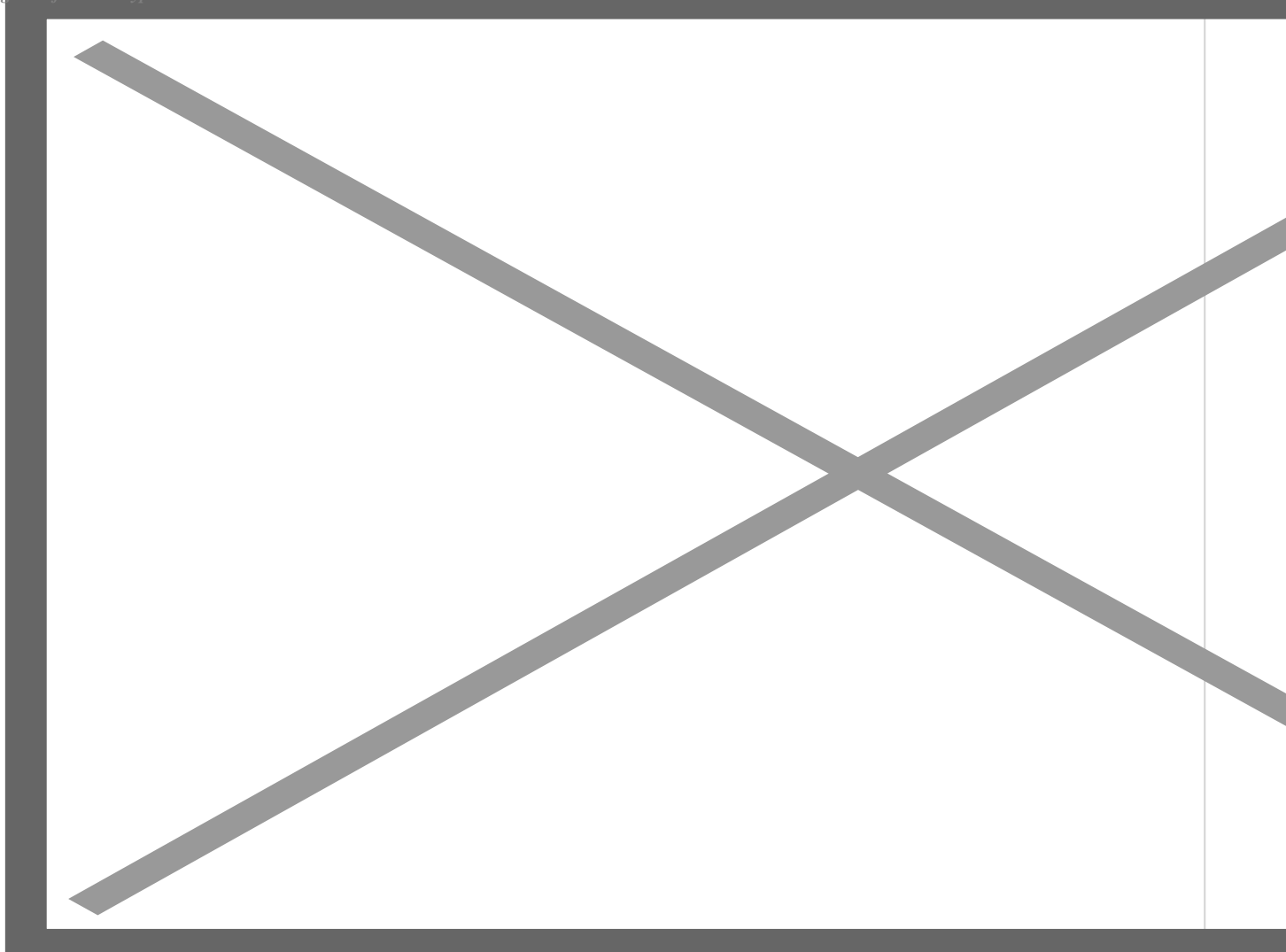# Oxfam warns infectious diseases exploding in Gaza amid healthcare system collapse

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A Palestinian boy, who is diagnosed with gastroenteritis, lies on a bed as he receives treatment in a hospital, amid doctors warning of the spread of diseases and infections among Gazan

children in Rafah, in the southern Gaza Strip.   (File photo by Reuters)

Geneva, February 18 (RHC)-- The global anti-poverty charity Oxfam has reported an outburst of waterborne and infectious diseases in the Gaza Strip amid the lack of safe water and untreated sewage overflowing in streets following the Israeli military's genocidal war on the besieged coastal territory.

It cited a study by the World Health Organization, which discovered that 88 percent of environmental samples surveyed across Gaza were found contaminated with polio, "signaling an imminent risk of outbreak."

Oxfam noted that infectious diseases, including acute watery diarrhea and respiratory infections – now the primary causes of death, are also soaring, with 46,000 cases, mostly children, being reported each week.

Chickenpox and skin diseases such as scabies and impetigo are also spreading quickly, particularly among displaced people in northern Gaza, where the population is facing severe water shortages.

"Rebuilding water and sanitation is vital for Gaza to have a path to normalcy after 15 months of horror. The ceasefire must hold and fuel and aid must flow so that Palestinians can rebuild their lives," Clémence Lagouardat, Oxfam's Humanitarian Coordinator in Gaza, said.

This comes as the Ministry of Health in Gaza says hospitals in the coastal sliver are facing "a severe lack of oxygen" that threatens patients' lives as a result of Israel's atrocious military campaign and the ongoing blockade of aid.

The ministry noted that Israeli forces had destroyed 10 central oxygen generating stations during the war.

According to the report, the attacks have impacted major medical facilities, including "al-Shifa Medical Complex, al-Rantisi Hospital, al-Durra Hospital, the Indonesian Hospital, al-Nasr Medical Complex, and the Sheikh Radwan Clinic."

The 10 destroyed stations were essential for supplying oxygen to "critical hospital units such as operating rooms, intensive care units, emergency wards, and neonatal incubators, as well as patients receiving home care."

Backed by the United States and its Western allies, Israel launched the war on Gaza, after Hamas and other Gaza-based Palestinian resistance movements carried out Operation Al-Aqsa Flood against the Israeli regime in response to its decades-long campaign of oppression against Palestinians.

Israel's genocidal war on Gaza has led to the death of at least 48,284 Palestinians, mostly women and children, and injury of 111,709 others since early October 2023.

A ceasefire and prisoner exchange agreement went into effect in Gaza on January 19th, halting -- for now -- Israel's aggressive campaign against the coastal region.

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