

# Israel's war on Gaza continues, deliberately targeting children

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7 July 2026

Nine months after the Sharm el-Sheikh peace agreement, signed with the Middle East regimes and major powers in attendance, Gaza lies in ruins, the Palestinians again face famine, and Israel has expanded its military control across most of the Strip.

The agreement was designed to secure the return of Israeli hostages while preserving Israel's freedom to wage a war of annihilation against the Palestinians. Israel was merely asked to withdraw some troops, suspend military operations and allow the entry of 600 aid trucks per day into Gaza, coordinated by international organisations, including the United Nations and the International Committee of the Red Crescent. Later phases would focus on assembling an International Stabilisation Force to disarm Hamas.

Israel has been free to violate conditions without consequence since the agreement contained no enforcement mechanism. It was "guaranteed" by the Trump administration, Israel's chief backer. Egypt, Qatar and Turkey, Israel's allies, signed on as "monitors" to provide diplomatic cover while Tel Aviv continued with its declared aim of driving out the Palestinians.

Israel violated every term of Phase I. Verified reporting shows thousands of ceasefire breaches: airstrikes, raids, shelling, demolitions, shootings. More than 1,041 Palestinians were killed after the ceasefire began, with 3,372 others injured, bringing the total number killed since the start of the war to more than 73,000, with 173,480 people injured.

The most devastating evidence comes from the UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry, which concluded that Israel's campaign includes the deliberate targeting of Palestinian children. Israeli forces "deliberately carried out acts inflicting death and severe bodily and mental harm on hundreds of thousands of Palestinian children, irreparably destroying the sanctity of childhood, including family ties, identity, innocence, safety and future," the report states.

Children accounted for roughly 30 percent of the more than 73,000 people killed—an even higher proportion than in

Israel's 2008–2009 and 2014 assaults. Since the ceasefire, at least 265 children have been killed, many shot or shelled near the ill-defined "Yellow Line": a boundary Israel uses to justify lethal force.

Israel's actions demonstrate an intent "to destroy the existence of the Palestinians in Gaza as a group," the report explains, noting that children "embody the biological and social continuity of the group." By attacking children, Israel is "eroding the foundational structure of Palestinian society, weakening the demographic vitality and overall capacity of the Palestinian people to sustain and exercise its right to determine its future."

The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) also used the truce period to expand territorial control from 53 percent to roughly 64 percent of Gaza, pushing the Yellow Line westward and carving out new restricted military zones. In May, Netanyahu stated publicly that Israel controlled 60 percent of Gaza and that he had instructed the military to increase that to 70 percent.

Eyal Weizman, the director of Forensic Architecture based at Goldsmiths University in London, in his new book *Ungrounding: The Architecture of Genocide*, says that Gaza is not only a demolition zone but a construction site. Israeli bulldozers work systematically demolishing everything and constructing military roads, fortifications, and vast empty spaces in the two thirds of the enclave it now controls.

Meanwhile, Israel has cut humanitarian aid to a fraction of survival needs. The agreement required 600 trucks per day; Israel immediately cut that to 300, and in practice has allowed far fewer. UN agencies have reported that about 77 percent of Gaza's population were experiencing acute food insecurity, inadequate water supplies, repeated displacement, damaged infrastructure, and continuing constraints on humanitarian operations, while civilians, including aid workers, remained exposed to Israeli airstrikes, shelling and gunfire despite the ceasefire.

Gaza authorities report that only 25 percent of minimum food needs are entering the Strip, with UNICEF confirming that famine thresholds have been breached and children are

dying from malnutrition.

UN agencies have warned that famine in Gaza is being driven by the deliberate collapse in humanitarian funding across the board as donors have cut aid budgets, suspended contributions—most notably to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian refugees (UNRWA)—and failed to deliver pledged funds. Major donors, including the US, UK, Germany, the Netherlands, Canada and Australia, have reduced or frozen key streams of financing, while Gulf contributions have also declined. This has left agencies unable to scale up life-saving operations.

The major powers, not just the US but Europe, have allowed all this to happen. The European Union (EU), Israel's largest trade partner, documented Israel's breaches of its EU-Israel Association Agreement that requires both parties to uphold international law and human rights, giving rise to calls from Amnesty International and other human rights organisations to suspend the agreement.

Trade in goods between the bloc and Israel amounted to 42.6 billion euros (\$45.3bn) in 2024, according to EU data. A partial suspension of the Association Agreement could directly impact about 5.8 billion euros (\$6.6bn) worth of Israeli exports. But earlier this year, member states, including Germany and Italy, blocked an attempt to do so. All that is being considered are sanctions against Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich and Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir over their remarks advocating the expansion and legalization of Israeli settlements and the expulsion of Palestinians from Gaza and parts of the West Bank.

Regional guarantors have behaved no differently. The Sharm el-Sheikh agreement was designed to bring Turkey and the Arab regimes into a US-Israeli alliance aimed at Iran. It stabilised Israel's rear as Washington escalated confrontations, freeing up the Israel Defense Forces to focus on Tehran.

Egypt gave Israel total freedom to violate the ceasefire while Gaza starved, controlling the Rafah crossing and maintaining intelligence channels with the Israeli military. Dependent upon the US for \$1.3 billion in annual support and Israel for security cooperation against Islamist groups in Sinai, Cairo's dictator Abdel Fattah el-Sis predictably stayed silent. He kept Israel's supply lines from the Gulf via Sinai operational while Gaza was closed off.

Qatar has for years provided hundreds of millions of dollars for Hamas' civilian infrastructure and humanitarian assistance in Gaza, with Netanyahu's full approval because it served to control the enclave at minimal cost. It hosts Hamas' political leadership in Doha and serves as its primary diplomatic interlocutor. But it has done nothing to oppose Israel's continued offensive, not even publicly certifying violations or forcing the US into enforcement

consultations.

Even as the IDF violated the ceasefire, Türkiye's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan ensured that the flow of strategic goods to Israel continued uninterrupted, particularly energy. Türkiye remains the central transit route, via the pipeline to Ceyhan, for Azerbaijani oil, Israel's single most important external fuel source.

Last week, far-right Finance Minister and head of settlement administration Bezalel Smotrich told the mayor of Sderot that borders Gaza that plans for three Israeli settlements were waiting to be signed off by Netanyahu. This followed his repeated declarations that Israel will expand into Gaza, the occupied West Bank, Lebanon and Syria, widening its borders.

In May, Minister of Defence Israel Katz made clear his commitment to the ethnic cleansing of Gaza through large-scale migration of Palestinians, saying the government would implement a plan for them to leave Gaza "at the right time and in the right manner". It follows Israel's establishment of a bureau for "voluntary emigration" and the easing of travel restrictions for Palestinians who leave Gaza on a one-way ticket.

Israeli human rights organisations and lawyers have warned that Israel has created such horrific conditions in Gaza that no departure can be considered voluntary.

Channel 13 News reports, citing unnamed Israeli officials, said that security agencies have been told to abandon the term "voluntary migration" due to the global opposition, in favour of a "plan for free movement". It was hoped the rebranding would encourage countries that Israel has approached, thus far without success—Somaliland, South Sudan, Libya, Indonesia and Uganda—to accept the Palestinians.

According to a recent report in the *Times of Israel* citing an Associated Press investigation, the right-wing group Ad Kan secretly organized several flights taking Palestinians from Gaza to South Africa and Indonesia between May and November last year. It hid behind a company called Al-Majd, which claims to be a humanitarian Muslim charity supporting Palestinian lives.



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