

# Thousands of Babies Being Born Into ‘Hell’ in Gaza, Says UNICEF

"Humanity cannot allow this warped version of normal to persist any longer," said a UNICEF official. "Mothers and newborns need a humanitarian cease-fire."

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*With the Israel Defense Forces continuing to block supplies from reaching shelters, refugee camps, and hospitals in Gaza, humanitarian workers are warning that there is ["no end in sight"](#) for the horrors facing an estimated 55,000 pregnant women as well as postpartum parents and newborns.*

Tess Ingram, a communications specialist for the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), [told](#) reporters Friday that nearly 20,000 babies have been born in the three months since Israel began its bombardment of Gaza—an assault that has ostensibly been in response to Hamas' October 7 attack on southern Israel but has disproportionately targeted civilians in the enclave, with women and children making up [70%](#) of the [24,762 people](#) killed so far.

"Becoming a mother should be a time for celebration," Ingram said. "In Gaza, it's another child delivered into hell... Seeing newborn babies suffer, while some mothers bleed to death, should keep us all awake at night."

Only nine of Gaza's 35 hospitals are operational, and *Agence France Presse* [reported](#) that Emirati Hospital in Rafah is now providing care for "the vast majority of pregnant women in Gaza" as more than one million people have been [displaced](#) to the southern city since the war began.

Doctors and nurses at the hospital, who normally treat 30-40 pregnant patients daily, are caring for as many as 400 pregnant people, postpartum mothers, and newborns every day, the humanitarian group CARE [told](#) *HuffPost*. Emirati's only operating room, where two to

three C-sections are normally performed each day, is now being used for nearly 20 C-sections per day.

Overcrowding has forced hospital staff to discharge new mothers within three hours of having a Caesarean section—many of which are being performed without anesthesia or properly sanitized medical equipment, leading to a heightened risk of infection.

“‘Will I survive childbirth? Will my child survive? What will happen to my other children?’ These are very real dangers pregnant women and young mothers in Gaza have faced for the past 100 days, with no end in sight,” Hiba Tibi, acting deputy regional director for the Middle East and North Africa for CARE, [said](#) last week.

After childbirth, mothers and their vulnerable newborns are returning to “inhumane” conditions in makeshift shelters or overcrowded camps, where a lack of food and safe drinking water is placing “approximately 135,000 children under two at risk of severe malnutrition,” Ingram told reporters.

A woman named Fedaa Issa [told](#) the *Middle East Eye* this week about her experience returning to a makeshift tent in Khan Younis immediately after giving birth to her daughter on December 2.

“In the camp, she lacked the sanitation facilities to help her through the first few days and weeks of Aya’s life, and there was no proper sense of privacy,” *MEE* reported. “Issa said that she and other women had no access to sanitary towels and instead risked infection by rewashing pieces of cloth in dirty water.”

Without proper nutrients in her diet, Issa was unable to breastfeed and had to rely on formula to feed her newborn—which her family is struggling to afford.

“Humanity cannot allow this warped version of normal to persist any longer,” said Ingram. “Mothers and newborns need a humanitarian cease-fire.”

Ingram [relayed](#) to reporters the story of a woman she met in Gaza, Mashael, who was pregnant when her home was hit by an airstrike last month.

With her husband trapped under rubble for several days, Mashael realized after the bombing that her baby had stopped moving.

“She says she is sure now, about a month later, that the baby is dead,” Ingram said, but Mashael has not been able to see a doctor to confirm the miscarriage or get treatment. “The situation of pregnant women and newborns in the Gaza Strip is beyond belief, and it demands intensified and immediate actions.”

[According to](#) CARE, healthcare workers have seen a 300% increase in miscarriages since Israel’s assault began.

Humanitarian groups say conditions have worsened in the last month, despite the passage of a [U.N. Security Council resolution](#) demanding increased aid for Gaza.

“Whatever marginal improvement there has been,” Refugees International president Jeremy Konyndyk [told](#) *HuffPost*, “it’s nowhere near the scale that’s required at this

point. Where there are improvements, they're modest and fragile—they could be undone by Israeli military actions or Israeli political decisions.”

The Biden administration, which is helping to fund and arm the IDF and has vehemently defended its assault on Gaza as “self-defense,” has said it is [“pressing”](#) Israel to allow humanitarian aid into Gaza, where an average of just 100 aid trucks have been allowed in per day since October. About 500 trucks carried goods and supplies into the enclave daily before the current Israeli assault.

Despite the United States’ insistence that it is pushing Israeli officials, a State Department document this week [said](#) the IDF is still denying requests to move food and medicine into northern Gaza, where 300,000 people are still living.

Konyndyk, who previously worked in the Obama and Biden administrations, told *HuffPost* that as long as Israel’s bombardment continues, Gaza residents and those struggling to care for them “need the humanitarian equivalent of shock and awe.”

“When the U.S. government is defending their record on this, their basic argument is they’re making some incremental improvements,” said Konyndyk. “That’s like saying, ‘We got three more buckets to fight the forest fire.’ Whatever improvement that reflects, the pace of it is far, far outmatched by the rate of deterioration in the humanitarian situation.”

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*Julia Conley is a staff writer for Common Dreams.*

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