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Stop Repeating the Vast Undercount of Gazan Deaths. It Is Ten Times Greater.



Enough already of the media's lazy indifference to the vast undercount of the Palestinian death toll from Netanyahu's genocidal daily bombing and shelling of Gaza's defenseless civilian population. I'm referring to all the media – the corporate media, the public media, and the independent media. They all stick with the Hamas Ministry of Health's (MOH) count of named victims whose corpses have been identified by hospitals and mortuaries. For months there have been no operating hospitals and mortuaries to send their grisly data to the Health Ministry.

The official Hamas count that all sides like to cite is now over 48,000 deaths. As American doctors back from Gaza before the Rafah closing last year said—just about everybody surviving in Gaza is sick, injured, or dying. They put the death estimate almost a year ago at a minimum of 95,000, not counting tens of thousands of families buried under the rubble when Israeli F-16s blew up entire apartment buildings.

Why would all sides to this one-sided Israeli war of extermination rely on Hamas' figures? Well, Hamas has an interest in low-balling the number of deaths to limit the rage of its inhabitants and allies abroad for not protecting the people of Gaza and not providing them with shelters. The Israeli super-hawks want to keep the undercount low to dampen down the international rage, boycotts, and demand for more sanctions and ICC prosecutions. The Biden administration and now the Trump regime also benefit from a low number.

Here is the Washington Post's esteemed foreign affairs editor Karen DeYoung's reply on September 6, 2024 to my inquiry:

"We use the Gaza MOH [Ministry of Health] figures – as does the United Nations, World Health Organization and virtually every other humanitarian organization – while noting that independent media are not allowed to enter Gaza and the casualty counts are most certainly underreported... The Lancet [British Medical Journal] report notes that based on other 'recent conflicts...it is not implausible to estimate' that four times as many have died than those listed by the MOH...The time will come, I believe, when an independent accounting can be done."

But six months later the time still hasn't come. The Biden State Department had a much higher estimate of deaths but refused to release their analysis, obstructing our Freedom of Information request filed last May 24, 2024. All kinds of estimates and projections by reputable universities, specialists, global health groups and UN agencies point to a much higher death and overall casualty toll. But the State Department won't come forward with a reasonably estimated number that can replace Hamas' statistical immolation.

For example, in late 2023, the chair of Global Public Health at the University of Edinburgh—Professor Devi Sridhar—said that if the destruction continues, half a million Palestinians would die in 2024. The devastation has gotten worse—the bombings, the genocidal denial of "food, water, medicine, electricity, fuel" in the omnicidal words of the high Israeli military officials, the spread of diseases, untreated injuries, babies born into the rubble, infants starved, lack of potable water, sick elderly without critical medicines, and more. This is the result of 110 thousand tons of bombs (Israeli admission) daily tank shelling and precise destructions. Yet neither she nor most other experts who have projected continuing mayhem have offered a number.

Interestingly, the media has no trouble estimating the Syrian deaths at the hands of dictator Assad (500,000) nor the deaths in the wars in Sudan or Ukraine. Only the Palestinians, who are not allowed to live, don't get the respect of having their deaths accurately estimated. One

team of Gazan undertakers said they buried 17,000 bodies in mass graves by February 2024, including 800 in one day.

Were the shoe on the other foot, Congress would not only have had intense public hearings: it would have declared war against Hamas. With total U.S. co-belligerency – from huge weapons supplies to the veto at the UN, Netanyahu gets away with blocking Israeli and all other reporters from going freely into Gaza, and shuts up those conscience-stricken Israeli soldiers who are sickened by what they were ordered to destroy. One of them said, “I felt like, like, like a Nazi ... it looked exactly like we were actually the Nazis and they were the Jews.”

Some columnists in the U.S. like Charles Lane and Ruth Marcus of the Washington Post and Netanyahu’s mouthpiece, Bret Stephens of the New York Times, do not believe the Israeli military consciously targets civilians and civilian infrastructure. Israelis scoff at such naivete; many want more annihilation of all Palestinians whom they regard as “subhuman,” “vermin,” “snakes,” or “animals” (racist words from high Israeli politicians over the decades).

Some 45 years ago, former UN Ambassador and Foreign Minister Abba Eban —under then Prime Minister Menachem Begin—wrote that Israel “is wantonly inflicting every possible measure of death and anguish on civilian populations in a mood reminiscent of regimes which neither Mr. Begin nor I would dare to mention by name.”

In August 2024, based on available historical, empirical, and clinical records, we estimated about 300,000 Palestinians had been killed. (See the August/September 2024 issue of the Capitol Hill Citizen). By now it is over 400,000. Yet the media still uses the figure by Hamas and ignores the lives blown apart under the killing fields in Gaza.

At 400,000 and growing, far more Palestinians have been killed in Gaza than the combined total of deaths from Hiroshima, Nagasaki, and Dresden in World War II. This week, Netanyahu dropped leaflets in Arabic signaling a forthcoming violent exclusion of Gaza’s trapped, unsheltered Palestinians from their homeland. More accurately estimated civilian casualties matters morally and for the intensity of the political, diplomatic, and civic resistance when the world learns the truer toll of death and injuries in this tiny enclave the geographical size of Philadelphia.

To remind the world of the daily Israeli violations of settled international law inflicted on Gazans (also in the West Bank and Lebanon), international law practitioner Bruce Fein compiled this concise list:

ISRAEL’S TEN VIOLATIONS OF INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL HUMANITARIAN LAW IN GAZA

1. Genocide Count I. Killing Palestinians in Gaza.
2. Genocide Count II. Deliberately inflicting on Palestinians in Gaza conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part.
3. Genocide Count III. Destroying hospitals and maternal care necessities intended to prevent births by Palestinian women in Gaza.
4. Crimes against humanity. Extermination and persecution of 2.3 million Palestinians in Gaza as part of a systematic attack directed at Palestinian civilians.
5. Deliberately targeting civilians and civilian property for destruction.
6. Failing to provide for the security and welfare of the inhabitants occupied by the Israeli Defense Forces in Gaza.
7. Impeding delivery of humanitarian assistance.
8. Forcible relocation of civilian population.
9. Use of military force causing civilian casualties vastly disproportionate to the importance of any legitimate military objective.
10. War of aggression against Gaza Palestinians.

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