

11,500 Children Have Been Killed in Gaza. Horror of This Scale Has No Explanation

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A displaced Palestinian child sheltering in a UNRWA school in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip, Thursday. Credit: Ibraheem Abu Mustafa/Reuters

Two hundred and sixty names of babies whose age was 0; names of babies who didn't get to celebrate their first birthday, nor will they ever celebrate anything else. Here are some of their names: Abdul Jawad Hussu, Abdul Khaleq Baba, Abdul Rahim Awad, Abdul Rauf al-Fara, Murad Abu Saifan, Nabil al-Eidi, Najwa Radwan, Nisreen al-Najar, Oday al-Sultan, Zayd al-Bahbani, Zeyn al-Jarusha, Zayne Shatat. What dreams did their parents have for them? Then there are hundreds of names of one- and two-year old children; toddlers three or four years of age; children who were five, six, seven or eight, up to the youths who were 17 when they died.

Thousands of names, one after the other, out of the 11,500 [children killed by the Israel Defense Forces in Gaza](#) over the last four months. The list flows like credits at the end of a long movie, a mournful tune in the background. The Al-Jazeera network posted the list of names known to it over the weekend, a total of half the 11,500 who were killed, according to Hamas' health ministry. A child killed every 15 minutes, one out of every 100 children in Gaza.

Around them remained the children who witnessed the deaths of their loved ones, the parents who buried their babies, the people who had extricated their bodies from the fire and rubble, thousands of crippled children and tens of thousands forever in shock. According to UN figures, 10,000 children lost both parents in this war, a war in which two mothers die every hour.

No explanation, no justification or excuse could ever cover up this horror. It would be best if Israel's propaganda machine didn't even try to. No stories of " Hamas is responsible for it all," and no excuses pointing to Hamas hiding among civilians. Horror of this scope has no explanation other than the existence of an army and government lacking any boundaries set by law or morality.

Think of these babies, who died in their cribs and their diapers, of the children who tried to run for their lives to no avail. Close your eyes for a moment and imagine the 10,000 tiny bodies lying side by side; open them and see the mass graves, the overcrowded emergency rooms, with ambulances spewing out more and more children who are rushed in, unclear if dead or alive.

It's happening, even now, just over a one-hour drive from Tel Aviv. It's happening without being reported in Israel, without any public debate over the violent rampage Israel has allowed itself to wage in Gaza this time, more than ever before. This is also happening [without anyone in Israel reflecting](#) on what will come of this mass killing, on what Israel might gain from it and what price it will pay for it. Don't bother us, we are killing children.

A girl uses a baby stroller to ferry drinking water in rainy weather at a makeshift tent camp in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip, on Friday. Credit: Mohammed Abed/AFP

The clichés are hackneyed and pathetic: “They started,” “there is no choice,” “what would you have us do?” “The IDF is doing everything it can to avoid the killing of innocent people.” The truth is that Israel doesn’t care, it doesn’t even take any interest. After all, Palestinians don’t love their children, and in any case, they would have only grown up to become terrorists.

In the meantime, Israel is erasing generations in Gaza, and its soldiers are killing children in numbers competing with the cruellest of wars. This will not and cannot be forgotten. How can a people ever forget those who killed its children in such a manner? How can people of conscience around the world remain silent over such mass killing of children? The fact that Israel is not deliberating this issue internally, with no tears or conscience in evidence, only desiring more of this war, until a “final victory” is achieved, does not bind the world. The world sees and is shocked.

The truth is, it’s impossible to remain silent. Even Israel, so absorbed in its grief and its concern for the fate of the hostages; Israel, which itself sustained horrors on October 7, cannot ignore what is happening in Gaza. It takes seven minutes to display the list of thousands of dead children, passing at the same speed as their miserable lives did. By the end, one cannot remain silent; these are seven minutes that leave you choked up, distressed and deeply ashamed.

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P.S.

• Haaretz. Feb 4, 2024 4:17 am IST:
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