

# Study finds Israeli bullets and bombs likely killed over 60,000 Palestinians in Gaza

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A landmark study by researchers from the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, published in *The Lancet* last week, estimates that the official death toll of the Gaza genocide understates the number of people killed by Israeli attacks by 41 percent between October 2023 and June 2024.

According to official figures from Gaza's Ministry of Health, over 46,000 people have been killed by Israeli bullets and bombs since the start of the genocide in October 2023. If the new study's findings of a higher death rate held through the present, it would mean that the number of people killed by Israeli forces since October 2023 stands at over 64,000, or 2.9 percent of the pre-war population of Gaza.

Billions of people around the world have been rightfully shocked by the Los Angeles wildfires, which have destroyed over 12,000 homes, businesses, schools and other structures, and led to 24 deaths, in what California Governor Gavin Newsom said could be the worst natural disaster in US history by cost. But the death toll of the Gaza genocide is thousands of times greater in a tiny and besieged enclave, not one of the world's wealthiest cities, and by deliberate human, or rather inhuman, action.

The study found that 59 percent of victims were women, children or those over 65 years old. These findings reaffirm the undeniable fact that the systematic massacre of the people of Gaza by the Israel Defense Forces (IDF), with the support and assistance of the United States and other imperialist powers, is a genocide.

But even this horrific death toll exposed by the London School of Hygiene study is a significant underestimation in multiple respects. First, as the authors make clear, the survey is designed to exclude those who are still buried under the rubble and

presumed dead, a figure estimated by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) at approximately 10,000.

The study likewise excludes the impact of starvation, dehydration and the spread of infectious diseases promoted by the deliberate efforts of the Israeli government to withhold food from the Gaza Strip and to systematically destroy its hospitals.

The study published last week used an extremely detailed and granular statistical method to estimate the death toll. The study combined data from three sources: Ministry of Health hospital death records, an online survey conducted by the ministry and social media obituaries.

A method known as capture-recapture analysis was used to identify overlaps and gaps among the data sets, which allowed researchers to account for deaths not recorded by any single source. Missing data was addressed through statistical modeling, and various scenarios were tested to improve accuracy.

No study of similar granularity or rigor has been undertaken to estimate the overall death toll, including deaths from hunger and communicable diseases, and such a study may not even be possible. As the study's authors explain, "Although a ground survey could yield robust estimates, the highly unsafe conditions for humanitarian and health workers inside Gaza and access constraints currently make it unfeasible."

In July, an article published in *The Lancet* estimated, based on the impact of previous wars, that the number of deaths tied to the genocide could reach 186,000 or more.

It is entirely possible that, given the major underestimation of violent deaths revealed by the most recent study, the earlier figure of 186,000 deaths from all causes could itself be a major underestimate.

The official position of the Biden administration is that the death toll in Gaza is a byproduct of Israel's war against an armed resistance group. The latest study underscores, however, that the death toll is the product of a deliberate campaign to kill as many civilians as possible in order to break the resistance of the Palestinian people to the illegal Israeli occupation of Gaza. It is not a war against an armed group but a genocide against the entire population.

Last month, the *New York Times* reported the existence of official Israeli military documents authorizing the killing of 20 non-combatants in every attack on a single presumed Hamas supporter, with the ratio in some cases reaching 100 to one. "In each strike, the order said, officers had the authority to risk killing up to 20 civilians," the *Times* wrote.

The *Times* account made clear that the "system" for targeting suspected Hamas sympathizers was nothing more than a cover for a blanket bombardment of Gaza with blockbuster bombs, aimed at killing as many people and destroying as much of Gaza as possible.

Earlier in December, Amnesty International published an exhaustive 296-page report documenting that "Only an intent to destroy the Palestinians in Gaza" can "explain the scale and scope" of the mass murder, forcible displacement and deliberate starvation of the Palestinians in Gaza by Israel.

On November 27, the International Criminal Court (ICC) issued arrest warrants for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and former Defense Minister Yoav Gallant, accusing the two men of "the war crime of starvation as a method of warfare; and the crimes against humanity of murder, persecution, and other inhumane acts."

On Monday, in the final speech on foreign policy of his presidency, US President Joe Biden gloated that "Israel did plenty of damage to Iran and its proxies," and that as far as the United States was concerned, "Our actions contributed significantly." Summarizing the legacy of his presidency, Biden declared, "We have increased America's power in every dimension," adding, "We've increased our military power." He concluded, "Our sources of national power are far stronger than when we took office."

In a call with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu over the weekend, Biden boasted of the "fundamentally changed regional circumstances"

throughout the Middle East, "the fall of the Assad regime in Syria, and the weakening of Iran's power in the region."

The Gaza genocide is an essential component of the US drive to increase American imperialism's "power" in the Middle East. The Biden administration has pursued the final solution of the Palestinian question, the drive to totally break the resistance of the Palestinian people in an effort to create what Bush administration National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice christened the "New Middle East," a term repeatedly used by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to describe the goal of the massive regional war he is waging on behalf of the imperialist powers.

In just six days, US President Donald Trump will take office. In a press conference last week, Trump pledged that "all hell will break loose" in the Middle East unless Hamas surrenders to Israel's demands. Vice President JD Vance pledged to enable "the Israelis to knock out the final couple of battalions of Hamas and their leadership."

Israeli Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich has responded to the election of Trump by ordering preparations for the annexation of the West Bank, threatening to make the West Bank look like Gaza.

All factions of the American political establishment, from the blood-drenched Biden administration to Trump and his band of fascists, are committed to normalizing genocide and neo-colonial annexation. They see the ongoing massacre of the Palestinians not as an exception never to be repeated, but as the model to be applied to all rebellious populations, whether at home or abroad.

As Trump prepares to take office, the struggle against the Gaza genocide must be redoubled and transformed into a fight against the capitalist social order of which the slaughter in Palestine is only one horrific manifestation.



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