

MORE WOMEN AND CHILDREN KILLED IN GAZA BY ISRAELI MILITARY THAN ANY OTHER RECENT CONFLICT IN A SINGLE YEAR

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Israeli explosive weapons hit civilian infrastructure in Gaza - including schools, hospitals and aid distribution points - once every three hours

More women and children have been killed in Gaza by the Israeli military over the past year than the equivalent period of any other conflict over the past two decades, new Oxfam analysis has found.

As hostilities and tragic loss of life spread in Lebanon and the West Bank - including East Jerusalem - the regional escalation underscores the urgent need for an immediate and permanent ceasefire.

Conservative figures show that more than 6,000 women and 11,000 children were killed in Gaza by the Israeli military over the last 12 months. Data from 2004 - 2021 on direct conflict deaths from the Small Arms Survey estimates that the highest number of women killed in a single year was over 2,600 in Iraq in 2016.

A report by the organisation Every Casualty Counts examined information on over 11,000 children killed across the first 2.5 years of the Syria conflict, an average of over 4,700 deaths a year. UN Children and Armed Conflict reports over the last 18 years show that no other conflicts killed a higher number of children in one year.

Israel's military assault began last October, following the attacks by Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups. Almost 1,200 Israelis and foreign nationals were killed, including at least 282 women and 36 children - the deadliest day in Israel's history. More than 250 people, including 38 children, were taken hostage, 96 of whom are reported to be still held in Gaza. These targeted attacks constituted serious violations of International Humanitarian Law.

Separate data from Action on Armed Violence up to 23 September shows that Israel hit civilian infrastructure across Gaza with explosive weapons once every three hours on average since the war began. Other than the six-day humanitarian pause last November, there were just two days in the entire year without bombardment.

Records - which are not comprehensive - show that Israeli explosive weapons hit on average:

Homes every four hours

Tents and temporary shelters every 17 hours

Schools and hospitals every four days

Aid distribution points and warehouses every 15 days

Civilian infrastructure has either been completely destroyed or severely damaged, including around 68 per cent of cropland and roads. Only 17 of 36 hospitals remain partially functional, and all suffer from a lack of fuel, medical supplies, and clean water.

Throughout the last year Israel has committed serious violations of International Humanitarian Law which may rise to the level of crimes against humanity. This includes a level of destruction that is indicative of Israel's use of disproportionate force in relation to military objectives and a failure to discriminate between military targets and the civilian population. The Israeli military has relentlessly targeted infrastructure indispensable to civilian survival. Civilians have been forcibly displaced dozens of times to so-called 'safe zones' that fail to meet basic humanitarian needs and have also been regularly bombed or attacked.

The UN Children and Armed Conflict reports show the number of Palestinian children killed in Gaza and the West Bank. Over the last year, more than five times more children were killed in Gaza than between 2005 and 2022 in total.

The record number of women and children killed in Gaza does not include those among nearly 20,000 people who are either unidentified, missing or entombed beneath the rubble and bomb debris.

Earlier this year, a study published in The Lancet estimated the true number of deaths in Gaza could be over 186,000, taking indirect deaths – for example due to starvation and lack of health care – into consideration.

Halima Begum, Oxfam GB's Chief Executive, said:

"It is impossible to comprehend the scale of the destruction and the number of people killed by Israel's military in the last 12 months. More harrowing still, those numbers are conservative at best. When we look

back at the political inertia of UK governments this year and the continued flow of arms to Israel, history will surely judge that the UK could have done far more to protect human rights and save the lives of thousands of women and children.

“While there has been a partial suspension of arms licences, the UK Government continues to allow the export of arms to Israel despite knowing that they risk being used to perpetrate war crimes and fuel this appalling bloodshed. By continuing to allow the delivery of F-35 components for Israeli fighter jets, the UK remains complicit in the unlawful killing of Palestinian civilians. It has long been time for half-measures and issuing mere platitudes about peace to stop.

“At this critical juncture, the UK needs to step up and use every last vestige of its influence to help bring an end to the death and destruction, and curb the risk of a further regional escalation. Those people in Gaza who are still alive today despite the odds, whether Palestinian civilians or Israeli hostages, deserve nothing less.”

Dr Umaiye Khammash, director of Oxfam partner Juzoor, which is supporting hundreds of thousands of people in more than 90 shelters and health points across Gaza, said: “The past year has had a devastating impact with women bearing a double burden. Many have suddenly become the heads of their households, navigating survival and care in the midst of destruction. Pregnant and breastfeeding mothers have faced immense difficulties, including from the collapse in healthcare services.

“For children, the trauma is equally profound. Over 25,000 children have either lost a parent or become orphans, leaving them in deep emotional distress. Most children are grappling with anxiety and severe physical injuries, with many having lost limbs.”

In the occupied West Bank, the unprecedented escalation and levels of violence are raising concerns that serious violations of international law and war crimes are being committed. Since last October, more than 680 Palestinians have been killed either by Israeli settler or military violence. More than a thousand settler attacks on Palestinians have been recorded, with direct attacks on agricultural land resulting in the destruction of crops, irrigation systems and greenhouses, including

internationally funded and Oxfam-supported projects. The Israeli military has forced the demolition of more than 2,000 Palestinian homes with massive damage to public infrastructure including roads.

Oxfam is calling for an immediate, permanent ceasefire, the release of all hostages and unlawfully detained Palestinians, an end to all arms sales to Israel and full access across Gaza for humanitarian aid. In light of the recent International Court of Justice advisory opinion and in order to avoid complicity, third states must do everything in their power to bring an immediate end to the illegal Israeli occupation, the removal of Israeli settlements in the West Bank and reparations paid, including restitution, rehabilitation and compensation for affected communities.

Ends

For more information and interviews, please contact Oxfam's Media Unit on media.unit@oxfam.org.uk / 07917 791 836

Notes to editor

The data is available upon request.

The number of women directly killed by conflict comparison is taken from The Small Arms Survey Global Violent Deaths database, which contains the latest data available from 2004 to 2021. It includes data and estimates on direct conflict deaths disaggregated by gender of the victims. The previous highest number of women estimated to be killed in a conflict in one year was 2,647 in Iraq in 2016. Even accounting for potential under-reporting of women killed in other conflicts, the death toll in Gaza is much higher. It was compared with the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) cumulative impact [report](#) on 25 September, sourced from the Ministry of Health in Gaza. Of 41,495 people killed, 34,344 have been identified to 31 August. 6,297 are women and 11,355 children. The Ministry does not differentiate between civilian and combatant deaths.

A [report](#) by the organisation Every Casualty Counts examined the information available on the deaths of 11,420 children in the Syria conflict from March 2011 to 31 August 2013 (approximately 29 months), an average of 394 children killed a month - 4,725 a year.

The **Children and Armed Conflict reports** issued by the UN Secretary General started reporting consistently on grave violations against children in 2006, with annual data for the previous year. The UN reports contain both verified and estimated figures for the number of children killed each year, but even when Oxfam factored in the most extreme assumptions for each estimation and checked additional data sources, the number of children killed in Gaza far exceeds any single year for children killed in all conflicts. These figures were then compared with the OCHA **report** .

According to the UN Children and Armed Conflict reports the total number of children killed in Gaza and the West Bank between 2005 and 2022 was 2,304. 11,355 children have been killed so far this year, which is 4.9 times more, when compared with the OCHA **report** .

There is limited, verified data available for the number of women and children killed directly by conflict during the Tigray civil war (November 2020 – November 2022) in northern Ethiopia. While there are some women fatalities for Ethiopia within The Small Arms Survey report, the most referenced data is from the **University of Ghent** which estimates between 300,000 to 600,000 civilian deaths over a two-year period. Of the well-documented 3,074 deaths, 8% were women and 9% children (under 20 years of age). The study **estimates** that 10% of total deaths were victims of bombing and massacres, 30% due to lack of healthcare and 60% due to starvation.

Human Rights Watch published **analysis** of the 7 October 2023 attacks and **Times of Israel** documented the number of Israeli child hostages.

Action On Armed Violence (AOAV) records, investigates and disseminates evidence of armed violence against civilians worldwide. Data from 7 October 2023 to 23 September 2024 inclusive showed 2,845 Israeli explosive strikes – including airstrikes, missiles and tank shelling – with information including the date, event description, number of civilians killed and location. AOAV uses English-language media reports to capture the information. An AOAV **report** last year found that English-language media underreports the number of casualties caused by specific incidents of explosive weapons use,

capturing only roughly a third of the actual civilian deaths from specific explosive incidents in Gaza.

Counting the dead in Gaza: difficult but essential was published in The Lancet in July 2024, studying indirect deaths in Gaza due to the war.