



Israel's Reproductive Genocide in the Gaza Strip

**The Palestinian Initiative for the Promotion of
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Foreword by MIFTAH

This study comes at a time in which several forms of annihilation are manifested in Palestine, all under the umbrella of genocide, including “reproductive genocide”. Palestinian women in Gaza faced, and continue to face, unprecedented challenges that threaten their lives and health at several levels. This study, conducted by MIFTAH, aims to shed light on one of the worst forms of violations against the Palestinian women amid the on-going aggression, namely the “reproductive genocide”, committed by the Israeli occupation forces in Gaza strip since October 2023.

Analyzing the occupation practices and their destructive impact, this study unveils this compound crime committed against Palestinian women, which systematically targets their reproductive rights. The study addresses the various aspects of this annihilation process, starting with deliberate targeting and killing of women, lack of prenatal healthcare for pregnant women, banning medicines and treatments related to reproductive health, and deliberate targeting of healthcare centers and medical facilities. It also highlights the serious threats against the women’s mental health, aggravating their suffering and undermining their resilience against crises.

The study asserts that according to international conventions, such violations fall within the framework of genocide, hence not only they constitute crimes against humanity, but they also constitute systematic and on-going genocide.

As we, at MIFTAH, present this study, we assert the need for the international community, UN agencies and local and international rights –based organizations to take concrete steps to protect the rights of Palestinian women and stop the violations against them. We also demand enhancing the efforts that aim at putting an end to the reproductive genocide committed against Palestinian women, through supporting the health system, especially in reproductive health, and providing mental support to the women who face the most horrific conditions.

This study constitutes an urgent call to advocate for the rights of Palestinian women and to hold the Israeli occupation accountable for the crimes committed against them. At MIFTAH, we believe that the international community, through its commitment to international laws and resolutions, can play an active role in putting an end to these brutal practices and contribute to safeguarding the right of Palestinian women to life and dignity.

Tahreer Araj

Executive Director

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Executive summary:

Through this study, MIFTAH aims to shed light on the violations committed by the Israeli occupation against Palestinian women, focusing on reproductive genocide in Gaza strip. It seeks to expose the nature and components of the reproductive genocide against Palestinian women, explaining reproductive genocide, developing the concept and providing the necessary knowledge to identify the required interventions and women's immediate and strategic needs. The study also aims to provide the Palestinian local and international organizations as well as UN agencies with recommendations on required action to protect Palestinian women.

As an occupying power, Israel bears legal responsibility for the rights of Palestinians, as it maintains effective control over Palestinian land and population. Under international law, this designates the Gaza Strip as occupied territory. Consequently, Israel is obligated to adhere to International Humanitarian Law, which safeguards civilians during armed conflict, and International Human Rights Law, which requires the occupying power to protect civil and economic rights while refraining from war crimes and crimes against humanity.

The Hague and Geneva conventions assert the obligations of the occupying state towards protecting women. UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 on women, security and peace, and Recommendation No. 35 of CEDAW assert the need to comply with the protection of women during conflicts and wars, refraining from risking their safety and the safety of their children, providing health services and other human rights. The international criminal law refers to individual criminal responsibility for criminal acts, such as participating in committing crimes or inciting them.

Since the start of its military offensive in October 2023, Israel deliberately intended to annihilate the Palestinian people, targeting them with continuous bombardment, destroying infrastructure, using internationally prohibited weapons, forcing displacement and targeting hospitals and healthcare facilities. The occupation has committed several gross violations, classified as crimes against humanity and war crimes, such as forcible displacement, starvation, deprivation of water, cutting water and energy supplies and forcible displacement. All those crimes and practices constitute genocide against the Palestinian people, which is one of the most serious crimes at the human, international and legal levels.

Israel's deliberate targeting of Palestinian women in Gaza is evident in the killing of more than 12,298 women, the disappearance of 4,700 women and children (data reported until the end of December 2024), the displacement of approximately 800,000 women from their homes in Gaza, and the suffering of about one million women and girls from severe acute food insecurity.

The data documenting the genocidal war, which this study unveils, reveals that Israel deliberately committed reproductive genocide against Palestinian women, through a set of actions that primarily targeted the reproductive activity of women. Targeting hospitals and healthcare facilities, forcible evacuation of the medical staff, cutting off water, energy, power, food and medical supplies, amid the absence of healthcare for pregnant women, having to have caesarian births and emergency operations without any sterilization, anesthesia or painkillers. The medical teams had to evacuate the mothers from hospitals in few hours after caesarian births, leading women to deliver in the areas of refuge, and in unsafe and unhygienic places, which increased the risks to their and their children's health.

Israel deliberately prevented the entry of consumables, medicines and treatments related to reproductive health to Gaza, where more than 690,000 women and girls at the menstruating age live, which exposed them to the risks of catching diseases.

On one hand, women in Gaza face tragic conditions during pregnancy and birth; they suffer from difficulties in accessing health facilities to follow up pregnancy and receive prenatal care, because of the lack of medical services and necessary medications, lack of ambulances and lack of fuel in hospitals. Moreover, 85 hospitals and medical centers stopped providing services; women also faced famine.

The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) reported that approximately 60,000 women in Gaza are pregnant, with around 180 births occurring daily. PCBS estimated that 15% of these women are likely to experience pregnancy and childbirth complications that are difficult to treat due to the severe lack of medical care and unhygienic conditions. This constitutes a grave violation of women's rights and endangers both their lives and those of their newborns.

Additionally, the policy of starvation and deprivation has put children's lives at risk by denying them essential resources such as food and water. Israel deliberately targeted the embryo preservation center and artificial insemination clinics, while also cutting off electricity to premature infant wards.

The assault extends beyond physical harm to psychological devastation, affecting women's mental health as part of what the study terms "reproductive genocide." While physical targeting aims at extermination, the destruction of mental health services seeks to erase self-identity. Gaza's only psychiatric hospital, along with specialized mental health clinics, was bombed, and the entry of psychiatric medications was prohibited.

The study introduced and defined the concept of reproductive genocide as "acts and practices carried out by Israel, the occupying power, to annihilate and exterminate the Palestinian people through policies and crimes primarily targeting women's reproductive capacity." This definition aligns with the criteria set forth in the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide.

The study recommends advancing the recognition of reproductive genocide at local and international levels as a tool for advocacy and legal accountability. It emphasizes the need to strengthen human rights efforts to halt the genocide against the Palestinian people and the violations against Palestinian women by activating relevant UN resolutions, including UNSC Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security. Furthermore, it calls for international pressure to support Gaza's healthcare system, particularly in reproductive health, ensuring the entry of essential medications, medical equipment, and humanitarian aid. It also underscores the necessity of implementing psychological support programs for women, submitting evidence of reproductive genocide to the International Criminal Court (ICC), and establishing international investigation committees to examine these crimes.

Introduction

The genocidal war has exposed the occupation's doctrine of eliminating women to eliminate the whole Palestinian entity. The occupation perceives the body of the Palestinian woman as a body deserving of death and killing, since Palestinian women represent a weapon of war and a demographic threat to Israel and its security; the sons they raise are merely "small snakes", as put by a prominent female leader of the Israeli New Right Party and Minister of Justice, Ayelet Shaked, before the offensive against Gaza in 2023, particularly in 2015[1]. She called on the Israelis to destroy Palestinian cities and villages, "with their entire infrastructure". She also called for killing the Palestinian mothers and their children, leaving no trace of them. She justified her call on her Facebook account then by saying that, "all the Palestinian people are enemies of Israel".

At another level, several global specialized and rights based organizations and media reports have pointed out the violations and crimes perpetrated by Israel, that aim at executing reproductive genocide, as part of the genocidal actions launched against Gaza. Those included imposing measures that preclude reproduction, killing pregnant women, children, destroying medical centers, starvation, and transforming Gaza Strip into an uninhabitable place, etc...[2]

Given this dire reality, the study seeks to expose the nature and components of reproductive genocide against Palestinian women in Gaza, defining its characteristics, elements, and forms. It aims to develop and establish the concept of reproductive genocide within relevant literature to support efforts in holding the occupying state accountable. Additionally, the study provides essential information to guide necessary interventions and address women's needs at both immediate and strategic levels. Finally, it offers recommendations to local Palestinian and international organizations on the actions required to halt this genocide.

[1] BBC Arabic website: Financial Times: Ayelet Shaked, a rising star that raises concerns in Israel. Published in Arabic on 14 May 2015. See: <https://shorturl.at/z7KkY>

[2] See for example: the Palestinian Center for Human Rights, The Israeli occupation measures to prevent reproduction in Gaza Strip. Check the link: <https://uploads.geobingan.info/attachment/9fdac166c38b40f3bcd84f9652a9b3a0.pdf>;

Dialogue-international official: pregnant women in Gaza race against death, UN News, <https://news.un.org/ar/story/2023/10/1125097>; International agencies 25/10/2024: women and newborn infants shoulder the burden of the conflict in Gaza, UN news <https://news.un.org/ar/story/2023/11/1125672>

Palestinian women in Gaza between the risk of miscarriage and giving birth in makeshift tents France 24: <https://rb.gy/eo5x> 25/10/2024: At Least Two Mothers Die Every Hour... The Struggles of Pregnant Palestinian Women Amid the War in Gaza, France 24, <https://rb.gy/3lxsn0>.

25/10/2024: "Pregnant Women in Gaza Between Two Tragedies: Premature Birth or Miscarriage, Al Jazeera, <https://rb.gy/7b6mcj>.

The study aims at analyzing the Israeli practices that fall under the term “reproductive genocide”, which are the acts and practices that Israel, the occupying state, commits to annihilate and exterminate the Palestinian people, through policies and crimes that primarily target the reproductive dimension of women, including all the significant indicators related to the aim of cutting off the lineage of Palestinians and committing reproductive genocide. The study aims at developing a special comprehensive and complementary concept of reproductive genocide as a main component of genocide defined in the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide,

The study aims to provide comprehensive knowledge about the violations and crimes of Israel, the occupying state, during its military aggression against all the Palestinian Territory; provide a legal approach to those actions and practices based on the provisions of the International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and the International Human Rights Law (IHRL); come out with future tools to stop and prevent the continuation of reproductive genocide against Palestinian women, through the use of available international, regional and local mechanisms, and hold the occupation accountable for those crimes. It also aims to assess the needs of women amidst the continued aggression to enable the specialized organizations to meet them.

To prepare this study, qualitative research tools were utilized in gathering information, through carrying out a comprehensive desk review of relevant literature that aims at identifying the components and manifestations of reproductive genocide. The study reviewed all reports, interventions, and statements issued by international UN bodies, their representatives, and relevant international organizations and institutions operating in the sector. This included reviewing numerous reports of local institutions concerned with the aggression, such as reports from the Ministry of Health (MOH), PCBS, and rights based organizations, among others, with the aim of providing data on the crimes and ongoing violations committed by the occupying power in Gaza Strip.

Furthermore, the study reviewed MIFTAH field reports on the impact of genocide on women in Gaza, particularly focusing on women’s reproductive health rights and the services provided to them.

To establish a comprehensive understanding of international legal frameworks related to violations and crimes committed by the occupying state, especially those linked to reproductive genocide, the study reviewed the Geneva Conventions, the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, and all resolutions related and subsequent to UNSCR 1325 on women in conflict and war situations. Relevant agreements from international human rights law, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and its recommendations, were also reviewed.

The study concluded that Israel has shirked its obligations to protect the rights of Palestinian women and has deliberately committed grave crimes and violations against them. These actions have intentionally placed women in living conditions that are unsustainable. These violations and practices align with the components of reproductive genocide, necessitating that Palestinian women's and rights-based organizations continue their efforts to stop this genocide, hold the occupation accountable, and provide protection for Palestinian women.

Part One: the responsibility of Israel, the occupying state, towards adherence to human rights

The legal frameworks of the responsibility of Israel, the occupying state

According to the international law, Gaza Strip remains under Israeli occupation despite the unilateral withdrawal from the Strip in 2005. Israel retained full control over Gaza's land, sea, and air entry points. Furthermore, it maintains control over Gaza's population registry, communication networks, and many other aspects of daily life and infrastructure[3].

Based on this, several bodies of international law apply to the Israeli military aggression and acts of genocide perpetrated in Gaza since October 7, 2023, including:

1. The International Humanitarian Law (IHL): It comprises the rules that protect civilians and others in armed conflicts, regulate the means and methods of warfare, and impose obligations on occupying states.
2. The International Human Rights Law (IHRL): It provides for the civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights. It applies in both times of peace and armed conflicts, is binding on states and their armed forces, and provides for the rights to redress and reparation for the victims of violations.

3. The International Criminal Law (ICL): It establishes individual criminal responsibility for violations of IHRL and IHL, such as war crimes, crimes against humanity, genocide, forcible disappearances, torture, and extrajudicial executions.

As an occupying power, Israel is bound by the rules of International Humanitarian Law (IHL) applicable to belligerent occupation. Legally, occupation is a distinct status within the broader context of war or international armed conflict, where IHL naturally applies. These rules have a customary legal nature and have been codified through various international conventions, most notably:

- **The Hague Regulations of 1899** on the laws and customs of war on land, later expanded by the Hague Convention of 1907.
- **The Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949**, which protects civilians during wartime.
- **The First Additional Protocol of 1977**, which supplements the Geneva Conventions and focuses on the protection of victims of international armed conflicts. [4]

The Hague Convention mandates that the occupying power must **"take all measures within its capacity to restore and ensure public order and safety as much as possible, while respecting the existing laws in the occupied country."** Similarly, the Fourth Geneva Convention imposes obligations to protect civilian populations, ensuring their right to special protection, humane treatment, and protection from intentional killing or deportation. It also requires the provision of humanitarian necessities and prohibits attacks on civilian hospitals caring for the wounded, sick, disabled, and postpartum women. Parties to the conflict are obligated to respect and protect such facilities at all times, and collective punishments are explicitly forbidden.

The **International Court of Justice (ICJ)** and the **UN Human Rights Committee** have affirmed that **International Human Rights Law (IHRL)** remains applicable during armed conflict and complements IHL. Israel's actions in the Occupied Palestinian Territory are therefore subject to its obligations under international treaties and customary human rights law.

[3] Euro-med Human Rights Monitor Website, Suffocation and Isolation, 17 years of Israeli blockade on Gaza. <https://euromedmonitor.org/ar/gaza>

[4] The International Committee of the Red Cross ICRC, Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory: The law of occupation must be respected, published on 19/7/2024. <https://shorturl.at/jHSwJ>

The UN Human Rights Committee clarified that states are obligated to uphold the provisions of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) beyond their territorial jurisdiction. The International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) similarly places no geographical limitations on its regional application and does not permit derogation from its provisions even during emergencies. Since IHRL applies alongside IHL in situations of conflict, practices of the occupying power may constitute violations of both IHL and IHRL simultaneously[5].

The CEDAW Committee has reiterated in its reports, its call on Israel to apply the Convention in the occupied territories. It considered that “Israel’s assertion that the Convention does not apply to Palestinian women, contradicts the views of the Committee and other treaty bodies, including the Human Rights Committee, the Committee on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, and the Committee Against Torture”. Furthermore, the Committee’s opinion on the applicability of CEDAW provides that, “With reference to paragraph 12 of its General Recommendation No. 28 on the core obligations of States parties under article 2 of the Convention, the Committee urges the State party to reconsider its position and to give full effect to the implementation of its obligations under the Convention as well as its obligations under humanitarian law with regard to all persons under its jurisdiction or effective control, and to provide in its next periodic report detailed information on the enjoyment by all women, including, if still relevant, women living in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, of their rights under the Convention”[6].

In 2000, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security, recognizing women's leadership role in achieving international peace and security, and their contributions in preventing conflicts, maintaining peace, resolving disputes, and building peace. The resolution emphasized the necessity of protecting women in conflict and war zones and considered implementing the Women, Peace, and Security Agenda an unnegotiable political commitment for the UN and the Security Council.

[5] ICRC, The interplay between international humanitarian law and international human rights law in situations of armed conflict, published in Arabic on 12/2/2024 at ICRC website, from an article published on 26/12/2007, International Law Forum, University of Jerusalem, by Cordula Droege. <https://shorturl.at/DdlQh>

[6] Items 12 and 13 of the Concluding observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women on the fourth and fifth reports of Israel. (CEDAW/C/ISR/CO/

International Criminal Law

The international criminal law is a set of international rules aimed at prohibiting certain categories of conduct (such as war crimes, crimes against humanity, genocide, and aggression) and holding individuals who participate in such conduct criminally responsible. These rules either authorize or oblige states to prosecute and punish these criminal acts. The international criminal law governs the procedures before international criminal courts to prosecute and try individuals accused of committing such crimes[7].

War crimes are violations of **IHL** that occur within the context of an armed conflict, whether international or non-international. These crimes may be committed against civilians or combatants and result in individual criminal responsibility. This definition is outlined in **Article 8 of the Rome Statute**, the founding treaty of the **International Criminal Court (ICC)**, adopted in June 1998. The Rome Statute provides the most comprehensive legal framework for defining **war crimes and crimes against humanity**, reflecting international consensus on these offenses.

Crimes against humanity refer to acts committed as part of a **widespread or systematic attack** against a civilian population or specific group, with prior knowledge of the attack's objective. A defining element is large-scale violence, either through a high number of victims, a broad geographical scope, or systematic patterns of violence. **Isolated or incidental acts do not qualify**. According to the Rome Statute, such crimes must be committed to further a **state or organizational policy**[8].

The Rome Statute specifies the acts constituting crimes against humanity and war crimes. Those include wilful killing, torture, inhumane treatment, conducting biological experiments, widespread destruction or seizure of property without military necessity and carried out unlawfully and wantonly, forcing prisoners of war or protected persons to serve in the armed forces of an enemy state, depriving prisoners of war or protected persons of their right to a fair trial, illegal deportation, transfer, or unlawful imprisonment, deliberate attacks against civilian populations or individuals not participating directly in hostilities, and deliberate attacks on civilian sites, including locations that do not constitute military objectives.

[7] ICRC, General principles of international criminal law. Check the link: <https://shorturl.at/yCEDP>

[8] IBID

Furthermore, violations include deliberate attacks against personnel, facilities, materials, units, or vehicles involved in humanitarian assistance or peacekeeping missions under the UN Charter, as long as they are entitled to the protection afforded to civilians or civilian sites under the law of armed conflict, in addition to attacks or bombings of cities, villages, dwellings, or undefended buildings that are not military targets, regardless of the means used. They also include the occupying power, directly or indirectly, transferring parts of its civilian population into the territory it occupies, or deporting or forcibly transferring all or part of the population of the occupied territory within or outside that territory.

International criminal law recognizes various forms of **individual criminal responsibility**, even for those who do not directly commit crimes. [9] These include:

- **Co-perpetration** – Jointly committing a crime based on shared control.
- **Aiding and abetting** – Assisting or encouraging a crime with knowledge of its commission.
- **Ordering** – Instructing others to commit a crime as a person in authority.
- **Planning** – Preparing or organizing a crime.
- **Attempt** – Taking steps to commit a crime, even if it does not occur due to external factors.
- **Incitement to genocide** – Directly or publicly urging others to commit genocide.
- **Omission** – Failing to fulfill a legal duty to act.

Additionally, individuals may be held accountable under command or superior responsibility if they fail to prevent or punish crimes committed by subordinates under their command or authority within a structured hierarchy. This applies to military commanders and those in similar roles, as well as non-military officials with authority over subordinates.

These crimes fall under the jurisdiction of the ICC—the first and only permanent international court empowered to prosecute individuals for genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes, and crimes of aggression.

[9] Dannenbaum, Tom. “Siege Starvation: A War Crime of Societal Torture”. The University of Chicago – The Law School: Chicago Journal of International Law, Article 22.2. Check the following link: <https://shorturl.at/mtXfB>

The Crime of Genocide*

Genocide is one of the gravest crimes in human history, often described as the "crime of crimes." It encompasses atrocities committed against specific human groups with the intent to destroy them wholly or partially. The international law developed this term to describe acts aimed at annihilating entire groups based on race, religion, ethnicity, or nationality. The 1948 UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide officially defines genocide and constitutes the principal reference on this matter.

Genocides are often triggered by racial or religious hatred or the desire for political and social domination. Propaganda and incitement play a pivotal role in igniting such crimes. The consequences include killing large numbers of people, destruction of the social fabric of the targeted societies, economic collapse in the affected areas, and long-term impact on survivors including severe psychological disorders.

The Convention criminalizes the following acts listed in Article 2: any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such: (a) Killing members of the group; (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.

Article 3 outlines punishable offenses: 1. Genocide. 2. Conspiracy to commit genocide. 3. Direct and public incitement to commit genocide. 4. Attempt to commit genocide. 5. Complicity in genocide.

In the same context, Israel's actions and crimes have led to growing belief that genocide has been committed against the Palestinian people in Gaza. South Africa referred the situation to the International Court of Justice (ICJ), urging immediate intervention to halt the ongoing Israeli military assault. Multiple UN representatives and international human rights bodies have affirmed that Israel's actions amount to genocide.

* The first legal tool to recognize genocide as a crime and the first human rights treaty adopted by the UN General Assembly on 9/12/1948 during its third session, and constituted Resolution Number 260. The Convention entered into force on 12/1/1951, and has been ratified by 152 UN member states of 2021.

Acts of genocide can be examined by analysing the crimes committed by the occupying power through the core legal frameworks that define genocide. Article 6 of the ICC Rome Statute and Article 2 of the Genocide Convention provide a detailed legal framework for defining genocide. Genocide includes acts committed with the specific intent to destroy a national, ethnic, racial, or religious group, whether in whole or in part. These acts involve killing group members, causing them serious harm, or imposing living conditions intended to physically destroy the group in whole or in part, among other actions. It is worth noting that the "target group" can be a geographically limited segment of a population, such as the 2.2 million Palestinians living in Gaza.

Part Two: Reproductive genocide: A manifestation of genocide

The general context of reproductive genocide

Women constitute the social group that suffers most from compounded hardships during armed conflicts and wars. This prompted the UN General Assembly to adopt the Declaration on the Protection of Women and Children in Emergency and Armed Conflict Proclaimed by General Assembly Resolution 3318 (XXIX) of 14 December 1974.[10] Furthermore, UNSC adopted Resolution 1325 on 31/10/ 2000, on "Women, Peace, and Security," which affirmed that conflicts affect women and girls differently than they affect men.[11]

The practices of the occupation violated Rule 134 of the International Committee of the Red Cross's (ICRC) study on customary international humanitarian law, which stipulates that the specific needs of women affected by armed conflict must be met in terms of protection, health, and assistance, as they are protected persons. Moreover, these practices contravene the Geneva Conventions, which state that "at all times, whether in conflict or otherwise, women—and all protected persons—must be safeguarded from attacks on their lives and physical integrity, including all forms of killing, mutilation, cruel treatment, torture, and assaults on personal dignity, particularly humiliating and degrading treatment." Furthermore, the ICC Rome Statute defines gender-based persecution (among other grounds) as a crime against humanity (Article 7(1)(h) of the Rome Statute).

[10] UNHRC. "Declaration on the Protection of Women and Children in Emergency and Armed Conflict". Check the following link: [* The first legal tool to recognize genocide as a crime and the first human rights treaty adopted by the UN General Assembly on 9/12/1948 during its third session, and constituted Resolution Number 260. The Convention entered into force on 12/1/1951, and has been ratified by 152 UN member states of 2021.](#)

[11] OSAGI. "Landmark resolution on Women, Peace and Security". Check the following link: <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/wps/>

Several global specialized and rights based organizations and media reports have considered the measures taken by Israel as a war against women, including imposing measures that preclude reproduction, the killing of pregnant women and children, destruction of health centers, starvation, and transforming Gaza Strip into an uninhabitable place[12].

The Israeli targeting of women in Gaza is not separate from the waged genocidal war, but rather one of its manifestations. In its pursuit to end the Palestinian presence in Gaza, Israel has committed all actions that create conditions leading to reproductive genocide, failing to adhere to the provisions of IHL, which grant women general and special protection during conflicts, taking into account the fact that women, in particular, may be vulnerable to specific forms of violence. This need for special protection focuses on the needs of women as mothers and mandates humane treatment for the wounded, sick, prisoners, and civilians in conflicts, without any discrimination based on sex, race, nationality, religion, political opinion, or similar criteria. The Four Geneva Conventions (1949) and their Additional Protocols (1977), as well as the customary humanitarian law provide for this general protection.

1.10 million females in Gaza Strip, constituting 49.3% of the population, including around 546,000 women of reproductive age (15-49 years), are suffering the horrors of genocide. More than 90% of them have been forcibly displaced from their homes and communities, enduring inhumane conditions and a lack of basic living requirements. Women immensely bear the consequences of this genocide.

Around 47,283 citizens have been killed and 111,472 injured in Gaza Strip since October 7, 2023, because of the Israeli aggression, as of 23/12/2025, with over 11,000 missing. This has occurred amidst massive destruction and a famine that has killed dozens of children and elderly persons[13]. Israel has also forced over two million Palestinians to flee within Gaza Strip. With repeated waves of displacement, 100,000 dilapidated tents have become uninhabitable for the displaced; shelters have been bombed, resulting in the deaths of women and children.

[12] See for example: the Palestinian Center for Human Rights, The Israeli occupation measures to prevent reproduction in Gaza Strip. Check the following link:

<https://uploads.geobingan.info/attachment/9fdac166c38b40f3bcd84f9652a9b3a0.pdf>;

Dialogue-international official: pregnant women in Gaza race against death, UN News, Check the following link: <https://news.un.org/ar/story/2023/10/1125097>;

International agencies 25/10/2024: women and newborn infants shoulder the burden of the conflict in Gaza, UN news <https://news.un.org/ar/story/2023/11/1125672>

Palestinian women in Gaza between the risk of miscarriage and giving birth in makeshift tents France 24: <https://rb.gy/eo5x>

[13] PCBS, Aggression of the Israeli occupation against Palestine - last update on 23/1/2025.

Consequently, more than 17,000 children have been orphaned, at least 15,000 women have lost their lives, and infrastructure has been destroyed, including electricity grids, mobile phone networks, bakeries, and food warehouses. The use of starvation and thirst as a weapon has severely restricted access to basic resources such as water and food, turning Gaza into one of the most hunger-stricken regions in the world. The entire population of north Gaza were at risk of death[14].

The health sector has been systematically targeted, resulting in the killing of over 986 healthcare workers and the arrest of at least 5,000 Palestinians, including 310 healthcare workers. This assault has disrupted routine healthcare services[15]. It is estimated that 16,854 children have been unable to receive routine vaccinations, leading to the spread of several epidemics, most notably hepatitis. Targeting hospitals and health centers has caused the collapse of the healthcare system's ability to meet the needs of the population, severely limiting access to health services. Obtaining treatment and medication has become extremely difficult, exacerbating the suffering of patients, especially those with non-communicable diseases such as diabetes and cardiovascular disease, who require continuous care, in addition to a severe shortage of essential medicines and medical supplies, making surgeries and emergency care almost impossible due to the lack of medical staff and available facilities. Pregnant women and children continue to suffer from the absence of adequate healthcare, leading to increased maternal and child mortality rates[16].

Furthermore, the environment and infrastructure have been completely destroyed. Over 65% of the road networks have been damaged, hindering the movement of people, vehicles, and animals transporting goods, and making it impossible for people and patients to access health facilities, shelters, and hospitals, which blocked the movement between cities and isolated communities[17]. More than 70% of Gaza's homes, 85% of schools, 99% of universities, 65% of road networks, 69% of hospitals, and 90% of economic facilities have been destroyed, along with at least 21% of cemeteries. A UN official described the massive destruction caused by the Israeli war machine as turning Gaza into a place that “resembles the surface of the moon”[18].

[14] IBID.

[15] Euro-med Human Rights Monitor website. Amid the ongoing genocide, Euro-Med Monitor documents the most prominent mass graves in Gaza. Published on 18/9/2024. <https://shorturl.at/V3xA7>

[16] Palestine News and Info Agency –Wafa.PCBS reviews the socio-economic and environmental conditions a year after the Israeli occupation’s aggression. Published in Arabic on 6/10/2024. <https://shorturl.at/UNwAB>

[17] IBID.

[18] IBID.

Entire families have been wiped from the civil registry. Around 902 families fell victims of this crime, so that the occupation killed all their members. Not only the occupation used its lethal fire and missiles against Palestinian children, but it also used internationally banned weapons such as white phosphorus. It also used starvation and thirst as weapons, cutting off essential supplies like water, food, electricity, fuel, and other essential necessities, including humanitarian aid. This constitutes collective punishment and retaliation against the civilian population, in addition to acts of sexual and gender-based violence that have been committed, including torture, abuse, and sexual humiliation. Detainees have been forced to walk naked, either fully or partially, while being subjected to sexual harassment[19].

The United Nations Special Committee [to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories](#) confirmed that, “Israel’s warfare in Gaza is consistent with the characteristics of genocide, with mass civilian casualties and life-threatening conditions intentionally imposed on Palestinians there”. A report issued by the committee revealed that since the beginning of the war, Israeli officials have publicly supported policies that strip Palestinians of the very necessities required to sustain life – food, water, and fuel[20]. These statements along with the systematic and unlawful interference of humanitarian aid make clear Israel’s intent to exploit life-saving supplies for political and military gains[21].

In this context, Israeli Defence Minister Yoav Gallant announced on 9 October that Palestinians are "human animals", declaring an unrestricted military operation, strongly suggesting an intent to kill and destroy the Palestinian population in Gaza on a large scale. He was echoed by the Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT), Major General Ghassan Alian, who threatened Gaza residents by saying, "You want hell, you'll get hell." Other Israeli figures reiterated this rhetoric.

[19] IBID.

[20] Un website: “UN Special Committee finds Israel’s warfare methods in Gaza consistent with genocide, including use of starvation as weapon of war”. Published in Arabic on 14/11/2024. <https://shorturl.at/sAwGl>

[21]IBID.

On 29 October, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu invoked Jewish holy texts to justify killing Palestinians. He said, "You must remember what Amalek did to you, says our Holy Book," quoting a verse that reads, "Now go and strike Amalek... kill man and woman, child"[22].

The above-mentioned UN committee (United Nations Special Committee [to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories](#)) report documents how Israel's intensive bombing campaign in Gaza destroyed essential services and caused an environmental disaster with long-term health effects. The committee stated, "By early 2024, 25,000 tons of explosives – equivalent to two nuclear bombs – had been dropped on Gaza, causing widespread destruction, the collapse of water and sewage systems, the devastation of agriculture, and toxic pollution". The report raises serious concerns about Israel's use of artificial intelligence, AI- enhanced targeting systems in directing military operations, which severely impacted civilians, "particularly manifested in the enormous numbers of women and children among the victims"[23].

Deliberate killing of Palestinian women

Statements of the Israeli officials reveal that the major element of genocide in Gaza has been met, i.e. "the intent to destroy a group, in whole or in part, regardless of the actual number of victims involved". Intent constitutes a fundamental element of the crime of genocide. In the context of exploring evidence for reproductive genocide, the statements by Israeli officials reveal the presence of "intent", the fundamental element of the crime of reproductive genocide. Israel perceives the bodies of Palestinian women as deserving of death and of killing. They treat it as such, since Palestinian women represent weapons of war and a demographic threat to Israel and its security. Palestinian children, raised by these women, are viewed as mere, "little snakes", according to a statement made by Ayelet Shaked, a prominent member of the New Right Party and former Israeli Minister of Justice, just before the 2023 offensive against Gaza. Shaked called on Israelis to destroy Palestinian cities, villages, "with their entire infrastructure".

[22]Assayad, Ahmad and Ahmad Duha. The legal dimensions of the crime of genocide in Gaza Strip. The position of international parties. Published in Arabic on the website of the Democratic Arabic Center for Strategic, Political and Economic Studies on 11/6/2024. See <https://shorturl.at/smqpL>

[23] UN website: UN rapporteur calls for imposing sanctions on Israel: Genocide in Gaza: escalating the process of obliterating Palestinians. UN. Published in Arabic on 26/3/2024. See <https://shorturl.at/S8Ogp>

She advocated killing Palestinian mothers and their children, leaving no trace of them. She justified these calls on her Facebook account at the time by saying, “The entire Palestinian people are Israel's enemies”. Shaked had wrote in a Facebook post, “Behind every terrorist stand dozens of men and women. Without them, terrorism cannot thrive. They are all enemy combatants, and their blood should be on their heads”. She added, "This also includes the mothers of [martyrs] who send their sons off to hell with flowers and kisses. They, too, must follow their sons. Nothing could be more just.

They should go, along with their homes where they raised snakes, or else small snakes will grow there”[24].

Despite the "No Excuse" campaign launched by the United Nations in 2023 to combat violence against women, nothing has spared women and girls from the tragedies they face every hour in Gaza. Children and women constituted around 70% of the casualties of the Israeli aggression since 7 October[25]. The number of women killed reached 12,298, while 4,700 women and children remain missing[26].

UN Women reports confirm the direct targeting of women's lives. They reveal that, “two mothers are killed every hour in Gaza Strip, seven women every two hours”. Moreover, around 800,000 women have been displaced from their homes due to continuous Israeli aggression since more than three months. Around one million women and girls now suffer from severe food insecurity”[27].

[24] BBC Arabic website. Financial Times: Ayelet Shaked, a rising star that raises concerns in Israel. Published in Arabic on 14 May 2015. See: <https://shorturl.at/z7KkY>

[25] UN website “No excuse”: A global call to end violence against women. Published in Arabic on 30 November 2024. See <https://shorturl.at/ObMBj>

[26] PCBS. “Impact of Israeli occupation aggression on Palestine. Last seen on 13/1/2025

[27] UN website: UN Women: Two mothers killed each hour in Gaza conflict. Published in Arabic on 19 January 2024. See <https://shorturl.at/bv8Yh>

Systematic destruction of the healthcare system

Just two days into the genocidal war, Beit Hanoun Hospital in north Gaza went out of service. Health centers across Gaza City and north Gaza were evacuated. The Baptist (Ma'amadani) Hospital was bombed, while the surroundings of other hospitals were threatened, besieged and bombed, including Al-Shifa, the largest hospital in Gaza Strip, as well as Al-Awda, the Indonesian and other hospitals, with the aim of evacuating hospitals and medical centers and forcing people to leave. Medical staff were arrested, systematically bombed, and forced to flee, causing a drastic deterioration in healthcare. It is worth noting that these hospitals served over two-thirds of Gaza's population due to their specialized capabilities, skilled personnel, and advanced medical equipment, which cannot be easily made available elsewhere in Gaza.

The Israeli occupation continued its assault on hospitals and health facilities across Gaza, issuing threats, conducting evacuations, and directly bombing or targeting them or their surroundings. Snipers shot at medical personnel and ambulances transporting patients and wounded individuals were obstructed. Later, additional hospitals were surrounded. The Israeli leaders issued orders to cut off water, fuel, electricity, food, medical supplies, and internet access, which had catastrophic consequences on hospitals and healthcare centers, undermining their work and driving them into collapse and complete paralysis, unable to cope with the escalating emergency or meet the basic medical needs of the population.

Because of this war, 20 hospitals went completely out of service, leaving only 16 functioning at three times their capacity, yet incapable of meeting the healthcare demands of the population due to weak operational capacity. This was caused by shortages of medical supplies, water, electricity, and medications, as well as a lack of medical staff. Bed occupancy rates exceeded 350%, while intensive care units were operating at 250% capacity. Over 94 healthcare facilities and more than 83 ambulances were destroyed because of the war launched against the healthcare system. Services stopped at more than 59 primary care centers, leaving only 13 operational in south and some central regions. Medical and healthcare personnel were subjected to over 300 attacks, resulting in the deaths of 377 healthcare workers and injuring around 764 others. Moreover, around 100 medical workers were arrested [28].

[28] Khammash, Umayyeh. Policy Paper: The Health Sector in Gaza during the Current War: The Real Situation on the Ground and Its True Import. See: : <https://shorturl.at/r7p5c>

Due to the lack of prenatal care for pregnant women, tens of women have lost their foetuses, with a significant rise in miscarriage rates and a three- to four times increase in premature births. Numerous cases of placental abruption have been recorded—an emergency condition that, without immediate medical intervention, can lead to death. Due to the unavailability of blood and its components, doctors resorted to performing hysterectomies as a treatment[29].

Women have been forced to undergo caesarian births and emergency operations without any sterilization, anesthesia or painkillers. The medical teams had to evacuate the mothers from hospitals in three hours after caesarian births, leading other women to deliver in the areas of refuge, and in unsafe and unhygienic places, which increased the risks to their and their newborns' health. According to UNICEF, around 20,000 children were born since the outbreak of the war as of the time of writing this report, including tens of preterm infants—babies born three weeks prior to the expected birth date with weights and sizes below normal. These premature births often make infants vulnerable to medical complications requiring specialized care. Maternal mortality is expected to rise due to the inability to access adequate care. Furthermore, the psychological effects of the hostilities have immediate—and sometimes fatal—consequences for reproductive health, including increased rates of miscarriage, stillbirth, and stress-induced premature births[30].

Deliberate infliction of living conditions that lead to reproductive genocide

Reviewing the Literatures shows that the elements of reproductive genocide outlined in Article 2 of the Genocide Convention are met: “Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group, and deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part. The occupation did not spare women from killings and subjected them to conditions “aimed at their destruction and imposed measures intended to prevent births within the group”.

[29] IBID.

[30] UNICEF website: Children in Gaza need life-saving support: there are no safe places for children with the aggravation of the humanitarian crisis. (يحتاج أطفال غزة إلى الدعم المنقذ للحياة: لا يوجد مكان آمن للأطفال مع تفاقم الأزمة الإنسانية). Last update on 3/9/2024. See: <https://shorturl.at/f0tPb>

The 1949 Fourth Geneva Convention stipulates the protection of civilians in general, particularly children, women, and mothers, during armed conflicts, prohibiting their targeting or exposure to harm while ensuring their access to medicine and food (Articles 17 to 27). Chapter Two of the First Additional Protocol to the Convention is dedicated to special measures for protecting children, women, mothers and pregnant mothers during conflict, emphasizing that they must be treated with “special respect”.

Israel deliberately restricted the entry of medicines and treatments related to reproductive health, such as drugs for treating reproductive infections, hormone regulation medications, and treatments for pregnancy complications, including anti-coagulants and drugs that facilitate natural delivery. The blockade extended to banning essential medical equipment, relevant treatments, medical consumables, laboratory tests and ultrasound machines. It imposed severe restrictions on sterilized surgical tools, and other basic sterilization supplies used in childbirth and reproductive surgeries.

The severe shortage of clean water, food, and sanitary supplies has forced women to use unsafe water, resulting in dehydration, intestinal diseases, diarrhoea, bacterial infections, and deteriorating personal hygiene. Consequently, the prevalence of reproductive infections and sexually transmitted diseases has increased[31]. The severe shortage of cleaning and sterilization materials further heightened the risk of communicable diseases and contributed to rising child mortality rates due to malnutrition and diseases related to unsafe water.

Dr. Yaser Sha’aban, obstetrician and gynaecologist, said that the “absence of proper nutrition, reliance on canned food, and the unavailability of vegetables, fruits, eggs, meat, and dairy products, along with the lack of supplements essential for pregnant women, have severely impacted their health. Most pregnant women we treated suffered from anaemia, small abdominal size, and low foetal weight”. Dr. Sha’aban also stressed that, "the living conditions in displacement camps, marked by a shortage of cleaning supplies, lack of safe water, overcrowding, and long waits to use toilets, have led to the spread of infectious diseases and epidemics, including hepatitis. This has had a devastating effect on the health of pregnant women, their foetuses, and newborns”[32].

[31] Interview with Dr. Khalil Dakran, spokesperson of the Ministry of Health in Gaza Strip on 14/10/2024.

[32] Interview with Dr. Yaser Sha’aban, (obstetrician and gynecologist). From a MIFTAH field report on the health rights of sick women in Central Gaza Governorate during the first year of the Israeli Genocidal War, conducted on 17/10/2024 at Al-Awda Hospital at Nusseirat refugee camp.

According to the **United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)**, the severe fuel shortage has disrupted the operation of incubators and other vital medical equipment. UNFPA reports that some emergency births are being carried out in tents without proper medical care. The scarcity of water and limited access to maternal health medications expose pregnant and breastfeeding women to numerous risks. Doctors continue to report an increase in preterm and low-birth-weight newborns, which are common indicators of severe malnutrition exacerbated by stress, fear, and exhaustion.

Approximately 30,000 pregnant women are facing hunger or acute food insecurity (Phase 3 of the **Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC)**). Over 10,000 pregnant women are on the brink of famine (Phase 4 of the IPC), and nearly 7,000 pregnant women are already living in famine (Phase 5 of the IPC). In total, around 155,000 pregnant and breastfeeding women urgently need increased food aid and supplements, according to **UNFPA**[33].

Deliberate targeting of reproductive and sexual healthcare services for girls and women

According to UNFPA, more than 690,000 women and girls of menstruating age live in Gaza Strip, with limited access to menstrual hygiene products. The shortage of these products has forced many women and girls to resort to makeshift alternatives, such as pieces of tent fabric, exposing them to an increased risk of infections and other medical complications. In the early stages of the aggression, a number of women reported taking birth control pills to prevent menstruation. These pills can have harmful side effects, especially in the long term[34]. However, women report that even sexual and reproductive health supplies, including birth control pills, have now become scarce. Yasmin Ahmed, a doctor in the maternity department at Nasser Hospital, said, “Every day, we face numerous cases of fever directly linked to vaginal infections caused by inadequate hygiene and the absence of feminine hygiene products. Sanitary pads are unavailable in pharmacies or anywhere else, and even with the aid we receive, they are still not accessible”[35].

[33] UN Office of the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)- Occupied Palestinian Territory. “Humanitarian Situation Update #191. Gaza Strip”. Published on 15/7/2024. See: <https://www.ochaopt.org/ar/content/191>

[34] UN Women. Scarcity and fear: A gender analysis of the impact of the war in Gaza on vital services essential to women’s and girls’ health, safety, and dignity. Published in April 2024. See: <https://shorturl.at/UDIZT>

[35] GISHA-Legal Center for Freedom of Movement. The women’s health crisis in Gaza: The impact of Israel’s war on Gaza on Palestinian women’s health and well-being. Published on 6/2/2024. See: <https://shorturl.at/v4925>

Women using intrauterine devices (IUDs) are experiencing bleeding and infections due to the unsanitary conditions in the camps. Currently, there are no options for IUD removal in Gaza, posing long-term risks to women's reproductive health, including severe bleeding. On 25 October 2023, the United Nations stated that fuel in Gaza could run out within hours and that hospitals in Gaza Strip are only handling emergency cases, preventing many women and girls from seeking sexual and reproductive healthcare if Israel continues to block the entry of humanitarian aid, including safe delivery kits, into Gaza[36]. Healthcare worker Wafa Abu Hashish said, “Shelters suffer from a lack of water, inadequate medical care, and an increase in diseases such as influenza, chest infections, skin ulcers, scabies, lice and diarrheal diseases. Girls and women are reporting menstrual disorders. There are also cases of sexually transmitted diseases and urinary tract infections. Women using birth control pills are sharing their supplies with others”[37].

Deliberate deprivation of women from their rights to prenatal healthcare

At the beginning of the offensive, PCBS confirmed that there were around 60,000 pregnant women in Gaza Strip, with a daily average of 180 births. PCBS estimated that around 15% of these women would suffer from pregnancy and childbirth complications that are difficult to treat due to the lack of medical care. This means there is a high probability of an increase in births under unsafe health conditions, constituting a serious violation of women's rights and endangering their lives and the lives of their newborns. Women in Gaza are facing tragic conditions during pregnancy and childbirth, struggling to access health facilities and receive prenatal care due to the shortage of medical services and essential medicines. Ambulances are difficult to operate, and hospitals are suffering from a lack of supplies and fuel, with 85 hospitals and healthcare centers ceasing to provide medical services[38].

[36] IBID.

[37] IBID.

[38] PCBS. PCBS issues a press release highlighting that the children and women of Gaza Strip face an unprecedented humanitarian disaster. Published on 24/10/2023. See: <https://shorturl.at/Tsa52>

According to CARE, the relief organization, and in parallel with the shortage of essential medicines and medical equipment needed for pregnancy support, such as heparin injections due to the blockade, the rate of miscarriages among Gazan women has increased by 300% during the war. This surge is attributed to fear, anxiety, and stress caused by Israeli military attacks, as well as the physical and psychological strain pregnant women endure while fleeing bombings or displacement, which increases the likelihood of miscarriage. There has also been a rise in premature births, putting both the lives of the mother and child at risk, particularly amid the collapse of the healthcare system.[39].

In a relatively recent report prepared in September 2024, UN Women confirmed that the destruction of health facilities and hospitals has significantly hindered pregnant women's access to maternal healthcare services, which put their lives at risk during pregnancy, childbirth, and postpartum. The report revealed that among 155,000 pregnant and new mothers, 15,000 women are on the brink of famine[40].

The Geneva Conventions grant pregnant women special protection. The First Protocol of the Fourth Geneva Convention includes pregnant women under the category of "wounded persons," entitling them to the same "special protection and respect" granted to the wounded and sick under humanitarian law on the wounded and sick. It obligates "the parties to the conflict to endeavor to remove pregnant women to hospitals or to safe areas outside besieged and encircled zones" (Fourth Geneva Convention, Articles 14, 16, 17, 21, and 22).[41] "Whether they are evacuated or not, they must be provided with necessary assistance, and states must permit the free passage of all consignments of essential foodstuffs, clothing and tonics intended for children under fifteen, expectant mothers and maternity cases" (Fourth Geneva Convention, Article 23).

[39] Wattan News Agency. Increase in miscarriages and premature births in Gaza: 60 thousand pregnant women are at risk. Published in Arabic on 19/1/2024. See <https://shorturl.at/C91HT>

[40] UN website. "UN Women: War against Gaza is a war against women. Published in Arabic on 16/4/2024. See <https://shorturl.at/RIHgV>

[41] ICRC. "The Geneva Conventions and their Commentaries". Check the following link: [36] [IBID.](#)

Targeting primary healthcare centers, whether managed by the Palestinian Ministry of Health (MOH) or UNRWA, has put 32 centers out of service[42], depriving more than 50,000 pregnant women of healthcare and maternity services[43]. These numbers are not fixed because of the large-scale evacuation operations carried out by Israeli occupation forces in Gaza governorates. As of February 2024, 46 out of 72 primary healthcare centers in Gaza were non-operational, with the rate increasing to 92% in north Gaza[44].

Three field reports prepared by **MIFTAH** in December 2024 on women's health rights, with a focus on reproductive rights, confirmed that pregnant women in **Central Gaza and southern Gaza City** were unable to access regular healthcare during pregnancy. Additionally, they lacked access to food supplements and vitamins due to significant shortages of these materials.[45].

Deliberate deprivation of women from their rights to reproductive healthcare during childbirth

The concept of reproductive health encompasses safe childbirth, pain management and relief, monitoring and measuring the mother's pulse and blood pressure, continuous monitoring of the fetal heartbeat, responding to emergencies, and preparing to handle critical situations such as severe bleeding. It also involves guiding women toward the most suitable option for their condition (natural birth or cesarean section) based on their health status and the condition of the fetus, as well as providing emotional and psychological support during childbirth to ensure the mother feels comfortable and confident.

[42] Other statistics indicate that since the start of the war against Gaza Strip, more than 59 primary healthcare centers have gone out of service, with only 13 centers providing services in the south and some central areas. Umaiye Khammash. The Health Sector in Gaza during the Current War: The Real Situation on the Ground and Its True Import. 2024. published at: <https://linksshortcut.com/oFHth>

[43] AL-Jazeera.net Ministry of Health in Gaza: Israeli targeted 65% of the health institutions during the genocide year. Published in Arabic on 8/10/2024. See <https://linksshortcut.com/jHmcs>

[44] Martine Najem et al. A Public Health Approach to Rebuilding Health in Gaza – A Contribution from the Public Health Sub-Group to the Amman Conference (7 February 2024). See: <https://linksshortcut.com/vVxkc>

[45] Field report by MIFTAH on the violations of the health rights of sick women in the Central governorate and South Gaza strip during the first year of the Israeli genocidal war (women cancer patients and women in need of reproductive healthcare).

The genocidal war in Gaza had a significant impact on reproductive health during childbirth, leading to increased rates of maternal and neonatal mortality due to the lack of adequate healthcare and medical facilities[46]. In this context, Dr. Said Abu Karesh asserted that, "...given that most hospitals providing maternity services went out of service because they were targeted or located in dangerous combat zones, this has placed immense pressure on the already limited field and private hospitals in the Central Governorate, and on their medical staff in the maternity department. This has resulted in a high number of childbirths with substandard care, leading to complications for both the mothers and the newborns. The wards were overcrowded, cesarean operating rooms were packed with cases, and resources were extremely limited due to the war and siege. At times, we were forced to perform cesarean sections without sterilization and discharge patients earlier than usual. Before the war, cesarean deliveries were monitored for two to three days, or longer in some cases. Moreover, we often had to use bed sheets and towels as substitutes for unavailable medical gauze, which undoubtedly caused health complications for mothers postpartum, including infections and bacterial or fungal infections in the reproductive system. Recently, there has also been a noticeable rise in fetal deformities, which may be linked to the war and the tons of explosives dropped on Gaza Strip..."[47].

Due to the lack of access to essential medical supplies, including medications, doctors are forced to perform unnecessary hysterectomies on mothers to save their lives, rendering them unable to bear more children in the future. Former Minister of Health Dr. Mai Al-Kaileh said, "The only option available for Palestinian women in Gaza who experience postpartum bleeding is to undergo a hysterectomy to save their lives"[48].

[46] Interview with Dr. Yaser Sha'aban in a MIFTAH field report entitled "violations against the health rights of women in the Central Gaza governorate during the first year of the genocidal war. Women cancer patients and reproductive health. Conducted on 17/10/2024 at Al-Awda Hospital in Nusseirat refugee camp.

[47] Interview with Dr. Said Abu Karesh, Obstetrician and Gynecologist, previous source.

[48] Interview with Dr. Mai Al-Kaileh, Minister of Health, at Al-Arabiya channel on 23/12/2023. See: <https://shorturl.at/bKrNr>

Postpartum care consists of providing comprehensive care for both the mother and the newborn to ensure proper recovery and adaptation to this new phase, which is critical for the mother's safety, and to restore her health and ensure having a healthy newborn. Postpartum care includes several aspects, including psychological and emotional care for the mother, promoting breastfeeding, initiating family planning and preparing for future pregnancies, newborn care, and proper maternal nutrition. Quality postpartum care plays a pivotal role in reducing maternal and infant mortality rates and improving the quality of life for mothers and their families.

Children, including newborns, preterm infants, and foetuses, have not received the necessary vaccinations, leading to the spread of polio. This prompted the Palestinian MOH, alongside international organizations, to launch a polio vaccination campaign, with the first round starting on 1/9/2024, in Gaza, aiming to vaccinate 640,000 Palestinian children. The second round commenced on 14/10/2024, targeting around 600,000 children of one day to ten years of age[49].

In December 2024, and in the context of its work in Gaza, Medical Aid for Palestinians (MAP) condemned the forced displacement affecting hospitals and medical staff, which threatened women's lives and deprived them of access to safe childbirth and neonatal care. On 12 December, the Israeli army issued a forced evacuation order in Gaza City, targeting the Patient's Friends Association Hospital, jeopardizing the advanced neonatal care it provides all over north Gaza. The hospital has one of only two remaining neonatal intensive care units in north Gaza after Israeli military attacks forced the closure of a third unit at Kamal Adwan Hospital in October 2024, during which the military also detained its staff[50].

[49] AlJazeera.net. The UN launches a vaccination campaign against polio in Gaza. Published in Arabic on 1/9/2024. See: <https://www.aljazeera.net/news/9/2024>

[50] MAP website. Israel's latest forced displacement order threatens to end advanced neo-natal care in northern Gaza. Published in Arabic on 12/12/2023. See : <https://shorturl.at/tm70Z>

Concerns are not only restricted to childbirth, but include several challenges, such as keeping children alive amid the deprivation of basic necessities like water and food, according to the World Health Organization (WHO). UNICEF warned of an "imminent explosion" in child mortality rates linked to malnutrition in Gaza, noting that mortality rates in the north are "three times higher" than those recorded in the south. A UNICEF spokesperson confirmed that Gaza's children are sharing incubators to survive amid a severe healthcare crisis[51].

On 10 November 2024, Doctors Without Borders (MSF) reported that medical staff evacuated from Al-Nasr Children's Hospital were forced to leave premature newborns in incubators after the Israeli army bombed the hospital. On 29 November, footage from Al-Nasr showed the aftermath of the hospital's evacuation, revealing that five premature babies had died in their incubators. The Euro-Med Human Rights Monitor confirmed the deaths of infants at Al-Nasr Hospital, stating that the Israeli army had informed hospital staff they would evacuate the children, although the army denied any involvement. In a recorded phone call between a government coordinator and a medical official, an Israeli army official confirmed that ambulances would transport patients from Al-Nasr, but hospital officials stated that the ambulances never arrived. The ICERS declared that the Israeli army had destroyed the incubators and denied responsibility for abandoning the infants[52].

The director of the center explained that after the beginning of the genocidal war, operations at the center were suspended. Women visiting the center were informed that work had stopped, and all procedures, including injections and treatments, were cancelled. Around 40 to 50 injection procedures were cancelled. The center housed 4,000 frozen embryos stored in three specialized tanks, each measuring 80 cm in height and 40 cm in diameter, costing \$10,000 per unit. It also contained 1,000 sperm samples extracted from husbands after lengthy courses of treatment and surgeries. These samples were stored until the wives underwent egg retrieval for fertilization under a microscope outside the body. A significant portion of these samples and embryos belonged to individuals who could not conceive naturally, some of whom were older, suffering from cancer, or dealing with chronic illnesses. For them, these samples represented their last chance to have children[53].

[51] Saleh, Lina. "Gaza gives birth to many lives despite death... 20 thousand babies are born in the genocidal war. published in Arabic on 8/3/2024. See: <https://shorturl.at/yi7QG>

[52] UNICEF website. Dying in waiting: Gaza's children face lethal delays in medical evacuation. Published on 20/10/2023. See: <https://shorturl.at/rQErz>

[53] ALJazeera.net One Israeli strike eliminates 5 thousand Palestinian in-vitro embryos in Gaza. Published in Arabic on 17/4/2024. See: <https://rb.gy/aboquv>.

The Israeli strike removed the lids of five liquid nitrogen tanks located in a corner of the embryo unit. As the extremely cold liquid evaporated, the temperature inside the tanks rose, destroying over 4,000 IVF embryos and an additional 1,000 samples of sperm and unfertilized eggs stored at the center. The director said that at least half of the couples who lost their samples in the bombing would no longer have another chance to conceive, as they no longer have the ability to produce viable sperm or eggs for fertilization[54].

This is not the only damage. In Gaza Strip, nine clinics perform artificial insemination procedures, where eggs collected from a woman's ovaries are fertilized with her husband's sperm in a laboratory. Those centers suffered severe damage and will not be able to operate after the war. The genocide has also extended to neonatal units in hospitals, where many premature babies died inside incubators after soldiers stormed the hospitals, forced medical staff to leave, and cut off electricity and oxygen, leaving the infants to face their fate alone. Among the most infamous cases documented in this context are the premature babies at Al-Nasr Hospital in Gaza City. A video filmed during the truce in November 2023, after the withdrawal of the occupation forces from the area, showed their decomposed bodies in incubators and intensive care beds[55].

Erasure of women's self-identity: Targeting Mental Health

The genocidal war has also targeted mental health care components. The only psychiatric hospital in Gaza Strip, located in Gaza City's Al-Nasr neighborhood, was bombed in November 2023, rendering it inoperable, according to WHO, which stated that mental health services are needed in Gaza now more than ever, given the increasing distress caused by the conflict. It called on the international community and its public and health institutions to provide the necessary mental health services to the people of Gaza. Moreover, 75% of mental health institutions have ceased operations. Since specialized clinics, including those for mental and family health, are generally located in hospitals, and 75% of these hospitals went out of service because of the genocidal war, this means that at least 75% of the six mental health clinics that existed have been destroyed or are no longer functional[56].

[54] IBID

[55] AlJazeera.net. Decomposed bodies of babies at a hospital in Gaza shock the world. Published in Arabic on 29 November 2023. See: <https://shorturl.at/YF8YB>

[56] Hammad, Ahlam. Doctors write prescriptions for what is available: Gaza... scarce mental treatments and infinite tragedies. Published in Arabic on 11/11/2024 at NAWA website. See: <https://shorturl.at/B61mt>

Dr. Khalil Shaqfa, Director General of Community Mental Health at MOH, said that the occupation has targeted, systematically and intentionally, the mental health of Gazans to undermine their psychological stability. This was done by blocking the supplies of psychiatric medications, which are now almost entirely depleted. This Israeli policy aims to increase stress, tension, and hostility within the society. MOH data reveals that 40% to 60% of essential medicines are completely unavailable, including psychiatric medications. The list of available essential psychiatric drugs is limited, ranging from 40 to 50 items, while the full list of psychiatric medications includes 150 items.[57].

In addition to banning the entry of medications, Dr. Shaqfa pointed out the systematic targeting of the mental health system in Gaza, as 14 medical staff have been killed, many others injured, and six mental health centers went out of service. These centers had been providing services to hundreds of patients and visitors daily through clinics and pharmacies dispensing medications[58].

Assessing the impact of genocide on women's mental health, as a pillar of reproductive genocide, is an issue that must be addressed. While targeting women's bodies leads to their physical decimation, targeting their mental health erases their self-identity. WHO warned of the aggravating conditions in Gaza due to the ongoing war, saying that the situation is indescribable. It highlighted the long-term psychological effects and consequences on survivors and families. War has a catastrophic impact on the health and well-being of nations, as it destroys communities and families, and often disrupts the development of their socio-economic fabric.

The Director of the Mental Health Unit at MOH, Dr. Samah Jabr, referred to statistics that indicate that women and children constituted a significant portion of the war victims in Gaza, and that women and girls faced immense psychological pressures amid the deteriorating health and mental conditions in Gaza. Since the beginning of the offensive, the only psychiatric hospital in Gaza was bombed, cutting off mental health services for more than 40,000 citizens who were receiving psychological treatment. With the destruction of mental health centers and the shortage of medications, the mental health crisis in Gaza has worsened, especially with the

[57] AlJazeera.net. Psychological patients in Gaza moan silently because of war and siege. Published in Arabic on 8/10/2024.

See:<https://shorturl.at/maqoT>

[58] IBID.

continuous rise in the numbers of people psychologically affected by ongoing events[59].

Regarding the psychological trauma that war inflicts on women, conflicts have detrimental impact and threaten individuals, causing them to lose their psychological balance. They suffer from psychological and cognitive disorders, leading to an abnormal life in both the short and long term due to the deep psychological effects that take a very long time to heal. In general, women bear the responsibility of caring for children and the elderly, in addition to the suffering caused by war. They witness the deaths of their children, husbands, and relatives, the destruction of their homes, and live in constant fear, psychological distress, and a sense of hopelessness, often in conditions lacking basic needs and services. The psychological disorders that women face include trauma, psychological stress, acute stress disorders, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and other mental health conditions such as anxiety, delirium, psychosis, mental, cognitive and emotional disorders, and physical or mental disabilities, or both.

[59] Wattan News Agency. Amid the ongoing occupation's aggression against Gaza, enormous psychological pressures on girls and women. Published in Arabic on 1/10/2024. See: <https://shorturl.at/R5TdN>

Part Three: Findings

The study revealed that the occupation has the intent of annihilating the Palestinian people and eliminating their presence, through continuous targeting, destruction of infrastructure, use of internationally prohibited weapons, forcible displacement and targeting hospitals and healthcare centers. The occupation committed several gross breaches, classified as crimes against humanity and war crimes, such as forcible displacement, starvation, thirst, cutting off water and power supplies, forcible disappearance and sexual assaults:

- As an occupying power, Israel has several obligations towards the Palestinian people under international human rights conventions and international humanitarian law. These obligations include protecting civilians, safeguarding their lives, treating them humanely, refraining from displacing them, and ensuring their safety from threats to their lives.
- The study revealed that Israel, the occupying state, has failed to comply with international conventions in general, and also failed to comply with conventions related to women, such as violation of the common articles of the four Geneva conventions that obligate the combatant parties to protect women and children, not jeopardize their physical and mental safety, and provide healthcare and special supplies for women. Moreover, it has violated the content of UNSCR 1325 on Women, Security and Peace, and CEDAW and its General Recommendation No. 35.
- The study confirmed the occupation's pursuit to target Palestinian women with annihilation, to eliminate their existence, end their reproductive role, erase their self-identity, and their collective identity as a human group with specific attributes, hence committing the crime of reproductive genocide. All the acts and elements of the crime of genocide against women are met, in accordance with the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. Those include the express intent of the occupation to deliberately target women and their reproductive role, to kill women and cause bodily and mental harm, deliberately inflict on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part, and impose measures intended to prevent births within the group.

- The reproductive genocide has caused the martyrdom of more than 12,298 women, the loss of 4,700 missing women and children and the displacement of around 800,000 women from their homes in Gaza Strip, in addition to causing the suffering of around one million girls and women from high levels of severe food insecurity.
- Deliberate targeting of hospitals and healthcare centers, forcibly evacuating the medical staff, cutting off water, fuel, power, food and medical supplies, rendered around 20 hospitals out of service, leading to a lack of opportunities for healthcare to pregnant women, and having to have caesarian childbirth and emergency surgeries without any sterilization, anesthesia or painkillers. The medical team had to check out mothers from hospitals within three hours after caesarian childbirth, which pushed women to have birth in their areas of refuge, and in unsafe and unhygienic places, which increased the risks to their and their newborns' health.
- Deliberate blocking by Israel of the entry of medications and treatments related to reproductive health, preventing the entry of the appropriate medical equipment and treatments, medical consumables, laboratory tests and ultrasound devices, imposing strict restrictions on the entry of sterile surgical tools, and basic sterilization utensils used in delivery or surgeries related to reproductive health, in addition to the severe shortage of food, water and cleaning material. This forced women to use unsafe water, causing intestinal diseases, diarrhea, and bacterial infections, and contributed to the deterioration of personal hygiene. The severe shortage in cleaning and sterilization materials also led to increasing the risk of communicable diseases and child mortality because of malnutrition and diseases communicated through unclean water.
- Israel intentionally bombed the embryo preservation center and the clinics that conduct artificial insemination and cut electricity off the premature infant wards.
- The genocide targeted women's mental health, as an element of reproductive genocide. While targeting women's bodies leads to their extermination, targeting their mental health leads to the erasure of their self-identity. The only psychiatric hospital and the specialized mental health clinics in Gaza Strip were bombed and the entry of psychiatric medicines was banned.

Part Four: Interventions and effectiveness

Promoting the term “reproductive genocide” and seeking to “instill” it as a concept in the work of Palestinian institutions and centers, for use in international advocacy aiming for protection and accountability

Based on the above, we can define reproductive genocide (as a term) as:

“The actions and practices that aim at destroying a group or preventing a specific group of people from reproduction or having children in a forcible or coercive manner, achieved through means that include, inter alia, killing and directly targeting women’s lives, targeting their reproductive and sexual health, preventing their access to healthcare, killing fetuses, and erasing their self-identity”. Reproductive genocide constitutes a part of human rights violations and is classified as an international crime within the framework of genocide if it aims at destroying a specific group in whole or in part.

In this context, a promotion and advocacy plan for the concept of “reproductive genocide” must be developed at local, regional and international levels. Initially, the aim is to develop consensus among women around the concept and use it within the framework of holding Israel accountable as a perpetrator of reproductive genocide, because of its evasion and failure to fulfill its obligations towards the Palestinian women.

Proposed interim and strategic interventions

- Launch international mobilization and advocacy campaigns to halt genocide in all its forms, including reproductive genocide. This can be achieved through coordinated actions among existing frameworks and coalitions, such as the National Coalition for Implementing UNSCR 1325 in Palestine, the coalition of CEDAW organizations, rights-based organizations, and official institutions. The concept of reproductive genocide should be integrated into both national and feminist agendas.
- Active women participation in the efforts to end occupation, and any other efforts that aim at finding a comprehensive and just solution for the Palestinian Israeli conflict.

Human interventions

- Improve access to health services: Apply international pressure on the occupying state to support the healthcare system in Gaza, particularly in reproductive health, including prenatal care, the provision of food supplements, and essential personal hygiene supplies for girls, among other needs.
- Exert pressure on relevant parties to facilitate the entry of essential medications, medical equipment, and medical teams into Gaza.
- Psychosocial support: Collaborate with international and local institutions to provide psychological support to women and families affected by the reproductive genocidal war.
- Lobby for the timely, safe, and uninterrupted delivery of humanitarian aid to all families and individuals within the Gaza Strip, including northern Gaza. Advocate for the opening of border crossings to allow the entry of sufficient fuel and materials necessary to operate and rehabilitate basic infrastructure and trade routes. Ensure safe movement for humanitarian relief workers and the provision of supplies throughout Gaza, while enabling reliable communication networks to coordinate responses.

Political and diplomatic lobbying

- International advocacy: Implement programs and projects aimed at raising international awareness of reproductive genocide and other violations against Palestinians in the Gaza Strip through media campaigns and human rights reports.
- Activate the use of international law: strengthen the cooperation with the friendly states with the Palestinian people to prosecute Israel at ICC, investigating the practices classified as reproductive genocide or war crimes/crimes against humanity, perpetrated against women.
- Urge the international community, particularly powerful states, to end the occupation of Palestinian territory in line with the recent Advisory Opinion issued by the International Court of Justice (ICJ).
- Form international and regional alliances: Lobby with UN agencies to hold Israel accountable for its crimes, isolate it diplomatically, and impose a ban on arms sales to the country.

Legal action

- Document violations: gather evidence and testimonies about all the acts that constitute the elements of reproductive genocide, such as deliberately preventing women from access to healthcare or targeting pregnant women ...etc.
- Press charges at international courts: Encourage human rights organizations to submit legal complaints related to reproductive genocide and its manifestations, to consider those acts of genocide, and demand the establishment of an international independent investigation committee to investigate acts of reproductive genocide.

Enhancing community awareness

- Education about the subject of reproductive genocide at the local Palestinian level: The women and rights-based institutions shall conduct continuing awareness campaigns and capacity building programs that address the issue as a separate topic.
- Cooperation with women institutions in Gaza Strip: strengthening cooperation for supporting and protecting women victims of reproductive genocide in Gaza, providing the best means and allocating all possible resources to alleviate the impact of reproductive genocide on women and children's health, including mental support to women victims of genocide.

Media and advocacy

- Expose the crime of reproductive genocide: through using the local and international media to highlight the human impact of the crime of reproductive genocide, and short and long-term impacts on Palestinian women.
- Cooperate with international human rights organizations: specifically, work with credible international organizations that report on occupation's violations and crimes to document and publish those violations in all international arenas and intensify those efforts with the aim of developing a specialized documentation process for reproductive genocide.

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