Oxfam report shows Gaza daily deaths exceed all other major conflicts in 21st century

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London, January 13 (RHC)-- The killing of civilians in Gaza is at a scale unprecedented in recent history, monitoring groups have said, as Israel continues to pound the besieged coastal enclave more than three months into the war.

Britain-based charity Oxfam said on Thursday that the daily death toll of Palestinians in Israel's war on Gaza surpasses that of any other major conflict in the 21st century, while survivors remain at high risk due

to hunger, diseases and cold, as well as ongoing Israeli bombardments.

"Israel's military is killing Palestinians at an average rate of 250 people a day, which massively exceeds the daily death toll of any other major conflict of recent years," Oxfam said in a statement.   For comparison, the charity provided a list of average deaths per day in other conflicts since the turn of the century: 96.5 in Syria, 51.6 in Sudan, 50.8 in Iraq, 43.9 in Ukraine, 23.8 in Afghanistan, and 15.8 in Yemen.

Oxfam said the crisis is further compounded by Israel's restrictions on the entry of aid into Gaza, where only 10 percent of weekly food aid that is needed gets in. This poses a serious risk of starvation for those who survive the relentless bombardment, it said.

Also on Thursday, United States-based rights group Human Rights Watch (HRW) released its World Report 2024, which said civilians in Gaza have been "targeted, attacked, abused, and killed over the past year at a scale unprecedented in the recent history of Israel and Palestine."

At least 23,469 Palestinians have been killed and 59,604 injured in Israeli strikes on Gaza since October 7, according to Gaza's Ministry of Health.   In the most recent 24-hour reporting period, Israeli forces carried out 10 mass killings in the Gaza Strip, causing 112 deaths and 194 injuries, the ministry added. About 7,000 people remain missing under the rubble and are presumed dead.

"The heinous crimes carried out by Israeli forces and Palestinian armed groups since October 7 are the abhorrent legacy of decades-long impunity for unlawful attacks and Israel's systematic repression of Palestinians," said Omar Shakir, Israel and Palestine director at HRW.

"How many more civilians must suffer or be killed as a result of war crimes before countries supplying weapons pull the plug and otherwise take action to end these atrocities?" he asked.

This comes as South Africa on Thursday presented its case against Israel at the International Court of Justice in The Hague, accusing the country of committing "genocide" against Palestinians in Gaza, a charge that Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu rejected as "hypocrisy and lies".

In its report, HRW noted that Israel's war on Gaza has included "acts of collective punishment that amount to war crimes and include the use of starvation as a method of warfare", including cutting off essential services such as water and electricity and blocking the entry of most critical humanitarian aid.

Meanwhile, in the occupied West Bank, HRW said during the first eight months of 2023, incidents of settler violence against Palestinians and their property reached the highest daily average since the United Nations started recording this data in 2006. At least 3,291 Palestinians were held in administrative detention without charge or trial, according to Israel Prison Service figures.

"Israeli authorities' repression of Palestinians, undertaken as part of a policy to maintain the domination of Jewish Israelis over Palestinians, amount to the crimes against humanity of apartheid and persecution," HRW said.

Experts in mapping damage during wartime have also found that the war in Gaza now sits among the deadliest and most destructive in recent history. According to an analysis of Copernicus Sentinel-1 satellite data by the CUNY Graduate Center and Oregon State University, the war has killed more civilians than the US-led coalition did in its three-year campaign against ISIL (ISIS).

The offensive has wreaked more destruction than the razing of Syria's Aleppo between 2012 and 2016, Ukraine's Mariupol or, proportionally, the Allied bombing of Germany in World War II, researchers found, according to a report by The Associated Press.

Israel's offensive has likely either damaged or destroyed more than two-thirds of all structures in northern Gaza and a quarter of buildings in the southern area of Khan Younis, according to satellite data collected by the research group.

That includes tens of thousands of homes as well as schools, hospitals, mosques and stores. UN monitors have said that about 70 percent of school buildings across Gaza have been damaged.

"Gaza is now a different colour from space. It's a different texture," said Corey Scher of the CUNY Graduate Center, who has worked to map destruction across several war zones.

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