by air bombardments, has starved to death or has succumbed to disease or chronic health problems due to the absence of basic medical care.

The death toll, based on a conservative methodology applied by public health scientists, underscores once again the urgency of the international working class intervening at the head of a global anti-war movement to put a stop to the Gaza genocide and the barbaric capitalist system that has produced it.

The report's chilling estimate took as its starting point the official death toll reported by Gaza's Health Ministry at the time of the study's preparation, 37,396. It noted that this figure is undoubtedly a massive undercount. Given that the United Nations estimated that 35 percent of all buildings in Gaza had been destroyed by the end of February, there are likely at least 10,000 bodies buried under the rubble, but not included in *The Lancet* study.

According to the study, in "recent conflicts" the indirect death toll has typically ranged from three to 15 times the total number of direct deaths. Applying the lower-end formula of four indirect deaths for every direct death to the Gaza genocide, the report reached its gruesome conclusion of roughly 186,000 victims.

The ratio of indirect deaths could be far greater, given the huge quantity of munitions dropped on Gaza and the Israeli government's barbaric policy of denying food, medical supplies, fuel and other basic necessities to the desperate population. The death toll could therefore be many tens of thousands or even hundreds of thousands greater than *The Lancet*'s estimate. A ratio of 10 indirect deaths to every

direct death, still well within the range of "recent conflicts" cited by *The Lancet*, would produce an estimate of more than 400,000 deaths.

To find comparable examples of mass death on this scale, it is necessary to recall the crimes of the most brutal regimes in history. During the Nazis' war of annihilation against the Soviet Union, a preplanned campaign of aggression aimed at exterminating Europe's Jews and creating "lebensraum" for German imperialism, the Waffen-SS Einsatzgruppen tasked with massacring Jews killed an estimated 500,000 within the first six months of the invasion.

Israel has been able to kill and maim Palestinians on such a scale and obliterate Gaza's infrastructure thanks to the steady flow of high-powered weapons from the United States, Germany and other imperialist powers. This includes some 14,000 2,000-pound bombs, one of which is sufficient to flatten multiple buildings.

The number of indirect deaths has unquestionably been pushed higher by the targeting of hospitals and primary healthcare facilities, and the destruction of water treatment, sewage and other basic infrastructure. According to the UN, just one-third of Gaza's hospitals and 30 percent of primary healthcare facilities are functioning to some degree.

The deliberate denial of food, water and other aid to the Palestinians has exposed many thousands to the slow death of starvation. In the latest UN-sponsored Integrated Food Phase Classification (IPC) report on hunger levels, international experts found that more than one in five Gazans "goes entire days without eating" and faces "catastrophic" levels of food insecurity. Over half of the population has no food to eat at home, and 96 percent face food insecurity at "crisis" levels, which is phase 3 on the IPC's five-phase scale.

These crimes against humanity are being perpetrated with cold-blooded calculation by the far-right Zionist regime. However, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his fascist regime can only act as they do because they enjoy the

unconditional support of the imperialist powers.

US President Biden, German Chancellor Scholz and other imperialist leaders have not only ensured that Israel's war chest is full of the most destructive weapons that money can buy. They have also launched a sweeping crackdown to silence all opponents of the genocide, including many Jews, whom they have scandalously smeared as antisemites.

The same political leaders and their bought-and-paid-for mouthpieces in the corporate media have worked tirelessly to cover up and justify the scale of Israel's war crimes. In late October, when the official death count after less than three weeks of Israel's onslaught was given as 6,500 by Gaza's Health Ministry, Biden asserted that he had "no confidence in the number that the Palestinians are using." Newly elected British Prime Minister Keir Starmer infamously declared in a radio interview last year that Israel had the "right" to sever electricity, water, fuel, medical and food supplies to Gaza in the name of "self-defense."

Their goal has been to normalise death and destruction on a scale comparable with the imperialist world wars of the last century. As the irreconcilable contradictions of capitalism propel American and European imperialism to engage in a repartition of the world to secure their control of markets, raw materials and pools of labour to exploit, they will tolerate no restraint on the pursuit of their economic and geopolitical interests.

The contradictions between the globalised economy and the division of the world into nation-states, and between the private ownership of the means of production and its social character, compel the ruling elites in every imperialist country to pursue the interests of "their" capitalist class against each other and against the working class around the world by means of war.

US, German, British and French imperialism have likewise fuelled the war in Ukraine against Russia, which has claimed the lives of an estimated 500,000 overwhelmingly young Ukrainians and tens of thousands of Russians, to subjugate Russia to the status of a semi-colony and plunder its natural resources. They are preparing no less aggressively for war with China in the Asia-Pacific. They accept the danger that these conflicts could spiral into a nuclear conflagration that would spell the end of human civilisation.

Starting today, Biden will host the NATO summit with his fellow imperialist warmongers in Washington. Over the next three days, they will plot and finalise a reckless escalation of the war in Ukraine based on the deployment of NATO ground troops, ensuring that the conflict becomes a direct war between NATO and Russia. The imperialist powers thereby make clear that they are ready to accept Gaza levels of death and destruction wherever their predatory interests dictate.

Two weeks after the NATO summit, Netanyahu will visit Washington to provide a progress report to Democrats and Republicans in Congress on the "final solution" of the Palestinian question in Gaza. He was given a bipartisan invitation to underscore the importance US imperialism attaches to the genocide as part of its preparation of a region-wide war to consolidate its dominance over the energy-rich Middle East by targeting Iran.

The *World Socialist Web Site* and Socialist Equality Party are calling a demonstration and public meeting in Washington on July 24. The purpose of this demonstration will not be to appeal to Biden, Netanyahu and their fellow war criminals to change course. Rather, it will lay the basis for the building of an international anti-war movement in the working class, which offers the only realistic way of opposing the genocide and the development of a third world war. The demonstration is being organised on the following principles:

First, the struggle against war requires an unconditional and irreversible break with the two corporate parties, Democratic and Republican, and the establishment of the political independence of the working class.

Second, the movement against genocide and against war must be international, uniting workers in every country and on every continent on the basis of their common class interests.

Third, the fight against war must be anti-capitalist and socialist, since there can be no serious struggle against war except in the fight to end the dictatorship of finance capital and the economic system that is the fundamental cause of war.

We strongly encourage all workers and young people who agree with these principles to join us in Washington on July 24.



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