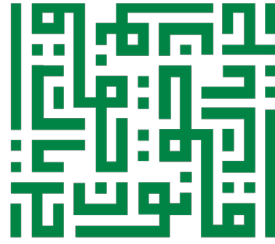


Wiping off the Seed of Palestinians

A Strategy of Genocide in the Israeli War of Aggression

2024 June





INDEPENDENT
COMMISSION
FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

Factsheet

Wiping off the Seed of Palestinians: A Strategy of Genocide in the Israeli War of Aggression

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Introduction

Since 7 October 2024, Israel, the occupying Power (including the government, war cabinet and army), has been committing genocide against the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip. On 26 January 2024, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) found reasonable grounds to believe that Israel committed genocide against Palestinians in Gaza. The ruling was premised on reliable evidence submitted by South Africa in the proceedings it instituted against Israel. In its war against Palestinians in Gaza, Israel has breached its obligations under the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (Genocide Convention).

Hence, the ICJ imposed provisional measures against Israel to prevent the commission of all acts that constitute the crime of genocide. So far, however, it appears that Israel has not implemented those measures, nor have Third Party States fulfilled their obligations under the Genocide Convention. Israel has persistently perpetrated genocide without any real pressure exerted by States Parties to the Convention.¹

In its application, South Africa accused Israel of committing genocide against Palestinians in the Gaza Strip through a range of acts. These include killing members of the group; deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; and imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group (the latter being sometimes termed as “prevention of births”). Subsequently, the ICJ ordered Israel to take all the measures, within the limits of its authority, to prevent the commission of all acts under Article 2 of the Convention, including actions and measures related to the prevention of births. The Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967 stressed that Israel perpetrated three acts of genocide, including imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group.²

In addition to specialised global organisations, press statements and human rights reports have pointed to the actions taken by Israel with the intention of “wiping off the seed of Palestinians” during the war of genocide against the Gaza Strip. Israel has imposed measures intended to prevent births by killing pregnant women and children, destroying healthcare centres, starving the Palestinian population, and turning Gaza into an unliveable place.³

This paper examines Israel’s actions designed to cut off the lineage of Palestinians in the Gaza Strip as a springboard to achieve racist Israeli strategic goals, namely, genocide of the

1 Independent Commission for Human Rights (ICHR), *The Third States' Responsibility in Preventing Genocide in Gaza: A Side Event at the Geneva Annual GHANHRI meeting*, available at: <https://www.ichr.ps/en/category-1/9859.html>, accessed 13 May 2024.

2 UN News, *Rights expert finds 'reasonable grounds' genocide is being committed in Gaza*, available at: <https://news.un.org/en/story/2024/03/1147976>, accessed 11 May 2024.

3 See, e.g., Palestinian Centre for Human Rights, *Israel's measures intended to prevent births within Gaza Strip*, available at: <https://pchgaza.org/en/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/Israels-Measures-intended-to-Prevent-Births-within-Gaza-Strip-1.pdf>, accessed 8 May 2024; UN News, *Interview: 5,500 women in Gaza set to give birth 'in race against death'*, available at: <https://news.un.org/en/interview/2023/11/1143327>, accessed 8 May 2024; World Health Organisation (WHO), *Women and newborns bearing the brunt of the conflict in Gaza, UN agencies warn*, available at: <https://www.who.int/news/item/03-11-2023-women-and-newborns-bearing-the-brunt-of-the-conflict-in-gaza-un-agencies-warn>, accessed 8 May 2024; France 24, *Palestinian women in Gaza between the risk of abortion and delivery in humble tents*, available at: <https://t.ly/AgChY>, accessed 8 May 2024 (in Arabic); France 24, *At least two mothers die every hour... Suffering of Palestinian pregnant women during the war in Gaza*, available at: <https://t.ly/0LCV3>, accessed 8 May 2024 (in Arabic); Al Jazeera, *Pregnant women in Gaza... Preterm birth or abortion*, available at: <https://rb.gy/7b6mcj>, accessed 8 May 2024 (in Arabic).

Palestinian people and changing the demographic situation in the Strip Gaza in particular, and across Palestine in general.

The concept of cutting off one's lineage (prevention of births)

Scientifically, prevention of births refers to medical procedures, which a person decides to undergo with the aim of avoiding reproduction on a permanent basis. It is mostly performed for medical reasons. On the other hand, the term might be used in non-medical context to indicate the severe pain caused to another person or group, reaching the point of eliminating the existence of that person or group by depriving them of their life, erasing every trace of their very existence, and interrupting their bloodline, including by killing and eradicating every vestige of their children and family.

Put more mildly, prevention of births may refer to killing a person's children, while at the same time keeping that person alive or preventing them from having children by subjecting them to coercive conditions or procedures that ward off fertilisation and reproduction.

Prevention of births has an adverse psychological impact on most humans. It means a life without children, without a lineage. For some, it reflects the meaning of personal existence. Potentially entailing racist dimensions, it might involve targeting the physical and moral existence of a group, such as in the case of Germany under the Nazi regime in the 1930s. Then, hundreds of thousands of Germans, who had been classified as having genetic disorders, were subjected to large-scale castration and forced sterilisation. Employing doctors and hospitals to perform them, these procedures were performed under the law and court rulings.⁴

Prevention of births falls within the acts constituting genocide if committed with the intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such. As provided for by the Genocide Convention, this practice involves "imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group."

Additionally, prevention of births can take place by committing other acts that constitute genocide, such as by killing members of the group, including children.

Forms and patterns of prevention of births committed by Israel against Palestinians in the Gaza Strip

I. Wiping families out from civil records

This brutal act is one of the most prominent forms of what we might call "wiping off the seed of people." Israel deliberately targets entire families with the intention of eliminating them, including fathers, mothers, grandfathers, grandmothers, husbands, wives, brothers, sisters, together with their sons and daughters. In this war, due to displacement and Israeli threats, families seek shelter in relatives' homes, located in less dangerous areas or are not under immediate threat. Without prior warning, however, the Israeli occupying forces (IOF) target

⁴ DW News, *Nazi Racism: Forced sterilisation and euthanasia*, available at: <https://t.ly/ZX3dt>, accessed 12 May 2024.

these homes by highly destructive missiles and projectiles, pulling them down on top of both residents and guests, including displaced relatives. As a result, extended families are eliminated and wiped off civil records, literally cutting off the lineage of targeted families. Family extermination is compounded by urbanisation and residential communities across the Gaza Strip. Of note, the concept of family is not limited to nuclear, but also involves extended, families. Over many generations, families live in a single residential quarter or several adjacent buildings. The targeting of these buildings or quarters with highly destructive bombs simply means “wiping out a family across generations.”

Israel has implemented this pattern of bombardments throughout the Gaza Strip. The foremost examples are the massacres the IOF committed in the Jabalya refugee camp on 31 October⁵ and 22 November 2023. In both massacres, Israeli warplanes dropped heavy bombs on residential quarters, resulting in the killing of 52 members of a single family.⁶

Extermination of families is often driven by Israel’s reprisal and collective punishment. For instance, if a member of the targeted family is wanted by Israel, the IOF bomb and destroy his or his family’s house, while residents are inside and even if the wanted individual is not present at the time of targeting. This was the case with many families of political officials of Palestinian factions outside the Gaza Strip. Staying inside Gaza, the families of these officials were targeted, including women, children, and older persons.⁷

Apparently, Israel intentionally targets and kills civilians *en masse* despite the fact that a family or a family member does not have any political or organisational affiliations. This practice is tailored to exert pressure on resistance factions to obtain political concessions (literally implying State terrorism: target civilians to achieve political goals). On the other end, it is part of collective punishment against the Gaza Strip at large (teach all Palestinians a lesson and hold them accountable for the 7 October events).

Israel has a long history of collective punishment against Palestinians and systematic targeting of Palestinian families, particularly during previous wars on Gaza. Commenting on Israel’s war on Gaza in May 2021, Amnesty International stated that “[t]here is a horrific pattern emerging of Israel launching air strikes in Gaza targeting residential buildings and family homes.” In the context of the May 2021 war, *Haaretz* also reported that Israel’s targeting of families was done with official backing and decisions from military commanders; it is not simply an error. In its report, *Haaretz* pointed out to the large-scale targeting of families during the 2014 war.⁸

In this war, albeit much more than ever before, the number of families that Israel has wiped out from civil records and interrupted their bloodline in Gaza is not yet clear. Released on 16 June 2024, an *Associated Press* investigation reported that Israel killed entire Palestinian families at

5 Al Jazeera, *Hundreds martyred and wounded in the Jabalya massacre and Hamas refute allegations of the occupying authorities*, available at: <https://t.ly/BmtR5>, accessed 26 June 2024 (in Arabic).

6 Roya TV, *From the grandfather to grandchildren... Qaddoura family wiped out en masse in the Jabalya refugee camp*, available at: <https://roya.tv/articles/9222>, accessed 26 June 2024 (in Arabic).

7 On two occasions, Israel targeted the family members of Ismail Haniyeh, Chair of Hamas Political Office on 9 and 24 April respectively. These resulted in the killing of dozens of Haniyeh’s relatives, including a number of his sons, grandchildren, sister, and brothers. Haniyeh said that Israel killed almost 60 members of his family. See Asharq Al-Awsat, *10 members of Ismail Haniyeh’s family killed in an Israeli raid on Gaza*, <https://t.ly/C05VT>, accessed 26 June 2024 (in Arabic).

8 ICHR, *Fact sheet on the extermination of families during the Israeli war of aggression against the Gaza Strip*, May 2021, available at: <https://rb.gy/lnd98v>, accessed 10 May 2024 (in Arabic).

an unprecedented scale. It identified that Palestinian families were wiped out *en masse*, sometimes four generations from the same bloodline, in bombings between October and December 2023.⁹

As of 22 June 2024, Israel killed 37,551 Palestinians. These include 15,821 children and 10,475 women, representing 75 percent of the overall number of victims. While more than 85,523 Palestinians were injured, over 10,000 have been missing.

II. Targeting pregnant women by killing, abortion, preterm birth, and starvation

A major pattern of Israel's goal of wiping off the seed of Palestinians in the Gaza Strip involves killing women, including pregnant women, inflicting conditions that prevent healthy pregnancy and childbirth, and putting at risk the lives of women and newborns in deliveries amid the breakdown of the health system. At the same time, this practice comprises an element of the crime of genocide, which Israel is accused of, namely, imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group.

From the beginning of the war until 22 June 2024, Israel killed 10,575 Palestinian women in the Gaza Strip.

There are no official statistical data on the number of Palestinian pregnant women, who were killed in Israeli strikes. However, observations and reports indicate that the IOF killed many pregnant women together with their unborn babies.

On the eve of the International Women's Day on 8 March 2024, based on health data, the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), stated that there were about 60,000 pregnant women in the Gaza Strip, with 180 daily births. Likely, some 15 percent of these women suffered from pregnancy and childbirth complications, which were difficult to treat due to the lack of medical care.¹⁰

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), during the war, 20,000 live births were delivered as of 19 January 2024 (figures of births are not available after this date).¹¹

The war has resulted in an increase in abortions among Palestinian pregnant women across the Gaza Strip. Due to the blockade, medications and medical equipment needed to sustain pregnancy have also been out of stock, such as Heparin injections.

According to CARE International, during the war, abortions among Gazan women rose by 300 percent due to fear, anxiety, and stress caused by Israeli military attacks. In addition, pregnant women make strenuous physical and mental efforts to escape bombardment or displacement, increasing the likelihood of abortion.

9 Associated Press, *The war in Gaza has wiped out entire Palestinian families: AP documents 60 who lost dozens or more*, <https://apnews.com/article/gaza-palestinians-families-israel-war-deaths-a9f8befe402c17f1f78903cae67b7a7d>, accessed 26 June 2024.

10 PCBS, *H.E. Dr. Awad highlights the status of the Palestinian Woman on the Eve of the International Women's Day on 08/03/2024*, available at: <https://www.pcbs.gov.ps/post.aspx?lang=en&ItemID=4706>, accessed 8 May 2024.

11 UN News, *Gaza crisis: Babies being born 'into hell' amid desperate aid shortages*, available at: <https://news.un.org/en/story/2024/01/1145677>, accessed 13 May 2024.

Preterm births were also on an upward trend, threatening the lives of both the mother and the child as the health system is at a breaking point.¹²

No statistical data are available on the number of newborn babies who died of complications of preterm births in the context of the war, nor on the number of women who lost their lives because of premature births or developed complications that resulted in the loss of the function of reproduction. Numbers are large, nevertheless. It is believed that the scale of the disaster will be more evident when ceasefire is declared and medical teams and relief organisations are able to operate effectively.

Due to the lack of access to needed medical supplies, including medicines, doctors are forced to perform unnecessary hysterectomy on mothers in order to save their lives. As a result, these women are incapable of giving more births in the future.

Dr. Mai al-Kaila, former Minister of Health, stated that the “only available option for Palestinian women who experience postpartum haemorrhage in Gaza is to undergo hysterectomy in order to save their lives.”¹³

In view of the catastrophic health conditions in Gaza, including shortage of food, medicines, potable water, sanitation and hygiene as well as overcrowded displacement sites and shelters, pregnant women, mothers and newborn babies are at increasingly heightened health risks, threatening both their lives and the continuity of their family line. Food shortages have resulted in malnutrition and negatively affected lactating mothers, who are in dire need for food. Also due to the blockade, breast milk substitutes are no longer available to sustain newborn babies.

The goal of this myriad of deliberate actions can only be understood in the context of wiping off the progeny of Palestinians. For Israel, the consequences of these measures are maintained with the ultimate aim of committing genocide and altering the demographic composition of Palestinians. Furthermore, the general conditions imposed on the Gaza Strip make it an uninhabitable place. Compounded by poverty and lack of hope for a better future, 85 percent of the Gaza population have been displaced and deprived of privacy and minimum basic living standards, drastically reducing marriages. This will result in a significant decline in expected live births in the years to come. Of note, 57,877 live births were registered in 2022.¹⁴

III. Bombing an in-vitro fertilisation centre (foeticide)

In December 2023, the IOF bombed the Al-Basma Medical Centre, one of the largest in-vitro fertilisation centres in the Gaza Strip. This facility used to provide the last hope for hundreds of Palestinian spouses, who experienced fertility issues. The Israeli strike removed the covers on five liquid nitrogen tanks, which had been stored in a corner of the foetal unit. As the

12 MADA News, *Increasing abortions and preterm births in Gaza: 60,000 pregnant women are at risk*, available at: <https://madanews.ps/68958/>, accessed 13 May 2024 (in Arabic).

13 Mai al-Kaila, former Minister of Health, Interview with Al Arabiya TV Channel, available at: <https://www.instagram.com/reel/C1W2QFCvmM8/?igsh=Ynk1NjRzdndnaHM5>, accessed 12 May 2024 (in Arabic).

14 PCBS, *Number of registered live births in Palestine by region, governorate and sex, 2022*, available at: https://www.pcbs.gov.ps/statisticsIndicatorsTables.aspx?lang=en&table_id=2259, accessed 12 May 2024.

extremely cold liquid evaporated, temperature increased inside the tanks, destroying more than 4,000 embryos in in-vitro fertilisation and 1,000 samples of sperms and unfertilised eggs, which were all stored in the centre.

The director of the centre said that at least half of the spouses who lost their samples would not have another chance to have children because they are no longer able to produce sperms or fertilisable eggs.¹⁵

In Gaza, birth and reproduction are vital. The fertility rate is high, registering 3.38 per woman in comparison to 1.63 in a country such as Britain.¹⁶

In spite of poverty, hardship and high cost of birth in Gaza, spouses with reproduction problems resort to artificial insemination. For that dream, they might sell their home appliances and precious belongings. This provides a picture of what wiping off the seed of people means for Gazans.

IV. War on children

“We have said this is a war on children. But these truths do not seem to be getting through.” With those words, the Deputy Chief of UNICEF, Ted Chaiban, described Israel’s war on Palestinians in the Gaza Strip in a statement made on 18 January 2024 following a three-day visit to Gaza.¹⁷

Since the beginning of the war until 22 June 2024, Israel killed 15,821 male and female children below 18 years of age, including children born and killed during the war.

Save the Children International documented that more than 21,000 Palestinian children have been estimated to be lost, disappeared, detained, or buried under the rubble or in mass graves (This is in addition to 15,821 dead children).

According to Save the Children International, at least 17,000 children are believed to be unaccompanied and separated and approximately 4,000 children are likely missing under the rubble, with an unknown number also in mass graves. Others have been forcibly disappeared, including an unknown number detained and forcibly transferred out of Gaza, their whereabouts unknown to their families.¹⁸

In this war, children are not only killed by bombs and missiles fired by Israeli warplanes. Many premature babies have also died in incubators after hospitals were raided by the IOF. Having

15 Al Jazeera, *A single Israeli strike exterminates 5,000 embryos in in-vitro fertilisation in Gaza*, available at: <https://rb.gy/2pmaxv>, accessed 13 May 2024 (in Arabic); SWI, *Exclusive: Thousands of embryos in a tube baby centre in Gaza killed in an Israeli strike*, available at: <https://rb.gy/lpeuri>, accessed 13 May 2024 (in Arabic).

16 Ibid.

17 UN, *War on children continues, warns UNICEF deputy chief*, available at: <https://palestine.un.org/en/258163-war-children-continues-warns-unicef-deputy-chief>, accessed 26 June 2024.

18 Save the Children International, *Gaza’s missing children over 20,000 children estimated to be lost disappeared detained buried under the rubble or in mass graves*, available at: <https://www.savethechildren.net/news/gazas-missing-children-over-20000-children-estimated-be-lost-disappeared-detained-buried-under#:~:text=%5B1%5D%20Save%20the%20Children%20estimates,in%20Gaza%2C%20or%20over%2020%2C000>, accessed 26 June 2024.

forced medical staff out, Israeli troops cut off electricity and oxygen supplies to these hospitals, leaving babies to their fate.

Foremost among documented cases were premature babies at the Al-Nasr Children's Hospital in the Gaza city. Captured during the truce of November 2023 after the IOF withdrew from the hospital, video footage showed decomposed corpses of these babies in incubators and on intensive care beds.¹⁹ Furthermore, children die of hunger and consequent malnutrition. According to UNICEF, as of 15 March 2024, at least 23 children died from malnutrition and dehydration.²⁰ Driven by the Israeli blockade, short or unavailable childhood vaccines puts at serious risk children's health and lives.

According to the Government Media Office, 3,500 children are threatened by death as a result of malnutrition and lack of food supplements and vaccines, which are not allowed into the Gaza Strip.²¹

Both figuratively and realistically, children have long been associated with progeny. Deprivation of birth and killing of children imply cutting off the lineage of people. This seems to be a stand-alone goal of Israel in this war. Israel has deliberately targeted civilians, including women and children. In addition to committing genocide, Israel aims at punishing and deterring the Gaza population and others. For Israel, there are no red lines when it comes to the extermination of Palestinians in the Gaza Strip.

Recommendations

The occupying Power continues to commit genocide against Palestinians in the Gaza Strip. Along this vein, Israel kills members of the Palestinian group, including children and women, imposes measures that prevent births within this group, and reduces the number of live births, literally interrupting the bloodline of people and altering the demographic composition in Gaza for racist colonial purposes. Genocide must be brought to an end immediately, protection provided to civilians, and Israel held to account. Against this backdrop, the ICHR recommends that:

- States Parties to the Genocide Convention bear their legal responsibilities for obliging Israel to put to effect the ICJ ruling, dated 26 January 2024, providing for imposing provisional measures against Israel to prevent genocide in the Gaza Strip, including acts involving the wiping off of the seed of Palestinians.
- The international community, governments and international organisations, particularly the United Nations, exert pressure and oblige Israel to implement the UN Security Council Resolution 2728 on ceasefire and Resolution 2720 on the expansion of humanitarian access to Gaza.
- The Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court immediately open criminal investigations with members of the Israeli war cabinet and army commanders,

19 Al Jazeera, *Decomposed corpses of premature babies at a Gaza hospital shock the world*, available at: <https://rb.gy/qime5w>, accessed 13 May 2024 (in Arabic).

20 UNICEF, *Acute malnutrition has doubled in one month in the north of Gaza strip*, available at: <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/acute-malnutrition-has-doubled-one-month-north-gaza-strip-unicef>, accessed 26 June 2024).

21 Al Araby TV, *Children are the victims of Israeli war on Gaza*, available at: <https://rb.gy/vw7mep>, accessed 26 June 2024 (in Arabic).

including chief of staff, on the perpetration of genocidal acts, including by imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group.