



مركز الميزان لحقوق الإنسان
AL MEZAN CENTER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

On World Toilet Day, Al Mezan Condemns Israel's Deliberate Destruction of Gaza Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene Infrastructure

19 November 2024



Gaza, 19 November 2024 — Today is [World Toilet Day](#), observed every year on 19 November to highlight the vital importance of having access to safe and clean sanitation in safeguarding human health and upholding dignity. On this World Toilet Day, Al Mezan draws attention to the harrowing sanitary conditions in occupied Gaza, where 14 months of Israel's ongoing genocidal military campaign have deliberately destroyed or severely damaged life-sustaining infrastructure—including water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) services—leaving nearly two million Palestinians, most of whom are internally displaced, without access to proper sanitation. The [human right to sanitation](#) entitles everyone to have access to facilities that are physically accessible, affordable, safe, hygienic, and secure, in all areas of life. These facilities must also be

socially and culturally acceptable, providing privacy and upholding human dignity.

Gaza's Israel-driven sanitation crisis, including the lack of access to toilets, is particularly dire for internally displaced persons (IDPs), who have been forced into overcrowded homes or makeshift tents within the so-called “safe humanitarian zones.” Al Mezan underscores that these zones are neither safe nor humane. Israeli attacks and policies have turned these designated zones—particularly Deir al-Balah, al-Zawaida, and al-Mawasi—into unsanitary areas, where sewage floods streets, roads, and tents housing IDPs. This contamination has led to the spread of life-threatening diseases caused by untreated waste, along with infestations of insects. Lacking access to water or sewage networks, especially in tent camps, IDPs are unable to build private toilets, depriving them of their right to sanitation. The sanitation crisis disproportionately impacts women, girls, the elderly, and the sick, who are forced to endure long waits for limited and inadequate facilities, denying them dignity and safety.

A recent report by Al Mezan, *Ecocide: Israel's Deliberate and Systematic Environmental Destruction in Gaza*, highlights the environmental catastrophe taking place in Gaza and its devastating impact on the human right to sanitation of over 2 million Palestinians. As of September 2024, nearly all of Gaza's 87 sewage treatment facilities—including five central and 80 pumping stations—have been heavily damaged or destroyed and thus rendered inoperable. Israeli attacks have also destroyed between 80 and 100 km of sewage pipelines, all five central treatment plants, and approximately 45 pumps either fully or partially. Furthermore, over five km of rainwater and surface water networks, including channels and manholes, have been damaged. The remaining sewage systems have been blocked by rubble, leading to overflows into streets and shelters, forming pools up to 10 cm deep. Palestinians are forced to live and move through these contaminated areas, increasing the risk of disease outbreaks.

The crisis has deepened due to severe fuel shortages needed to operate pumps and treatment plants, further aggravated by the shutdown of Gaza's sole power plant and the ongoing disconnection of electricity supplied from Israel for the second consecutive year. Additionally, Israel's continued ban on fuel entry into Gaza has halted public and private transportation, forcing people to rely on animal-drawn carts or to walk through sewage-flooded streets, exposing them to direct contamination at every step. This dire reality has led to the rapid spread of diseases, including skin infections, respiratory illnesses, and documented cases of polio and meningitis. Amid this

escalating sanitation catastrophe, Palestinians in Gaza are denied access to healthcare, as Israeli forces have systematically decimated the healthcare system and imposed strict bans on medicine imports as part of what Al Mezan identifies as a deliberate policy of population elimination. Those who survive Israel's relentless bombings are left to endure disease, starvation, or untreated illness, with little hope of relief.

On World Toilet Day, Al Mezan strongly condemns Israel's ongoing genocide in Gaza, including the deliberate destruction of its WASH infrastructure. Al Mezan expresses profound outrage at the continued silence and inaction of the international community, noting that some members actively facilitate these crimes by supplying weapons, providing political cover, and offering diplomatic support to Israel—actions that, in certain cases, rise to the level of complicity in genocide under international law.

We once again appeal to the international community to fulfill its obligations under international law, act urgently to end the Gaza genocide, and protect the lives of over two million Palestinians in Gaza. Immediate and effective action must be taken, including enforcing an immediate ceasefire, compelling Israel to fully and unconditionally lift its total siege and blockade on Gaza, and ensuring the unhindered delivery of critical humanitarian aid—such as food, medical supplies, and clean water. Lastly, urgent steps must be taken to restore access to essential infrastructure, including WASH services, to uphold the dignity of Gaza's population and alleviate their suffering.