



The Plight of Palestinian Women Amid Ongoing Gaza Genocide

[Home](#) \ [Advocacy](#) \ [International Advocacy](#) \ [Gaza](#)

29. Dec 2023



Updated translation of a joint [statement](#) originally published in Arabic on 23 December 2023. Since the start of Israel's all-out war on Gaza, the humanitarian situation has deteriorated to catastrophic levels. Currently, the entire Palestinian population in Gaza, including men, the elderly, children and

women, struggle to stay alive and survive amid Israel's genocide. 1.1 million Palestinian women and girls have been severely impacted, with over 90 percent of them being displaced, enduring harsh conditions and lacking basic needs for survival. Over 6,200 women have been killed and thousands injured by Israeli strikes. In addition to the catastrophic and dire conditions faced by all the people of Gaza, women endure an additional layer of suffering characterised due to a scarcity of basic hygiene products, a lack of privacy and, in many instances, the responsibility of caring for several family members. Palestinian civil society organisation MIFTAH [referred](#) to Gaza as a place where 'womanhood [is] denied'. We resoundingly share these grave concerns. Of the 2.23 million people living in Gaza, approximately 1.13 million are male, and 1.10 million are female – 49.3% of the population. According to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, there are 546,000 females aged 15 to 49, 58% of whom are married. Reports have also indicated that in Gaza, around 50,000 women are pregnant, approximately 5,500 of whom are expected to give birth in the coming weeks. The estimated daily number of newborns in Gaza is 183. Pregnant women in Gaza are at serious risk due to the collapse of the healthcare system, the resulting lack of medical care and the challenges they experience in accessing hospitals. Many women, unable to reach hospitals, are forced to give birth wherever they have been displaced to, including shelters, exposing themselves and their newborns to serious health risks. Amid the

stress and trauma caused by bombardment and displacement throughout their pregnancies, Palestinian women are [deprived](#) of proper medical care and routine checkups, which is particularly dangerous for women in their final three months of pregnancy, and newborns are not given the necessary vaccinations, since they are unavailable in Gaza. Furthermore, pregnant and lactating mothers lack access to the nutritious and healthy diet they need. It is estimated that in Gaza 155,000 women are either pregnant or lactating, and 135,000 babies are under two years old. Based on documentation collected by our field researchers, when people have been relocated, women in particular struggle in the overcrowded shelters. As noted above they lack hygiene products and suffer from an almost complete absence of privacy, especially in tents and spaces like classrooms that have been converted into shelters. Moreover, women face difficulties accessing shared facilities, including bathrooms utilised by hundreds of individuals, and accordingly suffer from a scarcity of water and a lack of suitable places for showering. Thousands of women, along with their families, endure the harsh winter cold, especially difficult given the shortage of blankets and warm clothing, when most of their belongings are lost or left behind each time they are displaced. Like the rest of the displaced people in Gaza, women also suffer from hunger due to a severe lack of food supplies. This suffering is particularly harsh for pregnant and lactating mothers, most of whom will eat, at best, one meal a day. Elderly women struggle to obtain necessary medication, and must endure the cold without adequate heating or proper clothing. Again, this is particularly difficult for those taking shelter in schools or tents, where access to bathrooms is limited and there is a shortage of water. Women who have lost their husbands, brothers and fathers during the ongoing aggression now find themselves the sole provider for their families and children, and need to fetch food for them in a situation already described as catastrophic. **Nuha Hazem Asraf, a mother of two**, including a newborn, told our field researchers: *'My first displacement was on the second day of the Israeli military attack. I was seven months pregnant at the time. Since then, I was forcibly displaced multiple times due to the bombardments and evacuation orders, until I reached southern Gaza. I couldn't do any follow ups with a gynaecologist, and my caesarean was postponed three times because of the difficult situation in hospitals. When the surgery was finally performed, I was only half sedated. I had to leave the hospital before the needed rest time, and I had no clothes for the baby with me whatsoever. I got some later through humanitarian aid. Later, I struggled to acquire a vaccine for the baby and lacked diapers and formula milk for her and her older brother, who is less*

than two years old. I myself didn't have the food I needed as a lactating mum and I have anaemia.' **Amna Abd Al Hadi Al Batsh, a mother of six, one of whom is a child with a disability,** was displaced several times. Amna took refuge in a home with relatives, but the home was later bombed, resulting in the killing of 16 people, including her son. She told our field researchers the following: *'I couldn't bid farewell to my son because of the bombardment. I was displaced multiple times from one place to the other. We couldn't find a tent in the shelter areas, and that was the case for some time. We struggled to find food and water for our children. We depend on one meal per day to survive and prioritise our children. We left our home without any official documents, and this has hindered our ability to receive aid. I have a child with a disability. She is 5 years old, and needs diapers and special clothing, and none of this is available. The markets are also empty. We ended up living in a storage area with 20 other people. I know nothing of my husband and the rest of my close relatives.'* According to the Ministry of Health, it is estimated that over 20,915 Palestinians were killed between 7 October and 26 December 2023, including over 8,000 children and 6,200 women, and over 53,000 Palestinians have been injured, around 70% of whom are children and women. Our organisations—Al-Haq, Al Mezan and the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights (PCHR)—continue to closely monitor the situation in Gaza and the devastating impacts of the Israeli military aggression: the heavy bombardment by air, land and sea and the land incursions on the districts of Gaza, northern Gaza and large parts of Khan Younis. We are following reports of serious crimes, including summary executions and willful killings, arbitrary arrests, and enforced disappearances. Our field reports indicate that the areas affected by the recent evacuation orders are densely populated with thousands of displaced women, men and children from the northern areas of Gaza and also from Khan Younis. These people have been compelled to move once more to new areas that are consistently coming under Israeli airstrikes, leaving them without safe haven and in areas where there is insufficient space for them to relocate. As we have stated multiple times, there is no safe place in the Gaza Strip, from its north to its south. Severe overcrowding, where hundreds of thousands of people are crammed into a limited geographical area, has led to a catastrophic situation. Thomas White, the Director of UNRWA in Gaza, [commented](#), '[p]eople in Gaza are people. They are not pieces on a checkerboard – many have already been displaced several times. The Israeli Army just orders people to move into areas where there are ongoing airstrikes. No place is safe, nowhere to go.' In the face of all of this, we urge women and feminist organisations and movements globally to act swiftly and

stand against the oppression faced by Palestinian women in Gaza. Palestinian women deserve to live in freedom and in dignity. We urge that pressure is exerted on Israel to stop its genocide against 2.23 million Palestinians in Gaza. We renew our demand for an immediate ceasefire, an end to the Israeli military aggression on the Gaza Strip and a halt to all genocidal acts against our people. We call on the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC) to expedite practical steps and to advance the ICC investigation into the situation in Palestine, and to hold accountable perpetrators of war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide. Palestinian victims, who have long awaited justice and redress, continue to suffer amid grave escalation of hostilities—each time more violent—as international inaction enables Israel to entrench, with impunity, its settler colonialism, its 75-year-long apartheid regime and its 56-year-long occupation and annexation of Palestinian territory. It is high time for the Prosecutor of the ICC to cease the double standards and selectivity in addressing war crimes, crimes against humanity and the crime of genocide. Immediate and meaningful action, including the issuance of arrest warrants, is urgently needed to ensure accountability for the perpetrators and justice for victims.