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www.afgazad.com

afgazad@gmail.com

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Andre Damon

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Lancet study finds Gaza life expectancy slashed in half by Israeli genocide



Palestinians walk past a mosque destroyed by Israeli airstrikes in Nuseirat, Gaza Strip, Friday, January 24, 2025, days after a ceasefire deal between Israel and Hamas came into effect. [AP Photo/Abdel Kareem Hana]

Life expectancy in Gaza plunged by nearly 50 percent in the first year of the Israeli genocide in the besieged enclave, a study published in *The Lancet* has found.

The study, led by Michel Guillot, professor of sociology in the School of Arts & Sciences at the University of Pennsylvania, found that life expectancy in Gaza fell by a staggering 34.9 years, erasing over a century of progress in life expectancy in just one year.

For men, life expectancy dropped to 35.6 years from a pre-war life expectancy of 73.6 years—a decline of over 50 percent. For women, life expectancy declined from 77.5 years to 47.5 years.

By comparison, Nigeria, the country previously with the lowest life expectancy, has a life expectancy at birth of 54.46 years. The study's findings indicate that the population of Gaza now has a life expectancy lower than any other country in the world.

These findings make clear that Israel's war in Gaza is not a war, but a genocide, aimed not at any military objective but at killing as many Palestinians as possible and destroying as much of Gaza as possible in order to ethnically cleanse the territory, settle it, and annex it into "greater Israel."

This has been the aim of the Israeli state since the Nakba of 1948-1949, and has been its modus operandi for decades, including the illegal occupation of the Palestinian territories in 1967. With the support of the Biden administration, the government of Benjamin Netanyahu initiated a full-scale genocide in October 2023, using the October 7 attacks as a pretext.

The figures in the latest *The Lancet* study are likely to be a major underestimation, as they do not account for deaths uncounted in official government statistics or deaths due to Israel's deliberate policy of starvation, dehydration, and the destruction of Gaza's medical infrastructure. The study based itself on data from Gaza's Ministry of Health, which estimates that Israeli forces have directly killed 45,936 Palestinians.

The authors noted that "our approach to estimating life expectancy losses in this study is conservative as it ignores the indirect effect of the war on mortality... Actual losses are likely to be higher."

Earlier this month, another study published in *The Lancet* estimated that Palestinian deaths in Gaza from Israeli bullets and bombs "probably exceeded 70,000." An earlier study from *The Lancet* suggested that the all-cause mortality from the genocide, including from malnutrition and disease, could be 186,000 or more.

In November, the United Nations Human Rights Office published a report showing that nearly 70 percent of verified deaths in Gaza were of women and children, further underlining the reality that Israel is waging a genocide in Gaza.

Amid a ceasefire in Gaza which began on January 19, Israeli forces are continuing daily raids and bombings throughout the West Bank.

In a statement, United Nations spokesman Stephane Dujarric called on Israel to cease its military offensive on the West Bank, centered on the city of Jenin. The UN "remains deeply concerned about the humanitarian situation in the northern area of the West Bank as Israeli operations in Jenin continue for the 11th day...Nearly all of Jenin refugee camp's 20,000 residents have been displaced over the past two months in the context of security operations."

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu will travel to Washington next week for two meetings with US President Trump on Tuesday. "I can confirm that Prime Minister

Netanyahu will be here on Tuesday, February 4th, for a working meeting and visit with the president,” said White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt.

Despite the nominal ceasefire in Gaza, the Israeli government, in coordination with the Trump administration, is making a renewed push for the expulsion of the Palestinian people from Gaza.

Last weekend, US President Donald Trump called for Israel to “clean” Gaza of its Arab inhabitants, openly calling for ethnic cleansing. “You’re talking about probably a million and a half people, and we just clean out that whole thing,” Trump said.

Trump’s statement is an open and public embrace by the American state of the actual policy of the Netanyahu government, which is the systematic extermination and removal of the Palestinian population from Gaza. Trump reiterated his call for the ethnic cleansing of Gaza on Monday, declaring he would “like to get [Palestinians from Gaza] living in an area where they can live without disruption and revolution and violence so much.”

On Wednesday, Trump’s Mideast envoy Steve Witkoff met with Netanyahu to discuss, in the words of the *Times of Israel*, “Trump’s Gaza idea of sending Gaza’s population to Jordan and Egypt.”

The *Times of Israel* reported “the meeting lasted for two-and-a-half hours, and quoted senior Israeli officials as saying the officials discussed possible outlines for the transfer of Gaza’s population, in line with the US president’s repeated suggestion that millions of Gazans should relocate to Egypt and Jordan in order to enable the Strip’s reconstruction.”

Trump’s plan to ethnically cleanse Gaza would be a major violation of international law. In a news conference on Monday, UN spokesperson Stephane Dujarric condemned Trump’s calls, saying, “We would be against any plan that would lead to the forced displacement of people, or would lead to any type of ethnic cleansing.”

Michael Becker, a professor of international human rights law at Trinity College in Dublin, told Al Jazeera, “The proposal to relocate Palestinians from Gaza to neighboring states smacks of forced displacement, which would violate international humanitarian law.”

He continued, “International courts have also found that whether a population transfer constitutes forced displacement depends on whether people have a genuine choice in the matter... This means that even if some Palestinians might appear to consent to relocation, this would not necessarily make their displacement lawful.”

Andre Damon@Andre__Damon

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