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Gaza death toll tops 30,000, as US escalates wider Middle East war



A bulldozer unloads the bodies of Palestinians killed by Israel in a mass grave in Rafah, Gaza Strip, Tuesday, Dec. 26, 2023. [AP Photo/Fatima Shbair]

The Euro-Med Monitor reported Friday that 30,676 Palestinians have been killed in Israel Defense Forces (IDF) attacks since October 7, taking into account both those whose bodies have been identified and those who have been missing for more than two weeks, most buried under the rubble of demolished buildings.

This staggering death toll includes 12,040 children, 6,103 women, 241 health workers and 105 journalists. A further 58,960 people have been wounded in the onslaught.

Throughout the Gaza Strip, thousands of bodies remain unburied, including hundreds along roads used by the Israeli occupation forces.

Euro-Med reported that 4 percent of the population of Gaza is either dead, wounded or missing. A similar share of the American population would equate to over 13 million.

To date, 1.9 million Palestinians have been internally displaced, amounting to 90 percent of the population of Gaza. Many have been forced to flee multiple times.

In just under three months, Israel has destroyed or damaged approximately 70 percent of Gaza's civilian infrastructure, Euro-Med reported, including a staggering 247,696 housing units, 318 schools and 169 healthcare facilities.

The ongoing destruction of Gaza is accompanied by growing demands for the permanent displacement of the Palestinian population.

On Wednesday, the *Times of Israel* reported, "The 'voluntary' resettlement of Palestinians from Gaza is slowly becoming a key official policy of the government, with a senior official saying that Israel has held talks with several countries for their potential absorption."

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In a statement on Friday, United Nations humanitarian chief Martin Griffiths declared, "A public health disaster is unfolding. Infectious diseases are spreading in overcrowded shelters as sewers spill over. Some 180 Palestinian women are giving birth daily amidst this chaos. People are facing the highest levels of food insecurity ever recorded. Famine is around the corner."

In a separate statement, the United Nation Children's Fund (UNICEF) reported, "Children in Gaza are caught in a nightmare that worsens with every passing day."

Catherine Russell, UNICEF's executive director, said, "Children and families in the Gaza Strip continue to be killed and injured in the fighting, and their lives are increasingly at risk from preventable diseases and lack of food and water. All children and civilians must be protected from violence and have access to basic services and supplies."

She added, "Gaza has simply become uninhabitable. Its people are witnessing daily threats to their very existence—while the world watches on."

But this bloodbath is only the prelude to what is rapidly becoming a major new US war throughout the Middle East.

On Friday, *Politico* carried an article reporting that Biden administration officials admit that “the war in Gaza has officially escalated far beyond the strip’s borders.”

Politico, citing four unnamed US officials, reported that “Biden administration officials are drawing up plans” for “scenarios that could potentially draw the US into another Middle East war.”

The publication added, “The military is drafting plans to hit back at Iran-backed Houthi militants who have been attacking commercial shipping in the Red Sea, according to three US officials with direct knowledge of the discussions.” It added, “That includes striking Houthi targets in Yemen, according to one of the officials, an option the military has previously presented.”

The Pentagon planning to attack Yemen was previously reported by the *Wall Street Journal*.

The US is also seeking to “anticipate and fend off possible attacks on the US by Iranian-backed forces in Iraq and Syria, according to one of the officials,” *Politico* reported.

Against this backdrop, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken left Thursday for a trip throughout the Middle East, including a prominent stop in Israel, to coordinate the next phase of the war.

On the day that Blinken left, the US carried out an illegal missile strike on Baghdad, Iraq on Thursday in the latest escalation of the US-Israeli rampage throughout the Middle East. The strike targeted Mushtaq Jawad Kazim al-Jawari, a member of a pro-Iran militia, whom Iraq claimed was a member of its security forces. Iraq’s foreign ministry issued a “strong condemnation” of what it called a “blatant attack” on Iraq’s military headquarters. In a letter to Congress Friday, Biden justified the attack, declaring, “I directed these discrete military actions consistent with my responsibility to protect United States citizens both at home and abroad and in furtherance of United States national security and foreign policy interests.”

In response, Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani said the Iraqi government would move to expel the 2,500 US troops stationed in the country.

“The government is setting the date for the start of the bilateral committee to put arrangements in place to end the presence of the international coalition forces in Iraq permanently,” al-Sudani said in a statement.

The United States, meanwhile, is continuing to mass troops, warships and aircraft in the Middle East. In a statement Wednesday, White House National Security Council

spokesman John Kirby said the United States will not “shrink from the task of defending ourselves, our interests, our partners and the free flow of international commerce.”

Kirby warned, “To accomplish these goals, we have established and will continue to maintain a significant force presence in the Middle East, including significant ‘offensive’ military power.”

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