



Epidemics and infectious diseases used by Israel to intensify its genocide in Gaza



📅 10 Dec 2023

📍 Israel-Palestinian Territory

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Geneva - The Gaza Strip is set to turn into a disaster area, Euro-Med Human Rights Monitor declared on Saturday, as infectious diseases and epidemics spread in a way that is catastrophic and unprecedented in modern history.

More than 45% of the roughly 2.3 million people living in the Gaza Strip are children, said Euro-Med Monitor, and all Gazans are at risk of death, not only due to deadly bombs and missiles, but also to epidemics and infectious diseases in light of a comprehensive health collapse.

Given the record numbers and overcrowding of displaced people, the human rights organisation warned that the lack of clean drinking water, inadequate sanitation, and malnutrition will certainly lead to a public health disaster.

Sixty-three days into Israel's bloody air, land, and sea attacks throughout the Gaza Strip, over 1.8 million people have been forced into densely populated shelter centres in limited geographic areas.

These shelters record high rates of infectious diseases like diarrhoea, acute respiratory and skin infections, and hygiene-related diseases due to overcrowding, unhygienic conditions, and a lack of toilets and sanitation services.

Meanwhile, there is increasing concern about vulnerable people facing harsh shelter conditions, including disabled individuals, pregnant women, new and nursing mothers, injured people, and those with weak immune systems.

Paired with the power outage crisis, the fuel shortage has led to the total closure of water desalination and sewage plants, greatly increasing the risk of bacterial infections spreading, as polluted drinking water transmits diarrhoea-related diseases such as dysentery, typhoid, and polio.

Since the start of its genocide, the Israeli government has cut off fuel and electricity supply to Gaza as well as the pipes that typically supply Gazans with water, Euro-Med Monitor said, noting that over 96% of the water resources in the Strip had already been deemed “unfit for human consumption” for many years prior to the ongoing violence.

In the meantime, the risks associated with waste buildup in residential neighbourhoods are growing due to the extreme challenges municipal crews face in collecting the waste (given the fuel crisis and Israeli raids) and in view of their inability to access the main landfills on the Gaza Strip’s border, which process 2,000 tons of waste a day. This situation will lead to both a major health problem and an environmental catastrophe, Euro-Med Monitor stated.

Based on testimony gathered by the Euro-Med Monitor team from doctors, health officials, and international relief organisations, over 20,000 cases related to upper respiratory infections were registered in the first week of this month alone. Under normal circumstances, the Gaza Strip records roughly 2,000 cases per month related to respiratory diseases of all types.

The severe shortage of cooking gas due to the Israeli siege has led to heavy reliance on less safe alternatives such as firewood, wood scraps, and burning waste, which doubles the risk of respiratory diseases.

More than 50 cases of severe diarrhoea were reported in November, said the human rights

group, with children under the age of five accounting for approximately half of these cases. Given the malnourishment and poor physical health experienced by Gaza's population, especially children, it should be noted that violent diarrhoea may indeed be fatal.

A record-breaking outbreak of inflammatory skin diseases has also been reported, involving over 5,000 cases of chicken pox, 18,800 cases of skin rashes, 10,000 cases of scabies, and tens of thousands of cases of severe influenza.

While cases of hepatitis C have also been confirmed in various areas of the Gaza Strip, knowledge of the severity of its spread and precise number of infections is hindered by the inability to conduct necessary medical tests in local hospitals and need to send samples abroad.

According to Euro-Med Monitor, the risk has doubled as a result of infectious disease outbreaks and epidemics, coupled with malnourishment, a shortage of medical supplies, and the breakdown of the health system, as the majority of hospitals are out of service.

The Geneva-based organisation highlighted the risks associated with a lack of infection control medications and supplies needed for sterilisation and disinfection in local hospitals. Without these medications and supplies, the health of patients could rapidly deteriorate and they could die, particularly in the case of children. Vaccinations have only been available to a small percentage of Gazan children—no more than 10%—for weeks now.

Euro-Med Human Rights Monitor emphasised the urgent need for a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip and the lifting of Israel's strict siege, imposed on civilians as a collective punishment. The siege in itself is a war crime, said the rights group, and must be stopped by the international community in order to save the lives of civilians in Gaza, who are supposed to be protected under international humanitarian law.



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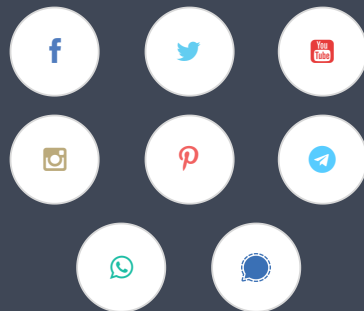
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