

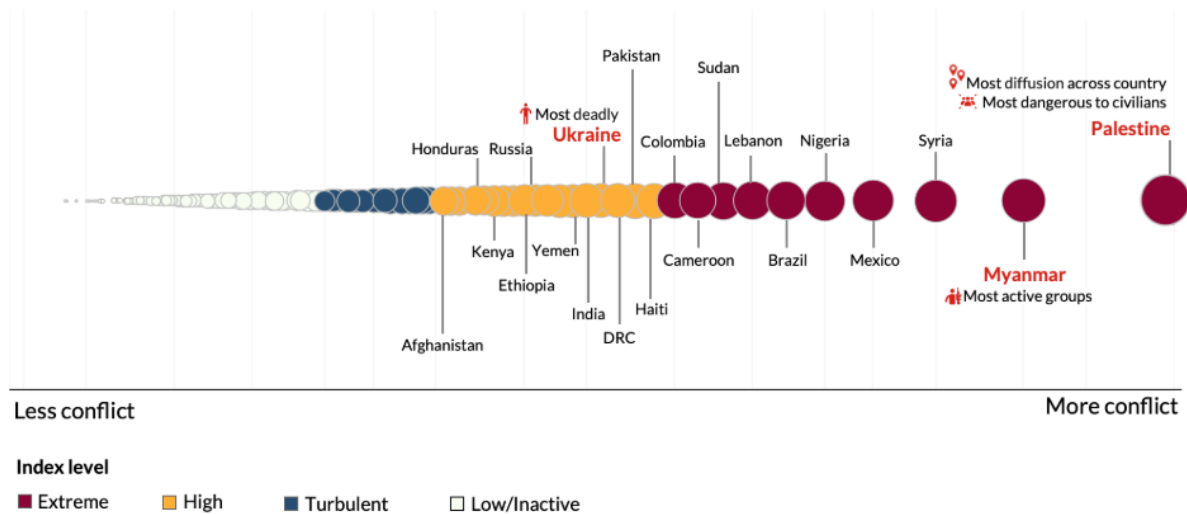
Written evidence submitted by the Socialist Health Association (IPC0068)

1. The [Socialist Health Association \(SHA\)](#) has campaigned for a ceasefire in Gaza since October 2023, highlighting the targeted destruction of the health and humanitarian sectors and the impacts on the civilian population. Key evidence from this campaign work and recommended UK government actions are shared below.

2. Direct civilian fatalities and injuries

The ACLED (Armed Conflict Location & Event Data) Conflict Index¹, rated Palestine as the most dangerous place in the world, as illustrated below, due to the war in Gaza.

Conflict Index: country rankings

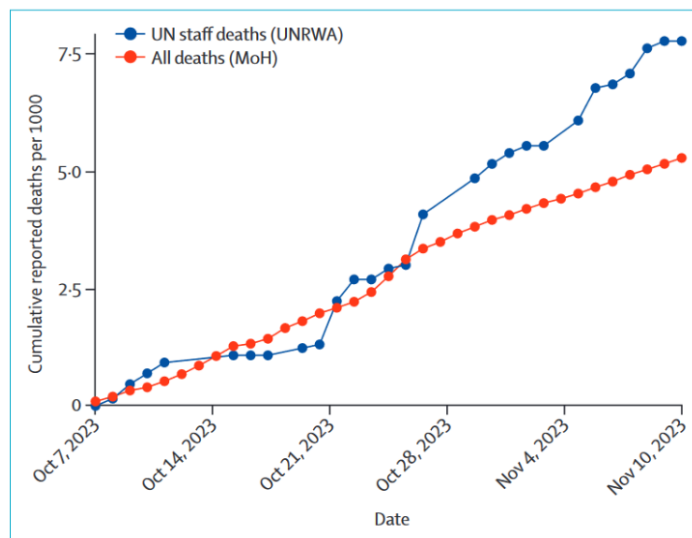


This is concerning as Gaza's 2.1 million population, almost half of whom are children aged under 18 years, remain trapped within its borders with no protection from Israeli bombardment.

The most recent UN-published death toll is 45,514²; however, UN agencies continue to cite fatality breakdowns that the Gazan Ministry of Health (MoH) can fully identify, out of the higher number of casualties they report³. In the extreme and limited current circumstances, these casualty figures are likely underestimating the true direct mortality of the war. Moreover, over 10,000 remain missing³ and this number has not been updated in months. At least 20,000 children are also missing.

Historically, the Gaza MoH mortality reporting has proved accurate, with independent UN analyses finding discrepancy rates of 1.5-3% at most⁴. A letter in The Lancet last year compared Gazan MoH figures with reported staff fatalities from UNWRA. The UNWRA mortality rates were substantially higher than those reported by the MoH (see figure below) – if the Gazan authorities were indeed seeking to inflate mortality data, the reverse could be expected to be true⁴.

UNWRA vs all MoH-reported deaths, Oct-Nov 2023⁴



3. Indirect civilian mortality

Indirect mortality from conflict can be from reproductive, communicable or non-communicable causes, e.g. people cannot access life-saving treatment for **treatable** acute or chronic conditions or when injured in accidents (e.g. burns from open fires may be more common when displaced communities rely on open fires for cooking).

In Gaza, this includes:

- lack of antenatal, maternity, postnatal and neonatal care, causing excessive maternal and neonatal mortality,
- infants dying from vaccine-preventable conditions such as measles, diphtheria and tetanus, due to disruption of the routine immunisation programme,
- cancer patients facing delayed diagnosis and no access to treatment,
- no access to kidney dialysis or treatment for diabetes, hypertension, heart attacks and stroke,
- mass displacement and over-crowding with no access to clean water or adequate sanitation, leading to infectious disease outbreaks, potentially including cholera, and
- lack of access to antibiotic treatment for treatable childhood conditions, such as pneumonia, meningitis and sepsis, as well as for wound infections (the risk for which is very high in this context).

A 2020 study⁵ investigating civilian mortality in 1,118 armed conflicts, across 193 countries, between 1990-2017, found an excess mortality of 29.4 million deaths, of which:

- communicable, maternal, neonatal and nutritional conditions = 21 million
- communicable diseases = 6 million
- injuries (i.e. direct mortality) = 2.4 million

Thus for every direct civilian fatality, there were 11 indirect deaths (Khatib et al. quote indirect mortality as 3-15 times direct mortality⁶). Indirect mortality in Gaza is likely to continue long after a

ceasefire, given the destruction of the health, housing and humanitarian sectors, disruption of water and sanitation systems and food and aid distribution systems.

4. Impact on children

Children are disproportionately injured in war, suffering different injury patterns to adults and higher mortality. Studies have shown that 80% of child patients in conflict zones have penetrating injuries, vs 31% adults⁷. Paediatric mortality from conflict injuries is significantly higher than from accidental trauma¹¹. Long-term impacts of paediatric blast injuries may be multi-system and persist into adulthood. Oxfam reported that the number of women and children killed by Israeli military in Gaza in the first year exceeded any other recent conflict⁸. Gaza has the world's largest cohort of paediatric amputees, with UN officials reporting 10 children per day losing limbs⁹, many without access to anaesthetics or analgesia. Child amputees need ongoing specialised treatment and rehabilitation, particularly as they are still growing.

Food has been deliberately withheld from Gaza. A recent study reported 16.6% of under-5's were malnourished¹⁰. OCHA reports that >96% of women and children are not meeting their minimum nutritional requirements and >60 000 children will need acute malnutrition treatment in 2025². Malnutrition impairs the immune system and, if not promptly addressed, can have lasting effects on a child's growth and neurodevelopment. Malnutrition in pregnant and breastfeeding women has severe consequences for their babies.

Disrupted vaccination programmes have left infants and young children vulnerable to preventable diseases, such as measles and tetanus. The first polio outbreak in 25 years was seen in 2024. Newborns, infants and young children, whose immune systems are still developing and potentially weakened by malnutrition, and who are now living in overcrowded conditions due to displacement, are exposed to many pathogens and less able to access timely and curative treatment due to the destruction of the health system.

Pre-October 2023, >543,000 Gazan children required mental health and psychological support. Currently the entire population faces mental health stressors. 96% of injured, disabled, separated or unaccompanied children believe that death is imminent and 49% expressed a wish to die¹³. Many display symptoms such as aggression, fear, withdrawal, severe anxiety and hopelessness¹³. As explained by one mother, *"Our children have already lived through different wars. They already lacked resilience and now it's very difficult to cope. The children are scared, angry and can't stop crying. Even many adults do the same. This is too much for adults to cope with, let alone children."*¹². At least 17,000 children are unaccompanied, many of them now caring for younger siblings.

5. Destruction of the health system

Israeli forces have fully or partially destroyed 122 health facilities and 146 ambulances, with only 6 field hospitals remaining "fully functional" – although the entire sector lacks access to essential medicines, equipment, fuel and clean water¹⁴. Many facilities designated as functional cannot treat wounded or critically ill patients, yet only 378 of the 14,000 patients requiring medical evacuation have been evacuated².

Over 1000 health workers have been killed, including 23% of Gaza's most experienced physicians¹⁵. Between 07/10/23-20/09/24, the organisation [Healthcare Workers Watch](#) has documented 264 cases of unlawful detention of health workers¹⁵. After release, many have reported being tortured in detention¹⁵. This is supported by B'Tselem's report, "Welcome to Hell", which details the human rights abuses of Palestinian detainees held and released, almost all without charge, since 7/10/23¹⁶.

Most urgently, we join health workers and activists around the world in calling for the **release of Dr Hussam Abu Safiya, Director of Kamal Adwan Hospital**, who was detained and beaten by Israeli forces on 27 December 2024. This followed >80 days of siege of the hospital, during which time it was repeatedly bombed and attacked by tanks and snipers, supplies were completely cut off and water, fuel and oxygen supplies destroyed. During that time, he and Kamal Adwan's nursing director reported repeatedly on the dire conditions they faced as they battled to deliver care. All the surgical staff were detained without charge earlier in the siege, leaving casualties without access to lifesaving surgery. The chilling image below is of Dr Abu Safiya walking alone through the rubble of his hospital towards an Israeli tank.



Kamal Adwan was the last functioning hospital in north Gaza, serving 75,000 people. Israeli forces “evacuated” 12 patients to a destroyed and non-functional facility, while sending most staff, stable patients and their families to “a nearby location” and forcing some to strip and walk south¹⁷.

This follows the [destruction of Al Shifa Medical Complex](#) earlier this year – irreplaceable in terms of its size and services – and along with Kamal Adwan, al-Awda and Indonesian hospitals, came under attack for the second time. Mass graves were found at Nasser and Al-Shifa hospitals, containing bodies of children, patients, elderly people – many stripped, disfigured and/or restrained with zipties¹⁹.

Save the Children reported an [unprecedented rate of attacks on health care in Gaza](#). Israel has also conducted 659 attacks on health care in the West Bank and Jerusalem over the same period². According to AP, “In its yearlong campaign in Gaza, Israel has stood out by carrying out an open campaign on hospitals, besieging and raiding at least 10 of them across the Gaza Strip, some several

times, as well as hitting multiple others in strikes.”¹⁸ Following months of investigation, AP wrote, “Israel has presented little or even no evidence of a significant Hamas presence in those cases.” In any case, hospitals and patients are protected by law (see below). The same AP article reported a **UN finding which stated, “Israel has implemented a concerted policy to destroy the health-care system of Gaza” and described Israeli actions at hospitals as “collective punishment against the Palestinians in Gaza.”**

As a result, Palestinians now fear hospitals, adding further morbidity and mortality risk to the population.

Other examples of Palestinian health workers detained without charge for simply performing their medical duties include:

- [Dr. Ziad Eldalou](#), Internal Medicine physician, Al-Shifa Hospital,
- [Dr Adnan Al-Bursh](#), one of Gaza’s most prominent physicians, died after being beaten and likely raped,
- [Dr. Mohammad Abu Salmiya](#), head of Al-Shifa Hospital, detained for severe months and tried repeatedly without being charged with a crime,
- [Dr Iyad Al-Rantisi](#), Director of Maternity, Kamal Adwan Hospital, died under torture in Israeli detention.

6. Destruction of public health infrastructure

Food security: As well as restrictions on aid and commercial imports, over 2/3 of Gaza’s agricultural land and fishing fleet have been destroyed, along with most of its livestock². Bakeries were destroyed early in the conflict. Lack of fuel and water has also hampered the agricultural industry as well as efforts to cook food or bake bread. Distribution is impeded by air raids and damaged roads.

WaSH: Almost 2/3 of the population lack minimum water requirements for drinking and cooking. Lack of water for washing and inadequate hygiene and sanitation facilities place at least half the population at risk of diseases from rodents and pests, solid and human waste and sewage². Due to overcrowded conditions among displaced communities (Rafah’s population increased by a factor of 5 in as many months), such diseases are likely to spread rapidly and the lack of health services means that the consequent mortality rates will be high²⁰.

Housing: 92% of housing units have been destroyed /damaged, leaving 89% of the population in need of emergency shelter and essential items. The average space per person in shelters is 1.5m², well below the minimum standard of 3.5 m², exacerbating the spread of infections². Locations where displaced Palestinians shelter have also been bombed, including hospitals, churches, mosques, schools and refugee camps.

7. Barriers to humanitarian aid

Prior to 07/10/2024, 500 trucks of aid and fuel / working day (approximately 10,000/month) entered Gaza. Less than half of this has been allowed in since the war started – in recent months, <20%². ½ - 2/3 planned missions are withdrawn, denied or impeded and missions have been attacked by Israeli forces:

- [World Central Kitchen convoy of clearly marked vehicles attacked in a deconflicted zone](#)
- [UNWRA – over 220 staff have been killed and 190 facilities damaged](#)

8. The role of UNWRA

UNWRA's support is integral to ten sectors in Gaza, including health, education, child protection, shelter, food security, psychological support and WaSH. They coordinate 80% of incoming humanitarian aid and local and international NGO's rely on them for operational and logistical assistance.

9. International Humanitarian Law breaches

International humanitarian law (IHL) protects all civilians. The wounded and sick must be respected in all circumstances and attempts upon their lives and violence against their person are strictly prohibited under the rules of the Geneva Convention. Warring parties must do everything in their power to protect the sick and wounded and to ensure that they receive medical treatment with the least possible delay. Medical personnel must always be respected and protected, unless they commit, outside of their humanitarian function, acts that are harmful to the enemy. Ambulances, hospitals and other health facilities must be respected and protected in all circumstances. They must not be attacked and access to them may not be limited²¹.

Under IHL (GCIV Arts. 17, 23, and 59; API Art. 70; APII Art. 18; Rules 55 and 56 of customary IHL study¹), if a civilian population lacks essential supplies, the party concerned has the obligation to ensure that humanitarian assistance is provided, including allowing and facilitating another state or organisation to enter territory it is controlling; it may not forbid or hinder the free passage of these supplies. The civilian population as whole is entitled to humanitarian relief and targeting or starving the population as a form of warfare is prohibited²³.

UN Security Council resolution 2417, also condemns the use of starvation against civilians as a method of warfare and declares any denial of humanitarian access a violation of international law.

As a State Party to the Genocide Convention, the UK government, and local councils, have a legal obligation to take all possible steps to deter, prevent and punish genocidal acts. In Sept 2024, the UN General Assembly overwhelmingly adopted a resolution calling for the implementation of ICJ's July advisory opinion including sanctions against Israel.

The UN Child Rights Committee has expressed its concerns at the impact of the conflict on children: *"The Committee is alarmed about the impact of the armed conflict on the right to life, survival and development of children, including: (a) The killing and injuring of children as a result of the long-term conflict, including the attack of 7 October 2023; (b) The safety and well-being of the children who have been affected by the attack of 7 October 2023, including the 45 children who were abducted and returned and the two who remains as hostages, as well as the tens of thousands of children who have been evacuated from their homes, injured, lost family members and/or have family members still in captivity."*²² Israel is a signatory of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

10. Palantir

Palantir, which was contracted to run the NHS England Federated Data Platform, has been criticised by human rights groups, including Amnesty International, for its role in grave human rights violations. Palantir's executives have been vocal in their support for Israel's actions against the people of Gaza, and [Palantir products are being used by the Israel Defence Forces to target and kill Palestinians](#). SHA believes that Israel is committing war crimes in Gaza, actively aided by Palantir's technology. Through its NHS contract, British taxpayers' money is being spent on illegal and inhumane activity.

11. Funding

WHO alone needs >\$600 million for relief and recovery. UN estimated reconstruction costs at \$30-40 billion. Israel must be held accountable for these damages.

12. Conclusion:

SHA calls for an immediate, unconditional

- end to all arms exports (direct & indirect) to Israel including components;
- urgently divest LGPS funds' investments from complicit companies;
- ceasefire by Israel, as stated by the UN, ICJ, and human rights organisations;
- permanent end to Israel's 17-year illegal siege of Gaza; end all restrictions on food, medicines, water, fuel and humanitarian aid and the release of all hostages including the Palestinians held in administrative detention and especially all detained health workers;
- condemnation of Israel's banning of UNWRA, and to support all resolutions passed by the General Assembly to force Israel to abandon this legislation and to abide by the rulings of the ICJ and humanitarian law.

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