# New report by The Lancet: More than 3 million Palestinian life-years lost in Gaza genocide

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**3 November 2025**

A report published in the British medical journal *The Lancet*, "Over 3 million life-years lost in Gaza," provides a scientific indictment of the ethnic cleansing operations of the Israeli military against Palestinians in the enclave territory since October 7, 2023.

Based on the confirmed death toll from the Palestinian Health Ministry as reported on July 31, 2025, *The Lancet*'s researchers—Sammy Zahran of Colorado State University and Ghassan Abu-Sittah of the American University of Beirut—calculated that the 60,199 Palestinians killed in this period lost on average 51 years each, amounting to over 3 million years of forfeited life.

The overwhelming majority of these losses occurred among civilians, including an estimated 1 million life-years lost among children under 15 years old. The figures presented in this study are staggering and testify to the barbarism pursued by the Israeli regime with the backing of the US and European imperialist powers.

The analytical framework adopted by *The Lancet* makes clear that these calculations are rooted in the explicit, recorded fatalities linked directly to Israeli military actions, excluding thousands killed indirectly through the systematic destruction of essential infrastructure, food, water supplies, medical facilities and personnel.

The thesis of *The Lancet* report is unequivocal: Israeli military operations have generated direct, quantifiable social devastation that is not adequately portrayed by death toll numbers alone. By excluding "indirect deaths resulting from the ruin of infrastructure and medical facilities, restriction of food and water, and the loss of medical personnel that support life," the true impact of the Israeli genocide is far greater than even the horrific numbers calculated in the study.

Regarding the statistical method, *The Lancet*'s team compiled a non-duplicate, demographically complete list of the 60,199 decedents that included their reported age and sex. Utilizing life tables for Gaza's pre-war population, the researchers estimated, for each death, the average number of remaining years he or she would have expected to live had their life not been cut short.

For instance, a child killed at the age of seven might have lost 70 years, whereas an elderly person killed would lose far fewer life-years. The study explicitly notes that the average life-years lost per death is 51, reflecting the youthfulness of Gaza's population. Over half of all those killed were women and children.

Researchers point out that their findings "only account for direct deaths" and omit thousands killed by starvation, dehydration, communicable diseases or the collapse of Gaza's medical system—a limitation forced by both the destruction of the territory's record-keeping and the impossibility of accounting for every casualty.

The detailed breakdown of the report's findings by age and sex shows a disproportionate impact on Gaza's youngest. Over 1 million life-years were lost among children under 15 years old, with the majority of killed persons belonging to categories that would never be classified as combatants by international law: women, the elderly, infants, and young boys and girls.

Even when adopting the broad standard for "combatant" that encompasses all men and boys ages 15 to 44, civilians are the overwhelming majority of the dead and in terms of the years of life lost. This substantiates claims that attacks were indiscriminate and systematically targeted Gaza's civilian population centers, neighborhoods, shelters, hospitals and schools.

These figures prove that the Israeli military operations in Gaza are a genocide, which is defined as the deliberate destruction, in whole or in part, of a national, ethnic, racial or religious group. Acts of mass murder, causing serious bodily or mental harm, imposing living conditions meant to destroy the Palestinian people, including forcibly transferring children from their families and preventing births, are all hallmarks of genocide.

The loss in life-years in Gaza has little precedent in contemporary war studies, but *The Lancet* authors draw direct comparisons to similar research on other global conflicts. For instance, when calculated as life expectancy loss, Gaza's decline now surpasses that of Chad and Lesotho, which previously ranked as the lowest in the world.

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In Chad and Lesotho, average life expectancy is 53 years, but for Gaza, following the documented genocide, the population's life expectancy has fallen far below that. The last comparable collapse in a nation's life expectancy occurred in the early 20th century United States during the Spanish flu pandemic at the end of World War I, in which the highest death rate was among young adults.

*The Lancet*'s approach, focusing on potential years lost rather than death counts, highlights the disproportionately intense impact of violence on younger populations. Compared with other wars, such as in Syria or Yemen, previous studies found life expectancy declines of up to a decade or slightly more, but never a halving of population life prospects as in Gaza.

The implications of these findings have been widely discussed among human rights organizations, media outlets and spokespersons. A representative of *The Lancet* said, "This quantification of life-years lost elevates the conversation beyond death tolls; it is an indictment of the deliberate targeting of a population's entire future."

Human rights groups such as CAIR have said that the study "demonstrates the genocidal intent of the Zionist regime and its enablers in the United States and Europe," as well as the international complicity in continuing attacks, which have been carried out during the present "ceasefire" and resulting in a reported average of 10 Palestinians killed per day.

Some commentaries point out that these statistics confirm that the mass killing is not incidental or collateral but systematic, coordinated and intended to erase an entire people's future. *The Lancet*'s analysis has shifted the review of the events in Gaza from casualty figures to "the empirical annihilation of decades of human potential."

*The Lancet* is among the world's most respected medical journals, dating back to its founding in 1823. Traditionally, its editorial and investigative focus has been on vital global health issues—epidemics, health policy, war-related health casualties and the intersection of violence and public health.

In recent decades, *The Lancet* has become a venue for major studies on health crises in Iraq, Syria, Yemen and other conflict zones, specializing in quantitative syntheses of mortality and morbidity under conditions of war and deprivation. The journal is recognized not only for its scientific rigor but also for its willingness to publish research that has significance for international law and for its challenge to the official narrative of governments.

Previously, *The Lancet* has published findings arguing that the official death toll in Gaza is likely underreported by at least 40 percent. This undercount is driven by the systematic destruction of Gaza's hospitals and clinics, institutions responsible both for treating the wounded and for recording and certifying deaths.

In early 2025, a *Lancet* study estimated that over 10,000 individuals were missing or still buried beneath collapsed buildings, and the real tally of Palestinian dead may approach or exceed 100,000. Additionally, previous studies have highlighted the catastrophic drop in life expectancy, calculated at nearly 35 years in the first 12 months of the conflict, effectively halving the pre-war figure of about 75 years for Gazans.

A population that, prior to the genocide, was approaching living standards similar to neighboring Middle Eastern societies now faces prospects lower than any country globally.

The methodology of *The Lancet* builds upon these earlier analyses, utilizing cross-referenced data from the Gaza Health Ministry and United Nations refugee records to correct for possible double-counting and demographic mismatches. By doing so, the study achieves a conservative yet comprehensive portrait of the direct death toll, establishing the authority of the report in the face of attempts by Israel to minimize the scale and impact of Palestinian deaths.

*The Lancet*'s report represents a significant breakthrough in documenting the true cost of Israel's genocidal war which cannot be reduced to casualty figures or easily explained away by the "fog of war." By calculating lost futures and decades not lived, the report is incontrovertible evidence of a war crime on the scale of that which was carried out by the Nazis in World War II.

The information contained in this analysis will no doubt play a role in the future prosecution of the criminals responsible for the genocide, such as Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, former Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant, Chief of the General Staff of the Israel Defense Forces Eyal Zamir, as well as former US President Biden, current President Trump and their cabinet and military-intelligence officials.

The case laid out by *The Lancet* demonstrates that, while masses of people around the globe participated in protests and demanded an end to the genocide in Gaza over the past two years, these leaders proceeded with mass death and the destruction of a defenseless civilian population.

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