

Israel officially accepts Gaza death toll of 70,000

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After more than two years of dismissing the Gaza Health Ministry's death toll as "Hamas propaganda," the Israeli military has officially accepted that approximately 70,000 Palestinians have been killed in Gaza since October 2023. This belated acknowledgment exposes years of systematic lies by the Israeli government, the imperialist powers and the Western media—all of whom worked in concert to conceal the scale of the genocide.

A senior Israeli security official told journalists Thursday that the military accepts the Health Ministry's figure, excluding the more than 10,000 missing and presumed buried under rubble. "We estimate that about 70,000 Gazans were killed in the war, not including the missing," the official stated. The Gaza Health Ministry's count as of January 27 stands at 71,662 killed, with 171,428 injured.

"What other accusations could turn out to be true?" the Israeli newspaper *Haaretz* asked following the briefing. "The Israeli public must ask itself what this belated recognition indicates about the army and the government's credibility regarding Israel's conduct in Gaza." These are questions the *Haaretz* editors might ask themselves. For over two years, they and their colleagues in the international press participated in the campaign to discredit the documented scale of the slaughter.

The Israeli military previously claimed to have killed 22,000 combatants in Gaza. By its own admission, this means more than two-thirds of the 70,000 dead were civilians. But even this figure understates the massacre. A leaked Israeli military database in August 2025 showed that 83 percent of those killed were civilians—consistent with what human rights organizations had documented all along and what Israel and its allies worked to suppress.

From the earliest weeks of the war, Israel and American imperialism mounted a coordinated campaign to discredit the Palestinian death toll. In October 2023, just two weeks into the assault, then President Joe Biden declared, "I have no confidence in the number that the Palestinians are using. I have no notion that the Palestinians are telling the truth about how many people are killed."

At the time, the Health Ministry had documented over 7,000 deaths, including nearly 3,000 children. Then National Security Council spokesperson John Kirby called the Health Ministry "a front for Hamas" whose figures could not be taken "at face value."

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu dismissed allegations of mass civilian casualties as "blood libel"—invoking the medieval antisemitic slander to deflect from documented war crimes—and bragged in September 2024 that Israel had achieved "the lowest ratio of civilian to combatant deaths in the history of modern urban warfare." This was a lie, and Netanyahu knew it was a lie when he said it.

The U.S. Congress took the extraordinary step of legally prohibiting government agencies from citing the Gaza Health Ministry's figures. In June 2024, a bipartisan group of lawmakers passed an amendment to a State Department spending bill blocking the department from citing Gaza Health Ministry data. The vote was 269 in favor, with 62 Democrats joining 207 Republicans. Later that year, Congress passed a defense spending bill that similarly barred the Pentagon from publicly citing the estimates as "authoritative."

Representative Ritchie Torres, a New York Democrat, declared: "Validating the public health arm of Hamas is like validating the public health arms of Al Qaeda and ISIS or the public health arms of Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan. It is morally and

intellectually corrupt.” Representative Steny Hoyer of Maryland said the Health Ministry figures should be treated “with the same skepticism we would those made by al Qaeda or ISIS.” Neither Torres nor Hoyer has commented since Israel itself acknowledged the accuracy of the figures they worked so hard to suppress.

The 70,000 figure Israel has accepted represents only a fraction of the true death toll. The official count includes only those killed directly by Israeli military fire whose bodies have been identified. It excludes the missing buried under rubble. It excludes the hundreds who have died of starvation. It excludes the thousands who have died from lack of medical care as Israel systematically destroyed Gaza’s healthcare system.

Multiple independent studies suggest the true death toll is far higher. A *Lancet* study in July 2024 estimated 64,260 traumatic injury deaths by June 30, 2024, more than a year ago. The Max Planck Institute for Demographic Research estimated in November 2025 that violent deaths had “likely surpassed 100,000” by October 2025.

An independent household survey published in *Nature* found almost 84,000 deaths between October 2023 and early January 2025. UN Special Rapporteur Francesca Albanese has cited estimates suggesting the real death toll could be as high as 680,000.

The scale of destruction defies comprehension. Over 20,000 children have been killed—more than one child every hour for 23 months. At least 274 journalists have been killed, more than the combined death total of the US Civil War, World War I, World War II, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, the Yugoslav Wars and the post-9/11 Afghanistan War. Over 1,700 healthcare workers have been killed. More than 300 UN workers have died—the deadliest conflict for UN staff in history.

Between 66 and 84 percent of all structures in Gaza have been damaged or destroyed. Ninety-two percent of residential buildings have been damaged or destroyed. Ninety-five percent of farmland lies in ruins. More than 500,000 people face catastrophic starvation conditions. Life expectancy fell by 44 percent in 2023 and 47 percent in 2024. Ninety percent of Gaza’s 2.2 million people have been displaced, many of them multiple times.

The genocide in Gaza—which is still ongoing, now with the backing of Trump—has been enabled by the

systematic lies of capitalist governments and their media. The Biden administration, the U.S. Congress and the major news outlets all worked to shield Israel from accountability by casting doubt on the documented scale of the slaughter. These same institutions now demand that workers support new wars against Iran and other targets of American imperialism. The lies about Gaza expose the lies that will be told about every war waged by imperialism.



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