

Number of civilians killed in Gaza 'inflated to vilify Israel'

[The number of civilians killed in the Gaza conflict](#) has been inflated to portray Israel as deliberately targeting innocent people, a report claims.

Researchers accuse the Gaza ministry of health of overstating casualty data by including natural deaths, failing to differentiate between civilian and combat casualties and over-reporting the numbers of women and children killed.



Gaza ministry of health estimates that more than 44,000 people have been killed since Israel launched its military response to the Oct 7 attacks
Credit: Mohammed Saber/Shutterstock

The study by the Henry Jackson Society, a think tank, claims the figures have been manipulated by the Hamas-run authorities in Gaza for propaganda purposes, with international media outlets happy to repeat them uncritically.

The Gaza ministry of health has estimated that more than 44,000 people have been killed since Israel launched its military response to the Oct 7 Hamas attacks.

The report found numerous [statistical anomalies](#) and inaccuracies. Researchers say that around 5,000 natural deaths, which would have happened even without the conflict, appear to have been added to the list of casualties, including cancer patients who later appeared on lists of those still receiving hospital treatment.

Other errors – some of which were later rectified by the ministry – include adult casualties being recorded as children and several men being wrongly recorded as women, thereby artificially increasing the number of women and children recorded as killed.

Researchers, who established that the majority of those killed were men aged 15-45, said they found a pattern of victims' ages being revised downwards by at least one year when compared to data on the Palestinian Population Register in an apparent attempt to inflate the number of children recorded as killed.

The Henry Jackson Society found that, based on Israeli and US military and intelligence reports, around 17,000 of these were Hamas fighters, but claims that this has been frequently overlooked in media reports.

Its report states: "The ministry of health, operating under Hamas, has systematically inflated the death toll by failing to distinguish between civilian and combatant deaths, over-reporting fatalities among women and children and even including individuals who died before the conflict began. This has led to a narrative where the Israel Defense Forces are portrayed as disproportionately targeting civilians, while the actual numbers suggest a significant proportion of the dead are combatants."

“This misclassification contributes to the narrative that civilian populations, particularly women and children, bear the brunt of the conflict, potentially influencing sentiment and media coverage,” said Andrew Fox, the report’s author.

The Henry Jackson Society said the casualty figures also failed to distinguish between Gazans killed by the IDF and those killed by misfired Hamas rockets or during the distribution of food aid. These include 17-year-old Ahmed Shdad Halmy Brika, who was reported to have been shot dead by Hamas while trying to obtain food for his family from a humanitarian aid shipment in December last year.

Palestinian representatives have rejected the report’s claims as a “morally and professionally repugnant” way of defending Israel’s actions in Gaza