

The Health and Human Rights Violations of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) Due to the 2023 War on Gaza

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Introduction

Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) are defined as people who are displaced and seek refuge within their own country. (1-3) Due to the Gaza war and genocide, 90% of its entire civilian population (2 million as of the end of 2024) have been uprooted, the majority of whom have been internally displaced multiple times. (4)

Health and Human Rights Violations of IDPs

Citizens who are forcibly displaced due to violence abruptly lose their housing along with their work, properties, financial resources, legal documents, and more.(5) Internal displacement has immediate and long-term impacts on IDPs as the lack of permanent housing involves the lack of safety, food security, education, and social welfare.(2) IDPs experience an increased risk of mortality, an increased risk of neonatal and perinatal deaths, particularly in stillbirths, and poor perinatal outcomes.(6)

Inadequate or overcrowded shelters lead to poor sanitary conditions for IDPs. Poor health outcomes also result from nutritional deficiencies and oral problems in IDPs. Additionally, IDPs are at risk of developing mental health issues (2) and emotional scarring (1) from the high prevalence of various types of violent exposure. (6)

Gaza's Health and Human Rights Status Prior to the Gaza Genocide

Root causes of internal displacement include the inter-ethnic, political, and chronic abuse of power. (7) All of these causes describe the 2023–2025 war on Gaza. (8,9) The inequality of power and national wealth also contributes to the violation of Gazans' human rights. (7) Management of such conflicts is recommended to end internally forced displacement. Immediate cessation of the violence and an end to the occupation are crucial. (9)

Health inequalities existed in Gaza and Palestine prior to the current war and genocide. By imposing policies and practices that target Palestinians, Israel is committing the crime of apartheid, which is mutually exclusive with health. (10) Examples of racialized health policies and practices include extrajudicial killing, maiming, excessive use of force, displacement, dispossession, isolation, containment, arbitrary detention, and movement restrictions of Palestinians. Specific to Gaza, the Israeli-Egyptian blockade since 2007 has caused the healthcare system to be vastly overstretched, under-resourced, and inadequate. (11, 12) It would be understandable that Israel's long-term siege would have already created an environment coercing Gazans to leave Gaza even before this war.

Gaza's Health and Human Rights Status during the Gaza Genocide

Targeted bombing of hospitals and schools was officially declared a crime against humanity by United Nations experts.(13) By destroying healthcare facilities and school shelters in this current war, Gazans are left with limited ability to provide adequate health services, leaving the population with less chance of survival.(14)A Gazan conflict surgeon believes that it is a deliberate strategy of the Israeli military to destroy Gaza's healthcare system.(15)Although hospitals and the healthcare infrastructure are protected by international humanitarian law, according to Human Rights Watch, no legal evidence has been provided to justify why Israel would violate the protection of Gaza's hospital and other health resources.

The forced internal displacement of Gazans due to this current war has caused IDPs to experience higher rates of mortality, disability, and mental health disorders. (16)The rate of infections, illnesses, and deterioration of their mental health was remarkably high. (17)Children experienced the bombing of their homes, schools, and shelters in which they were displaced. (16) Not surprisingly, children have high rates of post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, and depression. It is therefore projected that Gazan children may endure trauma, fear, or mental pressures throughout their lives. Such psychological impact also has direct and often fatal consequences for reproductive health, such as "stress-related miscarriages, stillbirths, and premature births". (13)

Gaza's Immediate Need for Humanitarian Aid and the End of the Occupation

International humanitarian law and human rights protect vulnerable individuals, especially women and children. It is imperative for immediate and unimpeded access to humanitarian aid for Gazans, the majority of whom are IDPs. (18)Gazans are in dire need of medical supplies, equipment, and medical human resources. Continued advocacy from the international community for a permanent ceasefire and the end of the occupation is imperative to stopping the Gaza genocide, (8,9) and ending Gaza's humanitarian crisis. (14,16)There is an immediate need to stop the killing and prevent further suffering of Gazans, the majority of whom are IDPs. (18,19) And, in doing so, a healthier, more just global society will result.

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