

Gaza Faces "Thirst," and Israel Offers Residents: Annihilation or Transfer



Gaza Faces "Thirst," and Israel Offers Residents: Annihilation or Transfer

13 Oct 2023

Israel-Palestinian Territory

Share On



AR

Geneva – In a new statement today, Euro-Med Human Rights Monitor expressed deep concern about the grave developments resulting from the ongoing Israeli military attacks on Gaza for the seventh consecutive day, and the serious violations against Palestinian civilians accompanying these attacks.

Euro-Med Monitor warned that Israel is conducting a wide revenge-driven campaign of annihilation against Gaza's civilians, through its heavy aerial bombardments on residential neighbourhoods and the deprivation of water and basic necessities.

The international rights monitor has viewed with utmost seriousness the Israeli army's warning to evacuate the Strip's cities and northern area, directing residents to move to the central and southern parts of the region; this openly constitutes a practice of forcible transfer (or transference), falling outside of international law.

Euro-Med Monitor cited a severe shortage of water supplies and essential food items due to a complete blockade on Gaza for seven consecutive days, and the cutting off of humanitarian supplies to its population, which is around 2.3 million people. It mentioned that Gaza currently faces a dire thirst crisis, as Israeli authorities have stopped pumping water from the Mekorot

supply line to the Strip as of the first day of its military attack. Desalination plants have also stopped working due to power cuts and fuel depletion.

The Israeli attacks on most water wells have exacerbated the crisis, greatly reducing the water supply to residential areas. Euro-Med Monitor also noted a severe shortage of food supplies including bread, eggs, and vegetables. International humanitarian organisations are facing immense difficulties in distributing food aid to Gaza's residents.

Nearly half a million people (112,000 families) have been unable to access their food rations since the closure of food distribution centres belonging to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees (UNRWA) since the start of Israel's attacks. Moreover, there has been significant documented damage to agricultural land and poultry farms due to Israeli attacks, and farmers are unable to access their lands, creating the risk of complete loss of crops.

The power cuts and fuel depletion have severe repercussions on the irrigation of crops, refrigerated food storage facilities, and various electric machinery used in agriculture, poultry farms, and fisheries in Gaza. The continued closure of the Kerem Shalom commercial crossing—the sole commercial crossing for Gaza—prevents the entry of animal feed, putting livestock and poultry sectors at risk, and over 10,000 producers who normally provide animal protein to the sector are at risk of losing their livelihoods.

Amidst the intensifying bloody attacks and severe humanitarian deterioration, the Israeli army has issued warnings to Gaza City residents and those in northern parts of the sector to immediately evacuate their homes and head to the central and southern areas of the Strip.

Euro-Med Monitor reported that written leaflets in Arabic were dropped by the Israeli army from Gaza's skies. The leaflets declare that Gaza City has become a "battlefield" and demand that residents evacuate, telling them not to return until further notice from Israel's forces.

The United Nations has also announced that Israeli army liaison officers informed the leaders of their humanitarian affairs coordination office of the necessity to relocate all of Gaza's residents to a location in the southern part of the Strip in the next 24 hours, which affects approximately 1.1 million people.

Euro-Med Monitor emphasised that these evacuation warnings for civilians in Gaza come without the cessation of air raids and in the absence of any safety or return guarantees, rising to the level of a war crime in the form of forced transfer. The group stressed that such an act represents a blatant violation of Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, which prohibits an occupying power from directly transferring the population forcibly or deporting any persons protected by international law in the occupied territory.

The laws of war prohibit "acts of violence or threats of violence primarily aimed at spreading terror among civilian populations". Under this prohibition, statements that call for evacuations of areas but which do not constitute genuine warnings and instead aim to intimidate the resident population, spread fear among them, or otherwise compel them to leave their homes in this terrifying manner are included.

Gaza initially experienced a wide displacement movement that has continued over the course of Israel's attacks. Euro-Med Monitor has documented the displacement of over 760,000 people to UN-affiliated schools and shelters, government schools, or with relatives and neighbours, with over 350,000 people forced to leave their homes due to destruction or damage from Israeli airstrikes.

Euro-Med Monitor further highlighted the continued intensification of Israeli aerial and artillery attacks across Gaza, which has caused the destruction of entire residential neighbourhoods and resulted in the decimation of at least 71 families, with a minimum of five individuals per family, in horrific mass killings.

Israel's smaller Security and Political Cabinet authorised a state of war on Gaza on last Saturday evening, allowing the army to conduct extensive military operations in response to Hamas' armed attack on Israel ("Al-Aqsa Flood"), which resulted in the killing of about 1,300 Israelis and the capture of dozens. The Israeli army has since carried out thousands of airstrikes and artillery strikes around the clock, targeting residential neighbourhoods and multi-storey buildings inhabited by the civilian population of Gaza.

According to documentation by Euro-Med Monitor, at least 1,840 Palestinians have been killed, including 671 children and 370 women. The number of civilian casualties amounts to around 1,328 civilians, while 8,120 others have been injured with varying degrees of severity, with over half of them being children and women.

Israeli media outlets reported that the Israeli Air Force targeted Gaza with 6,000 bombs weighing 4,000 tons, in addition to bombing more than 3,600 targets, since last Saturday. Euro-Med Monitor has recorded that Israel's attacks have destroyed 2,300 housing units and caused severe or partial damage to 19,200 housing units, while 55 government buildings have been destroyed. Israeli attacks have also caused destruction to at least 69 schools, the destruction of 112 industrial facilities, and 49 media outlets, in addition to demolishing 16 mosques and inflicting damage on dozens of ancient churches.

Euro-Med Human Rights Monitor renewed its demand for Israel to adhere to the principles of distinction and proportionality, with a focus on protecting civilians, especially children, medical facilities, health workers, humanitarian workers, and journalists.

The organisation emphasised that the continued silence of the international community and its institutions and mechanisms regarding the crimes and violations against civilians in Gaza is a green light for Israel to continue committing its relentless campaign of annihilation.