

# War on Gaza: twenty-first century's deadliest 100 days?



E/ESCWA/CL6.GCP/2023/Policy brief.3



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## ▶ Key messages.....

More than **one Gazan** person in every **100 has been killed** in just **100 days**, a rate which exceeds that of any other armed conflict in the twenty-first century.

**One Gazan child** in every **85 has been killed** since 7 October 2023.



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An **immediate cessation** of all hostilities is imperative, with a renewed commitment to a **lasting peaceful resolution** of the conflict based on relevant United Nations resolutions and international law.

**Ceasefire now!**

**Humanitarian, development and recovery assistance** cannot return to the pre-7 October 2023 modus operandi, given the scale of the devastation, **16 years of blockade**, and **decades** of occupation.



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## ▶ 1. Introduction

The ongoing war on the Gaza Strip is unfolding as the most severe episode of the 56-year Israeli occupation of Gaza, including the 16-year blockade, and other unlawful Israeli policies and practices.<sup>1</sup> One hundred days into the war, more than 24,100 Palestinians have been killed, with women and children accounting for the majority

of total fatalities.<sup>2</sup> As at 6 February 2024, 27,585 Palestinians have lost their lives and 66,978 have been injured.<sup>3</sup> Although Gaza has suffered previous military escalations,<sup>4</sup> the ongoing war stands out as unprecedented in the scale of death, destruction, and suffering, with repercussions that will echo for generations to come.

## ▶ 2. The deadliest 100 days in the twenty-first century?

Sunday, 14 January 2024 marked the 100th day since the war on Gaza began on 7 October 2023. Over the course of this period, more than 1 per cent of the Gazan population has been killed (about 1,082 deaths per 100,000 people or more than 1 per 100 people), with more than 240 people killed every day.

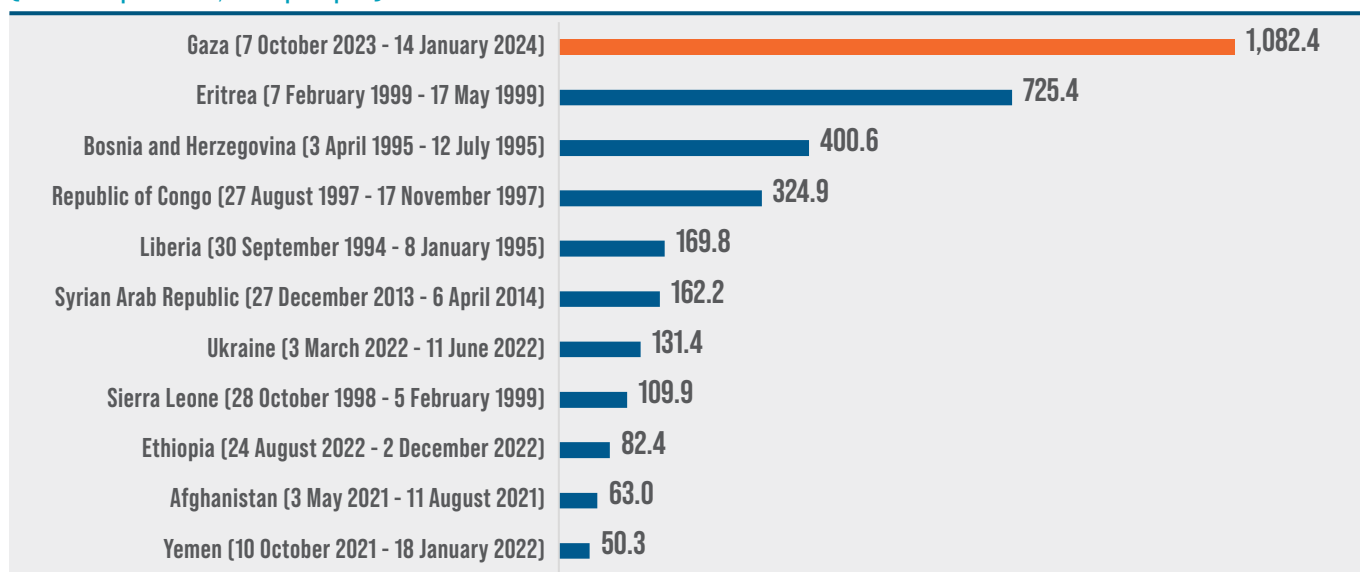
No other armed conflict in the twenty-first century has experienced such a devastating impact on a population in such a short timeframe. To find a 100-day period with greater bloodshed, it is necessary to go back to the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda.

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**No other armed conflict in the twenty-first century has experienced such a devastating impact on a population in such a short timeframe.**

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**Figure 1. Deadliest 100 days in major conflicts since the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda (deaths per 100,000 people)**



**Source:** OCHA, *Hostilities in the Gaza Strip and Israel – reported impact: Day 100*, 15 January 2024; Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP); World Bank, *World Development Indicators*; Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), *Estimated Population in the Palestine Mid-Year by Governorate, 1997–2026*, 2021 (as at 16 January 2024).

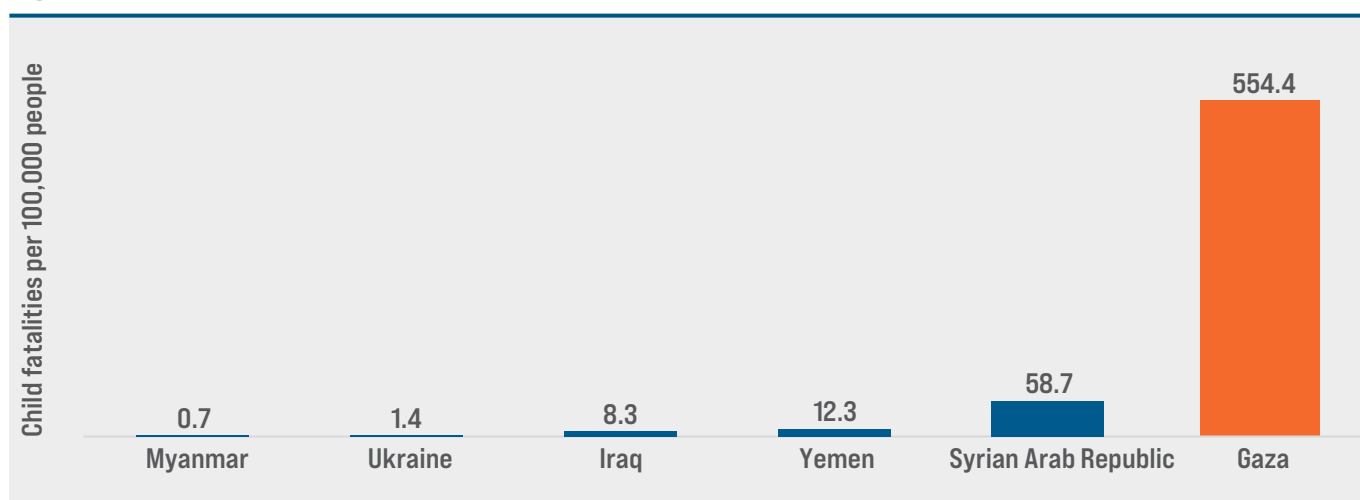
**Note:** Only the deadliest 100 days in every conflict are reported. Data for ongoing conflicts from UCDP are available up to the end of 2022. Conflict months were calculated based on time series availability. Selection criteria for “major conflicts” include intensity (fatalities per national population, >75 per 100,000), magnitude (total fatalities, >10,000), and geographical confinement (not involving more than two countries and excluding global and regional widespread conflicts).

### ▶ 3. A war on children

Among the fatalities are 12,345 children,<sup>5</sup> not including those who are still missing and presumably buried under the rubble. Children account for 47.3 per cent of the population of Gaza. This means that one Gazan child in every 85 has been killed since 7 October 2023, which is the highest rate by a wide margin when compared with other recent major conflicts.<sup>6</sup>

Children have not only been subjected to killing and maiming as a result of the war, but also to incarceration in Israeli prisons.<sup>7</sup> Surviving Gazan children will suffer the impact of the current war for years to come, exacerbated by the impact of displacement, food insecurity, malnutrition, and a lack of access to education and health services and to other basic services.

**Figure 2. Child deaths in recent conflicts**



**Source:** Gaza; Iraq; Myanmar; Syrian Arab Republic; Ukraine; Yemen.

In addition to the 24,100 reported fatalities and over 60,834 reported injured,<sup>8</sup> the war has led to 1.9 million internally displaced Palestinians,<sup>9</sup> and to the destruction or damage of over 60 per cent of Gaza's housing units.<sup>10</sup> It has also damaged 374 education facilities,<sup>11</sup> and put 30 hospitals and 53 health-care centres out of service, with only 13 left to service the needs of the population.<sup>12</sup>

OCHA indicates that the magnitude of the required humanitarian response and of operational constraints

are beyond what has been seen before in the occupied Palestinian territory and in other contexts.<sup>13</sup> The Gazan population will likely be dependent on assistance on a scale not seen since the first wave of Palestinian refugees in 1948. OCHA is already reporting that for Gaza, the 2023 appeal by OCHA has replaced the Humanitarian Response Plan 2023 HRP, given that regular emergency programming cannot continue, and the situation requires new operational frameworks and modalities.<sup>14</sup>

## 4. Perpetual risks

In the twenty-first century, the occupied Palestinian territory has been constantly exposed to high risks of violence. High vulnerability and low resilience, which drive up risks of violence, are the result of

decades of occupation and protracted crises. An analysis of the risk [as defined by a combination of high vulnerability and low resilience]<sup>15</sup> and its main drivers underscores notable increases in conflict

**Table 1. Assessment of vulnerability and resilience for the State of Palestine**

		1998	2022	1998 vs 2022
<b>Peace and security or conflict</b>	Vulnerability	Yellow	Orange	Deteriorated
	Resilience	Orange	Dark Red	Deteriorated
<b>Economy</b>	Vulnerability	Dark Red	Orange	Improved
	Resilience	Light Green	Yellow	Deteriorated
<b>Society</b>	Vulnerability	Dark Red	Orange	Improved
	Resilience	Yellow	Light Green	Improved
<b>Institutions</b>	Vulnerability	Yellow	Orange	Deteriorated
	Resilience	Yellow	Orange	Deteriorated

Low risk  High risk

Source: Based on ESCWA, *Arab Risk Monitor: a conceptual framework*, 2023.



and institutional vulnerability, coupled with a decline in economic and conflict resilience. Public debt has increased sharply in recent years,<sup>16</sup> starting from 20 per cent in 2000 to around 49 per cent in 2022.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, the consequences of the occupation and 16-year blockade have increased vulnerability and decreased resilience in most risk dimensions. For instance, unemployment rates sharply increased from slightly above 10 per cent in 1998 to 26 per cent in 2022,<sup>18</sup> reaching around 45 per cent in Gaza in the same year.<sup>19</sup> Limited improvements in economic vulnerability came amid high levels of international assistance, reaching 10 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) in 2021,<sup>20</sup> in addition to remittance flows at 20 per cent of GDP in 2022.<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, over the past three decades, there has been a dramatic surge in institutional vulnerability, coupled with a notable decline in institutional resilience, mainly owing to the occupation's policies and practices. This dual trend seriously undercuts the ability of Palestinians to respond to and recover

from a series of wars spanning the past 30 years. All these dimensions face significant pressure from the current war.

In this unique and tragic context, the toll on human lives, especially on children, elevates this war to an unprecedented level of devastation. The following three observations underscore the gravity of the situation:

1. The destructive impacts of the ongoing war on the social, economic and institutional fabric of the State of Palestine will severely affect humanitarian, development and recovery efforts for generations of Palestinians to come.
2. These impacts will only intensify the risk of future violence, making the prospect of renewed and deadlier outbreaks more likely in the future.
3. Even in the case of a prolonged ceasefire, a return to the pre-7 October 2023 status quo will create a high risk of future violence.



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## 5. Policy recommendations

The unprecedented impact of the current war on Gaza demands a transformative shift in addressing mounting immediate needs, reevaluating long-term systemic challenges to relief efforts, and confronting the root causes of the conflict, by ending the occupation and upholding international law. In this context, the following policy recommendations are put forward:

### 1. Immediately cease all hostilities and work towards lasting peace

End hostilities and work towards lasting peace for the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, based on all relevant United Nations resolutions and international law.

### 2. Protect civilians and civilian essential-service infrastructure

Until a cessation of hostilities occurs, measures should be taken to ensure the protection of civilian infrastructure, especially those that provide essential services (medical, water and sanitation, nutrition) for the general population.

### 3. Ensure unrestricted access to humanitarian aid for affected populations

Freedom of movement of goods and people are paramount for humanitarian aid and relief operations.

### 4. Immediately rehabilitate health infrastructure

There is a vital need to rehabilitate hospitals and other medical facilities, and provide them with necessary resources, including fuel, medicines, equipment and human resources. This will help save lives and alleviate much of the suffering of the wounded.



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## 5. Strengthen collaboration and coordination for relief and immediate assistance among relevant international and Palestinian actors

Multilateral and international humanitarian aid providers should enhance collaboration and coordination to ensure quick deployment, maximum effect and best optimization of resources for humanitarian aid.



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## 6. Provide psychosocial support to the traumatized population, particularly children

The psychological and emotional toll of the war on the affected population, especially children, requires immediate attention to minimize long-term effects. The scale of trauma, and the fact that the entire population is traumatized or at least affected, may require non-classical interventions. This can be coupled with efforts to address the impact of the war on education and educational attainment.



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# Endnotes

- 1 Israeli policies and practices in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, entail controlling land and natural resources, and restricting people by creating a coercive environment, and by controlling demographics and movements (Source: ESCWA, [Palestine Under Occupation III: Mapping Israel's Policies and Practices and their Economic Repercussions in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, 2023](#)). A/78/127-E/2023/95; A/77/328; A/77/493; A/HRC/52/75; and A/ES-10/273.
- 2 Accessed on 16 January 2024. (Source: United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), [Hostilities in the Gaza Strip and Israel – reported impact: Day 100, 15 January 2024](#)).
- 3 <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/hostilities-gaza-strip-and-israel-reported-impact-day-122>.
- 4 The previous four military escalations in Gaza, which took place in 2008–2009, 2012, 2014 and 2021, resulted in 4,065 casualties of which 987 were children and 469 were women (Source: OCHA, [Data on casualties](#)).
- 5 Accessed on 16 January 2024. (Source: Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), 15 January 2024).
- 6 By 15 January 2024, child deaths in Gaza per 100,000 persons amounted to 554.4. This number is by far the highest even when compared with other major conflicts, such as in the Syrian Arab Republic (58.7), Yemen (12.3), Iraq (8.3), Ukraine (1.4) and Myanmar (0.7).
- 7 [https://www.dci-palestine.org/military\\_detention\\_stats](https://www.dci-palestine.org/military_detention_stats); and <https://www.militarycourtwatch.org/page.php?id=J5V0bQevz8a19020AWwFb-v7lxv2>
- 8 Accessed on 16 January 2024. (Source: United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), [Hostilities in the Gaza Strip and Israel – reported impact: Day 100, 15 January 2024](#)).
- 9 Ibid.
- 10 On 15 January 2024, over 69,000 housing units had been destroyed, and over 290,000 housing units had been partially damaged (Source: United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), [Hostilities in the Gaza Strip and Israel – reported impact: Day 100, 15 January 2024](#)).
- 11 Accessed on 16 January 2024. (Source: United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), [Hostilities in the Gaza Strip and Israel – reported impact: Day 100, 15 January 2024](#)).
- 12 Accessed on 16 January 2024. (Source: United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), [Hostilities in the Gaza Strip and Israel – reported impact: Day 94, 09 January 2024](#)).
- 13 OCHA, [Flash appeal for the Occupied Palestinian Territory 2023](#), 6 November 2023.
- 14 Ibid.
- 15 ESCWA, [Arab Risk Monitor: a conceptual framework, 2023](#).
- 16 Measured as general government gross debt as a share of gross domestic product.
- 17 International Monetary Fund, [General government gross debt](#).
- 18 ILOSTAT.
- 19 PCBS, [About One Fourth of the Participants in the Labour Force in Palestine are Unemployed in the Second Quarter of 2023, 2023](#).
- 20 World Bank, [Net ODA received \(% of GNI\) – West Bank and Gaza](#).
- 21 World Bank, [Personal remittances, received \(% of GDP\) – West Bank and Gaza](#).



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