

# Crimes against Palestinian Women and New Born Babies, No Water, No Sanitation, Caesarians without Anesthetics, Cut Up Tents for Period Products

Displaced women and girls in Gaza are unable to manage their menstrual hygiene, while new mothers endure C-sections without anaesthesia

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*Displaced women and girls in [Gaza](#) are resorting to using tent strips as sanitary pads amid severe shortages of menstruation products, while women in labour are undergoing caesarean procedures without anaesthetic.*

With limited access to running water and hygiene products, women and girls living in tent cities in Rafah are using canvas strips and scraps of clothing as a substitute for sanitary pads, risking infection and deadly toxic shock syndrome.

Since the [Israeli](#) onslaught on the Palestinian enclave began on 7 October, the total siege on Gaza has prevented hygiene and period products from entering the Strip.

According to Riham Jafari, advocacy and communications coordinator at ActionAid Palestine, the aid trucks that do enter the strip mostly carry food and medical aid, rather than sanitary products for women.

"Women in Gaza go to many places and walk long distances to search in all the pharmacies for pads, but they can't find them," Jafari told Middle East Eye.

Many women have resorted to [menstruation delaying pills](#) to block their periods. While sanitary products are scarce, pills that delay periods are generally more available as they

are commonly not used.

## A New Form of Suffering

Of the 1.9 million Gazans who have [fled south to Rafah](#), [1 million are estimated](#) to be women and girls. Many are living in makeshift tents and struggle to access clean running water and toilets due to overcrowding.

In a post on Telegram, Palestinian health ministry spokesman Ashraf al-Qudra [said](#) that infrastructure and medical services in Rafah could not cater for the influx of people.

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (Unrwa) estimated that at its shelters in Rafah, there is [only one toilet per 486 people](#).

“We suffer a lot whenever we want to go to the bathroom. We stand in line for a long time and the bathrooms are far away,” Adara\*, a woman who was displaced from her home with her four children told ActionAid.

“This is a new form of suffering experienced by women in Gaza. This situation is extremely difficult for women and adolescent girls, who lack safe, private and dignified places to manage their menstrual hygiene,” Jafari said.

With only one of [three water pipelines in Gaza functioning](#), women are unable to wash themselves.

According to ActionAid, women they have spoken to have gone weeks without showering.

The UN estimated that there are 700,000 women and girls in Gaza experiencing menstrual cycles who cannot access basic hygiene products like pads, toilet paper or even running water and toilets.

## Born ‘Into Hell’

According to [Unicef spokesperson, Tess Ingram](#), babies in Gaza are being “delivered into hell”.

Mothers are undergoing caesarean operations without anaesthetic, and are being discharged just hours after the operation.

With [only one functioning maternity hospital left](#) in the besieged enclave, women in labour are forced to share beds or give birth in their tents or in toilets.

“Two women who were sharing a bed ... maybe an hour after getting a caesarean, they were then moved to a chair to free the bed up to somebody else, and discharged after three hours to go back to their shelter,” Ingram reported following a trip to the El Emirati Maternity Hospital on 12 January.

[According to Unicef](#), 20,000 babies have been born in Gaza since 7 October, with many of these deliveries conducted in dangerous and unhygienic conditions.

After delivery, mothers are forced to nurse their newborns in tents, and are often unable to find clothes and nappies.

[Food shortages](#) have left many new mothers too [malnourished to breastfeed](#), according to ActionAid.

[A report by UN women on 19 January](#) found that women and girls in Gaza are dying at “unprecedented levels” and facing “catastrophic levels of humanitarian need”.

Of the more than 25,000 Palestinians killed since 7 October, [70 percent](#) are estimated to be women and children, with two mothers killed per hour since the beginning of the crisis.

*\*Names have been changed on request*

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*Featured image: Airport workers unload crates with aid delivered from Qatar destined for Gaza at El Arish International Airport (Qatar Ministry of Foreign Affairs)*

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