

"Laundering Propaganda: How UN actors manipulated information in the Gaza War" (2023-2025)

Briefing Note

May 2026

Executive Summary

Since the 7 October 2023 attack by Hamas, the United Nations (UN) has been the primary source of information shaping perceptions in the international arena on the conduct of the war and the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip. Thousands of reports, bulletins, briefings, and online posts by UN agencies and officials have generated a continuous stream of statistics, statements and viral headlines which resonated globally. This body of information was used to promote unprecedented political and legal steps against Israel and Israelis and is likely to continue being used for that purpose in the future.

An analytical review of that material shows that key UN agencies and officials exhibited a systemic breakdown of core professional standards and of the principles of neutrality and impartiality in their public statements and reporting on the war in Gaza, resulting in significant factual distortions and consistent bias against Israel and in favor of Hamas.

This phenomenon has taken several recurring and mutually reinforcing forms:

- **Data-laundering:** the wholesale dissemination of unverified information from Hamas-controlled authorities as authoritative UN data;
- **Publishing misleading statistics:** knowingly presenting partial information as if it were complete thereby creating a highly distorted picture of humanitarian realities;
- **Complete disregard of Hamas' role:** presenting humanitarian outcomes without the relevant operational and military context necessary to understand their causes;
- **Baseless sensationalism:** making hyperbolic claims unsupported by evidence.

By repeating these practices numerous times, the UN's reports and statements transformed the genuinely complex and tragic realities of the war into a defamatory, one-sided narrative depicting an alleged Israeli atrocity. Their distortions and omissions turned reality on its head: Hamas, which launched a genocidal attack on October 7 and since then deliberately tried to maximize harm to civilians on both sides, was exempted from

any scrutiny, while Israel, which abides by the laws of war and took unprecedented steps to minimize harm to civilians, was portrayed as a cruel aggressor.

Hamas' barbaric attack and its tactic of using civilians as human shields indeed brought suffering, displacement, and hardship upon Gaza's population, despite Israel's unprecedented efforts to reduce harm to civilians. For Hamas, those outcomes were part of a strategy which aims to invoke international outrage against Israel. Key UN and other humanitarian actors failed to call out this cynical tactic and, knowingly or not, encouraged its continuation.

The breakdown of reporting standards in the UN had another critical consequence. Distorted legal and humanitarian narratives, distributed under the UN insignia, helped legitimize and intensify hostility, harassment, and violence directed at Jewish communities across multiple countries.

Taken together, the evidence presented here points not to good-faith mistakes or inaccuracies resulting from operational constraints, but to a systematic institutional failure within the UN's humanitarian information ecosystem.

The remedy to this unacceptable reality, the UN must take the following steps:

1. **Set the record straight:** issuing appropriate corrections and disclaimers addressing the flaws in UN reports and statements since October 7 to ensure they do not continue to misinform the public, academic, political and legal discussions on the war for years to come.
2. **Going forward, ensure accurate, objective, neutral and impartial UN reporting:** this includes setting clear and transparent reporting guidelines as well as effective oversight and accountability mechanisms.

The analysis below is based exclusively on open sources therefore its findings can be verified independently using the links in the footnotes.

This document is not intended to discredit the UN and all its agencies operating in Gaza. There are many capable humanitarians among them who are genuinely dedicated to providing aid in accordance with the mandatory humanitarian principles. However, their ability to work and coordinate effectively with Israeli authorities has been increasingly undermined by a relatively small number of UN agencies and senior officials who consistently deviated from those principles in their public reporting and communications. Those officials, in a stark departure from the UN's norms and best practice elsewhere, have turned humanitarian advocacy into a one-sided political campaign of defamation and lies against Israel.

1. When the Facts no longer Matter and their Pursuit is "Obscene"

Humanitarian reporting by the UN occupies a uniquely powerful position in global discourse. Statements issued by UN humanitarian bodies are routinely treated as authoritative facts in global media, policy debates, government briefings, submissions before international courts, and academic and policy research. At the same time, they are very rarely subjected to serious scrutiny or independent fact checking.

With this exceptional authority comes a corresponding responsibility to adhere to the highest standards of accuracy, verification, and objectivity. When errors occur within such a system, they do not remain local or temporary — they propagate, harden, and acquire legal and political consequences. The Gaza war provides a clear illustration of what happens when this responsibility is not met.

Very soon after the October 7 massacre, when Israel launched a military operation to free the 251 hostages taken by Hamas and to remove the threat of future attacks from Gaza, leading UN agencies and senior officials adopted a radical narrative depicting the situation in Gaza as the **worst humanitarian catastrophe ever recorded in conflicts**. To give their apocalyptic statements a semblance of credibility, they grounded them in statistics, most of it unverified figures originating from Hamas sources.

For example, on 22 November 2023, the UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Martin Griffiths, who headed the UN's Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) until June 2024, said on CNN that the humanitarian situation in Gaza was "the worst ever" as compared to all other conflicts (referring specifically to Cambodia's 1970s "killing fields" where up to two million people are believed to have been murdered).¹ Griffiths and other senior UN officials repeatedly claimed during the very early months of the war, that the numbers of Palestinian fatalities in key categories, including children, journalists, and medical workers, are greater than in any previous conflict.² They never referred to any verified figures or comparative statistics to back those statements.



The tendency to exaggerate statistics for greater public effect is not unique to the case of Gaza. It was described by one of Griffiths' predecessors, John Holmes, as "a besetting

¹ <https://edition.cnn.com/videos/tv/2023/11/22/amanpour-martin-griffiths-gaza-ceasefire.cnn>

² Ibid. In the same interview, Griffiths said: "there are more children killed in this conflict than in any other that we can think of." See also this post on X from 22 February 2024 by UNRWA's Commissioner General Lazzarini: <https://x.com/i/status/1760764594644013287>.

sin of humanitarian organizations."³ While Holmes, who headed OCHA from 2007 to 2010, wrote that such practice is often "committed with the best of intentions", he opposed it due to the harm it causes over time to the credibility of humanitarians which, he claimed, is critical for their effectiveness. In Gaza, this phenomenon had an unprecedented scale and impact due to the disproportionate volume of UN reporting on this conflict and international attention given to it compared to other contemporary wars and conflicts.

For Israel, the distortions and exaggerations by prominent UN actors on the war are not merely a "comms challenge" or an issue of "bad PR". UN reports and statements have been the main and often exclusive source of information for an array of civil, political and legal initiatives aiming to isolate Israel and hamper its ability to defend itself. The UN's narrative on the war and its accompanying statistics had a tremendous effect on public perceptions regarding Israel's conduct in the war in Gaza, and consequently it impacted the positions and policies of governments and intergovernmental bodies like the EU.⁴

However, when Israel and others raised questions about the accuracy, sourcing, and methodology of UN humanitarian reporting, they were often faced with attempts to delegitimize any scrutiny of the UN's methods.

A particularly revealing example was the following comment made by UNICEF's Executive Director Catherine Russell during an interview on CBS's *Face the Nation* on 24 August 2025, in response to questions about data quality and methodology:

"To me, it's kind of obscene that we are having these conversations arguing about whether the methodology works or not. We know children are dying, right? I am tired of a discussion about, well, are we giving the right information or not?"⁵



This statement explicitly attempts to reframe the legitimate, and indeed necessary, pursuit of factual accuracy as a distraction from suffering, even as something 'obscene'. By

³ John Holmes, *The Politics of Humanity: The Reality of Relief Aid*, Head of Zeus, 2013.

⁴ See for example the EU report from November 2024 which relied almost exclusively on UN sources to describe the situation in Gaza. Available for download here: <https://euobserver.com/31515/leak-of-eus-full-2024-gaza-report-piles-pressure-on-israel/>.

⁵ Transcript: UNICEF executive director Catherine Russell on "Face the Nation with Margaret Brennan," Aug. 24, 2025. CBS News. <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/catherine-russell-unicef-face-the-nation-transcript-08-24-2025/>

portraying basic professional scrutiny as heartless or obstructive, this posture aims to render any critical examination of humanitarian reporting as an illegitimate exercise.

Recognizing this misguided framing is essential to understanding how the flawed reporting practices examined in the following sections were able to take root and endure. The examples that follow are not intended as an exhaustive catalogue of every such failure, but as illustrative case studies demonstrating the depth, persistence, and systemic nature of the problem.

UN bodies which are already internationally recognized and widely criticized as inherently biased and politicized against Israel – like the UN's Commission of Inquiry (COI) and Special Rapporteur Francesca Albanese – have been intentionally excluded from this analysis to show that the breakdown of neutrality and reporting standards is pervasive also among UN agencies which are widely considered as reliable.

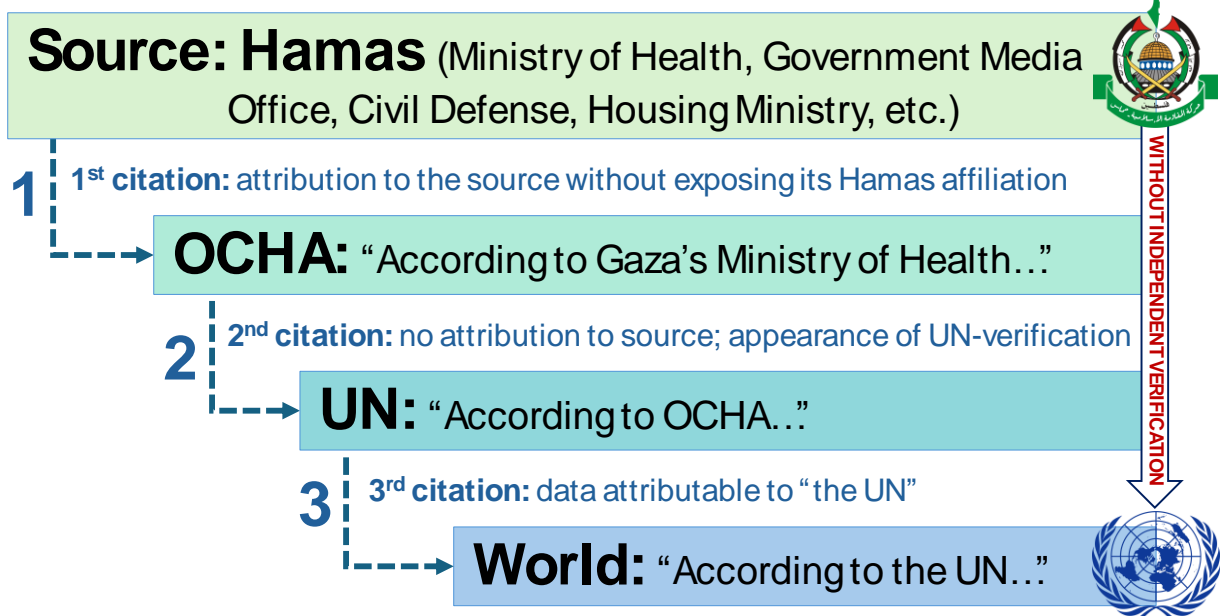
2. Data-Laundering: the wholesale transformation of Hamas propaganda into “UN Facts”

At the core of the reporting failures documented in this analysis lies an institutional practice best described as data-laundering: a simple process through which claims of Hamas-controlled authorities are transformed into authoritative facts attributed to the UN.

This process typically operates through the following three-step process:

- **Stage one – initial attribution:** A UN agency, most commonly OCHA, reports certain information, attributing it to a Hamas-run entity such as the Gaza Ministry of Health (MoH), Government Media Office (GMO), Civil Defense or Ministry of Public Works and Housing, without disclosure that those bodies are fully controlled by Hamas, a party to the conflict.
- **Stage two – institutional laundering:** The information is subsequently cited in other UN reports, briefings, dashboards, or public communications, this time with attribution to the UN agency which first cited it (e.g. "according to OCHA"). From this point, there is no longer any trace of the original Hamas-controlled source.
- **Stage three – authoritative rebranding:** Non-UN actors - media outlets, governments, diplomats, etc. – refer to the UN as the source of that information (e.g. “according to the UN”), creating the false impression that it either originated from or was verified by a neutral UN body.

UN laundering of Hamas data in 3 simple steps



This section examines notable examples of how this data-laundering process operated across two key domains: fatality figures and assessments of physical destruction.

2.1 Fatality Figures: From Unverified Totals to Global Narrative Anchors

From the very first days of the war, UN agencies and senior officials repeatedly disseminated fatality figures supplied by the Gaza MoH. These figures were presented as cumulative totals without independent verification and without any distinction between civilians and combatants.

This practice is exceptional. In other conflicts, UN agencies refrain from republishing a running totals of fatalities, let alone ones which originated from a party to the conflict and have not been verified to include only uninvolved civilians. By contrast, Gaza MoH casualty figures – both for specific incidents and the running total - were repeatedly cited in press briefings, situation reports, and speeches as if they were neutral, verified counts. Moreover, this unique manner of casualty reporting was conducted in total lack of transparency. No disclaimers were ever given notifying about the affiliation of the source to Hamas, the fact that those figures were not independently verified or that they most likely contain an unknown yet possibly significant number of combatants.

The UN's blind reliance on Gaza's MoH continued even when independent studies and reports exposed numerous methodological problems, inconsistencies and errors in the

data.⁶ Furthermore, in several instances when the numbers were corrected downward significantly,⁷ the UN agencies did not correct their previous reports accordingly or add appropriate disclaimers, thus allowing them to remain available online as part of the UN's record of the war. As a result, for example, OCHA's publicly available reports portray an impossible reality in which more women were killed in Gaza by April 2024 than by April 2025 after an additional year of war.⁸ Similarly, the number of child fatalities OCHA reported in March 2024 was the same in March 2025.⁹

The inflated fatality figures disseminated in the early months of the war by Hamas's propaganda arms were used by the UN's leadership to frame the conflict in hyperbolic terms such as "a war on children"¹⁰. Later corrections and adjustments of the statistics were quiet, unannounced and barely noticeable.

2.2 The Al-Ahli Hospital Explosion: How a Disproven Claim Became “Confirmed” UN Data

The explosion at the Al-Ahli hospital compound in Gaza on 17 October 2023 provides one of the clearest and most consequential examples of data-laundering in action.

Shortly after the incident, “Gaza authorities” asserted that an Israeli airstrike had struck the hospital, initially claiming that “*at least 500 people have been killed*”.¹¹ The figure was soon revised to 471,¹² and both the attribution and the casualty claim were rapidly

⁶ For example: Gabriel Epstein, Gaza Fatality Data Has Become Completely Unreliable, The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, March 26 2024. <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/gaza-fatality-data-has-become-completely-unreliable>.

Michael Spagat, Analysis of new death data from Gaza's Health Ministry reveals several concerns, Action on Armed Violence (AOAV), April 17 2024, <https://aoav.org.uk/2024/analysis-of-new-death-data-from-gazas-health-ministry-reveals-severalconcerns/>.

⁷ Gabriel Epstein, Here's the Real Problem with the U.N.'s Revised Gaza Death Toll, The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, May 24 2024. <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/heres-real-problem-uns-revised-gaza-death-toll>.

⁸ – In April 2024 OCHA reported that over 9,500 women had been killed in Gaza since the start of the war. See for example: <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/hostilities-gaza-strip-and-israel-reported-impact-day-201>. In April 2025 it reported that 8,304 (see: <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/reported-impact-snapshot-gaza-strip-22-april-2025>). Both figures were attributed to Hamas-run sources.

⁹ In March 2024 OCHA reported, citing Hamas sources, that "over 13,000" children had been killed (see: <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/hostilities-gaza-strip-and-israel-reported-impact-day-160>) and in March 2025 it reported a figure just above 13,000 (<https://www.ochaopt.org/content/reported-impact-snapshot-gaza-strip-4-march-2025>).

¹⁰ This term was used, among others, by UN officials from UNRWA (<https://news.un.org/en/story/2024/03/1147512>) and

UNICEF (<https://www.youtube.com/shorts/WfDYuEkxSug>) citing Hamas' later-refuted figures.

¹¹ *World reacts as Gaza officials say 500 killed in Israeli strike on hospital*, Al Jazeera (October 17, 2023) <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/10/17/world-reacts-as-gaza-officials-say-500-killed-in-israeli-strike-on-hospital>

¹² The Media Office of the Ministry of Health in the Gaza Strip (October 18, 2025). <https://t.me/MOHMediaGaza/4052>.

disseminated by UN agencies¹³ and cited by senior UN officials.¹⁴ It dominated global headlines, triggered mass protests across multiple countries, and was immediately incorporated into diplomatic statements and UN briefings.¹⁵

Within days, multiple independent investigations reached markedly different conclusions. Assessments by U.S.¹⁶ and European¹⁷ intelligence agencies and even Human Rights Watch (HRW), an Organization with a long documented record of bias **against** Israel in its reporting,¹⁸ found **no evidence consistent with a large aerial munition**.¹⁹ Instead, the vast majority of the independent analyses published on the explosion concluded that it was caused by a **misfired Palestinian rocket** launched from within Gaza, which impacted the **hospital's parking area**, leaving the its buildings largely intact.

These investigations also cast serious doubt on the reported casualty figures. HRW concluded that the numbers initially reported "*appeared to be **out of proportion with the damage visible on site***". A European intelligence source cited in media reports likewise assessed that the number of fatalities was **likely under 50**²⁰ — a figure that, while unquestionably tragic, is an order of magnitude lower than the 471 deaths initially claimed.

¹³ *Hostilities in the Gaza Strip and Israel | Flash Update #12* United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs - Occupied Palestinian Territory. (October 18, 2023)
<https://www.ochaopt.org/content/hostilities-gaza-strip-and-israel-flash-update-12>.

¹⁴ *Gaza: UN experts decry bombing of hospitals and schools as crimes against humanity, call for prevention of genocide*. The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. (October 19, 2023)
<https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2023/10/gaza-un-experts-decry-bombing-hospitals-and-schools-crimes-against-humanity>.

¹⁵ *WHO Virtual press conference on global health issues* (October 19, 2023),
<https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/virtual-press-conference-on-global-health-issues-transcript-19-october-2023>.


¹⁶ *US analysis shows Israel not responsible for hospital explosion*. Reuters. (October 18, 2023)
<https://www.reuters.com/world/us-analysis-shows-israel-not-responsible-hospital-explosion-white-house-2023-10-18/>.

¹⁷ *French military intelligence says Israeli strike not behind Gaza hospital blast*. Reuters. (October 20, 2023), <https://www.reuters.com/world/french-military-intelligence-says-israeli-strike-not-behind-gaza-hospital-blast-2023-10-20/>.

¹⁸ See for example: <https://govextra.gov.il/mda/hrw/hrw/>

¹⁹ *Findings on October 17 al-Ahli Hospital Explosion*. Human Rights Watch (November 26, 2023).
<https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/11/26/gaza-findings-october-17-al-ahli-hospital-explosion>.

²⁰ *European intelligence source tells AFP: A maximum of 50 killed in Gaza hospital*. The Times of Israel. (October 19, 2023), https://www.timesofisrael.com/liveblog_entry/european-intelligence-source-tells-afp-a-maximum-of-50-killed-in-gaza-hospital/.

 occupied Palestinian territory (oPt009242)

[17 October 2023 & 18:59:00]

Certainty Level: **Confirmed**

Affected Health Resources

Health care Facilities Health care Personnel Health care Patients

Types of Attack

Violence with heavy weapons (requires more than one person to use such as firearms, tanks, missiles, bombs, mortars)

[Type of Facility:]

Affected Personnel

Victims of Attack

Total Deaths

471

Total Injuries

342

Abduction/Arrest/Detention of health personnel or patients

Total number of Health workers

0

Total number of Patients

0

Despite these findings, the original claim was never formally corrected or withdrawn in UN reporting. Instead, the discredited Hamas figure continued to circulate in UN publications and statements. Notably, the WHO Surveillance of Attacks on Healthcare database (SSA)²¹ continues to list the Al-Ahli incident with a death toll of 471 fatalities, with the heading "confirmed" misleadingly placed above it, despite the subsequent convergence of evidence that this Hamas figure is false.

On the day after the al-Ahli incident, WHO's emergency situation updates on Gaza began reporting a running figure of people killed in Gaza by "health attacks" in which the 471 al-Ahli figure was and still is counted, comprising nearly half of the fatalities reported in that category throughout the two years of war.²² When WHO officials cited this statistic in briefings, including to the UN Security Council,²³ implying Israeli responsibility,

they concealed the fact that half of it, or more, came from an unverified and largely refuted Hamas claim on fatalities in a single event which, according to most investigations, was caused by a misfired rocket from Gaza.²⁴

²¹ *Surveillance system for attacks on health care (SSA)*. World Health Organization.

<https://extranet.who.int/ssa/LeftMenu/PublicReportList.aspx?start=2023-10-17&end=2023-10-17&countryList=178&countryRegionList=0&typeList=0>.

²² By the time of the October 2025 ceasefire, WHO reported a total of 991 people killed from "health attacks" citing Gaza's MoH. See: <https://www.emro.who.int/images/stories/palestine/sitrep66.pdf>. Note that the report cites WHO's SSA, not Gaza's MoH, as the source for that figure.

²³ *WHO Director-General's remarks at Meeting of the United Nations Security Council on the situation of the health system in Gaza – 6 November 2024*. <https://www.who.int/news-room/speeches/item/who-director-general-s-remarks-at-meeting-of-the-united-nations-security-council-on-the-situation-of-the-health-system-in-gaza---6-november-2024>.

²⁴ See for example in this briefing from October 24, 2023, by Dr. Ayadil Saparbekov, World Health Organization (WHO) lead for emergencies in the occupied Palestinian territory: "The health system of the Gaza Strip had suffered immensely from the repeated attacks and from the ongoing shortage of supplies, medicine, fuel and staff. Since October 2023, at least 516 attacks on healthcare in Gaza had been recorded which resulted in 765 deaths."

The critical issue here is not only that UN bodies initially relayed unverified claims in a fast-moving crisis. Early uncertainty is inherent to conflict reporting. The biggest failure lies in what followed: a refusal to correct once reliable evidence became available. Furthermore, this incident did not cause any reassessment of the credibility of Gaza's MoH as an information source, and its claims about fatalities in specific incidents continued to be laundered by the UN without verification regularly.



2.3 Inflating Destruction: How Housing Damage Was Misrepresented

A similar data-laundering dynamic was visible in UN reporting on housing destruction. In early November 2023, a mere one month into the war, global media widely reported — citing UN sources — that half of Gaza's housing stock had already been destroyed by Israel.²⁵ Indeed, this formulation was being recited at the time by senior UN officials, including in a speech at the UN General Assembly.²⁶

Half of Gaza's housing destroyed in 1 month by Israeli war: UN

Human Development Index to decline sharply, setting State of Palestine back by 11-16 years, says UNDP report

Samar L. Kasim | 10.11.2023 - Update : 10.11.2023

It first appeared in an OCHA situation snapshot from October 27, 2023,²⁷ which reported that "*at least 45% of Gaza's housing units were reportedly **destroyed or damaged***" (a total of 177,781 housing units) attributing those statistics to Gaza's Hamas-controlled Ministry of Public Works and Housing. A week later, on 5 November, OCHA repeated the "at least 45%" figure but this time with a total of over 260,000 housing units "damaged or destroyed". No explanation was provided for this mathematical anomaly.

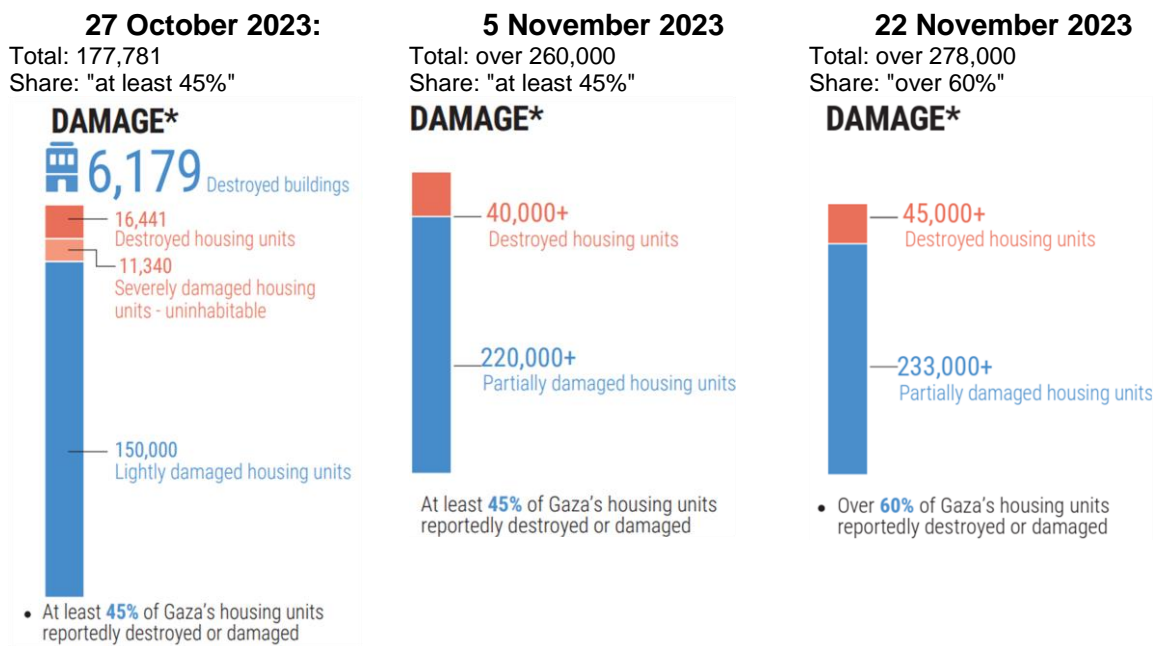
²⁵ The UN official mostly cited as the source for this claim was the regional director of UNDP, Muhammad al-Dardari. See in: *The war has taken a staggering toll on the Palestinian economy*. The New York Times. (November 9, 2023), <https://www.nytimes.com/live/2023/11/09/world/israel-hamas-war-gaza/the-war-has-taken-a-staggering-toll-on-the-palestinian-economy> ("more than 50 percent of housing in Gaza has been destroyed, the UN said"). See also: *Half of Gaza's housing destroyed in 1 month by Israeli war: UN*. Anadolu (October 10, 2023) <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/half-of-gazas-housing-destroyed-in-1-month-by-israeli-war-un/3049209>.

²⁶ *Acting Deputy Commissioner-General Natalie Boucly remarks at the Informal Plenary Meeting of the United Nations General Assembly*. (November 17, 2023). <https://www.un.org/unispal/document/acting-deputy-commissioner-general-natalie-boucly-remarks-at-the-informal-plenary-meeting-of-the-united-nations-general-assembly/>.

²⁷ *Hostilities in the Gaza Strip and Israel - reported impact | Day 21*. United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. (October 27, 2023) <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/hostilities-gaza-strip-and-israel-reported-impact-day-21>

As this aggregated figure migrated to subsequent UN statements and reports it lost not only the reference to its Hamas source (it was attributed to OCHA instead)²⁸ but also the critical qualifier “*or damaged*”. In the 28 October and 5 November OCHA reports, the share of “destroyed” housing units from the total “damaged or destroyed” category was 9 and 15 per cent respectively, making “half of all homes **destroyed**” claim highly misleading. Later in November, OCHA reported, citing the same Hamas ministry, that the share of damaged or destroyed units rose to “over 60”²⁹

OCHA's reports on damaged housing units in Gaza (Oct-Nov '23)



During this entire period, it remained unclear which methodology, if any, Hamas' ministry used to arrive at these damage assessments, especially in areas of active combat. Still, OCHA chose to highlight those Hamas figures in its reports rather than a UN damage assessment based on satellite imagery of Gaza which was conducted by UNOSAT at the same time (7 November 2023) and concluded that 3% of Gaza's structures were

²⁸ Most notably, it was cited in a UN report published by UNDP and ESCWA on 7 November which received significant media attention. The report refers to OCHA as the source for the housing damage statistics. See: "Gaza war: expected socioeconomic impacts on the State of Palestine", page 6, <https://www.undp.org/arab-states/publications/gaza-war-expected-socio-economic-impacts-state-palestine>.

²⁹ *Hostilities in the Gaza Strip and Israel - reported impact | Day 47*. United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. (November 22, 2023) <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/hostilities-gaza-strip-and-israel-reported-impact-day-47>.

destroyed and an additional 9% suffered severe or moderate damage, reflecting a far lower extent of destruction than the Hamas ministry figures.³⁰

The continued reliance on unverified Hamas data lacking methodological transparency which were higher than UN analyses available at the time, and the blatant misrepresentation of that data by senior UN officials, set the ground for false claims of intentional extensive structural damage by Israel, or "domicide", to emerge very early in the war.³¹

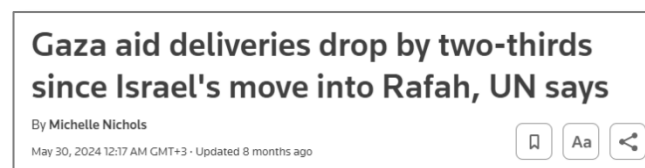
3. Feeding the “Starvation” Narrative by Misleading Statistics

In addition to laundering Hamas data, UN agencies presented data that they were collecting in highly misleading ways to support false claims that Israel was not allowing enough aid to enter Gaza and to be delivered to those who need it.

3.1 Under-reporting of aid supplies into Gaza

Throughout the war, UN statistics on the supply of aid into Gaza were significantly partial yet were misleadingly presented in UN reports and statements as comprehensive.

To observe that practice and its impact, one can take as a case study May 2024 – a critical month during which the IDF began its operation in Rafah (on May 5) and the ICC Prosecutor's announced his decision on issuing arrest warrants against Israel's Prime Minister and Defense Minister for using "starvation as a method of war." By the end of that month, media reports and headlines echoed the UN's alarms that aid



³⁰ UNOSAT Gaza Strip Comprehensive Damage Assessment, 13 November 2023.

<https://www.unosat.org/products/3734>. That analysis counted 6,786 destroyed structures which is roughly equivalent of 10,000 housing units according to the structures-units ratio in UNOSAT's analyses on Gaza. This is about a quarter of the 40,000 destroyed housing units claimed by Hamas and cited by OCHA at the same time.

³¹ The Guardian, Widespread destruction in Gaza puts concept of 'domicide' in focus, 7 December 2023, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/dec/07/widespread-destruction-in-gaza-puts-concept-of-domicide-in-focus>.

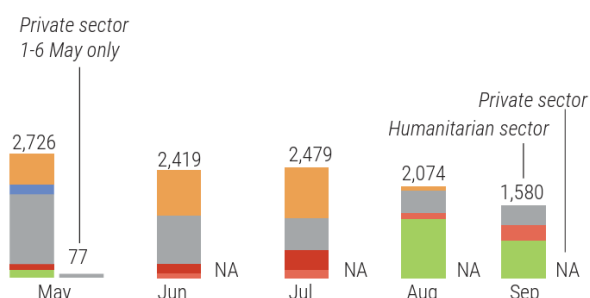
deliveries into Gaza had **fallen by two-thirds**.³² This claim was widely cited as evidence of a sharp tightening of Israeli restrictions and an accelerating starvation crisis.

The UN's claims indeed reflected the statistics it was reporting at the time on supplies entering Gaza. OCHA's May 31 "impact snapshot" reported that **2,713 trucks** had entered Gaza in May, a low monthly figure compared to previous months.³³ However, later in 2024, apparently due to the incorporation of additional data, **OCHA's own figure for May of that year was significantly raised to 4,202 trucks, a 55% increase**, as can be seen in OCHA's online dashboard.³⁴ This retroactive change was neither announced nor explained by OCHA. Still, even the new figure reflects only part of the incoming trucks into Gaza since the UN excludes from its count major supply flows.³⁵

The only public source covering all supply flows to Gaza is the Israeli unit coordinating the entry of every incoming truck – the Coordinator of the Government's Activities in the Territories known as COGAT. According to COGAT's online dashboard, 6,297 trucks entered Gaza in May 2024,³⁶ representing a marginal decline of roughly **7 percent from April**, not two-thirds. Moreover, May 2024 remained at that time the **second-highest month of supply deliveries since the beginning of the war**, exceeded only by April.

The UN's two-thirds decline claim thus did not reflect an actual collapse in supply flows but was the product of **incomplete early reporting combined with critical omission of supply channels**, presented without adequate caveat to cause exaggerated alarm.

May 2024 was not an isolated case. As the following chart shows, the two-tier gaps identified above - between the truck count that OCHA reported in real time, the numbers it reported retroactively and COGAT's



³² *Hostilities in the Gaza Strip and Israel | Flash Update #172*. United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (May 29, 2024) <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/hostilities-gaza-strip-and-israel-flash-update-172>; *Gaza aid deliveries drop by two-thirds since Israel's move into Rafah, UN says*. Reuters. (May 30, 2024), <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/gaza-aid-deliveries-drop-by-two-thirds-since-israels-move-into-rafah-un-says-2024-05-29>.

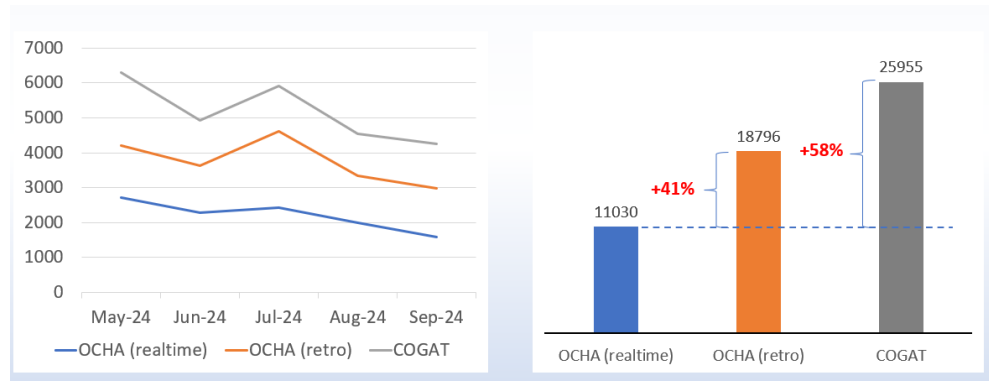
³³ *Reported impact snapshot | Gaza Strip (31 May 2024)*. United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/reported-impact-snapshot-gaza-strip-31-may-2024>.

³⁴ *Gaza crossings: Movement of people and goods*. United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, <https://www.ochaopt.org/data/crossings>.

³⁵ The disclaimer in OCHA's "impact snapshots" describes the reported data as: "Collected humanitarian truckloads as monitored by UN agencies, **excluding fuel and some cargo collected by NGOs and third parties. Commercial trucks are not captured in the totals after 7 May.**" See for example in: <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/reported-impact-snapshot-gaza-strip-8-january-2025>.

³⁶ *Gaza Humanitarian Aid Data*. Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT) <https://gaza-aid-data.gov.il/mainhome/#AidData>.

comprehensive figure – existed in subsequent months as well. As a result, the actual volume of aid which entered Gaza between May and September 2024 was 135% greater than the volume that much of the world believed had entered during that period based on OCHA's real time reporting.³⁷



This major discrepancy was never corrected nor publicly acknowledged by the UN. The original monthly statistics, which OCHA itself later revised quietly in its little-known dashboard, still remain in numerous "impact snapshots" which are available online and are widely cited in research or in support of various anti-Israel legal or political initiatives.

4. Telling Only Half of the Humanitarian Story

UN humanitarian reporting on Gaza distorted reality not only by the information it included, but also by information it systematically omitted. While reports included a wealth of statistics (much of it inflated) on the humanitarian consequences of the war, they largely exclude any information on the conduct of Hamas as a material driver of those outcomes. Several recurring categories of omission are particularly salient:

- **Embedding military infrastructure and fighters within civilian environments.** Hamas has consistently embedded tunnels, rocket launch sites, weapons storage, command infrastructure, and active fighters within dense civilian neighborhoods and civilian facilities, including residential buildings, shelters, hospitals, schools, mosques, and other protected civilian sites.³⁸

³⁷ OCHA's real time figures for that period can be seen in this report from 9 October 2024: <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/reported-impact-snapshot-gaza-strip-9-october-2024>.

³⁸ *Hamas' use of human shields in Gaza*. NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence (2019) <https://stratcomcoe.org/publications/hybrid-threats-hamas-use-of-human-shields-in-gaza/87>; Kirby: *U.S. intelligence shows Hamas using hospitals for military activities*. Axios. (November 14, 2023), <https://www.axios.com/2023/11/14/us-intelligence-hamas-hospitals-military-israel-john-kirby>; *Inside the tunnels of Gaza*. Reuters (December 31, 2023), <https://www.reuters.com/graphics/ISRAEL-PALESTINIANS/GAZA-TUNNELS/gkvldmzorvb/>.

- **Abuse of humanitarian aid.** Multiple sources have documented the abuse and diversion of humanitarian aid by Hamas.³⁹ These practices directly affect food availability and aid distribution.
- **Prevention of civilian evacuation.** There is extensive documentation of Hamas obstructing civilian movement, discouraging or preventing evacuation from combat zones, and coercing civilians to remain in high-risk areas.⁴⁰
- **Infiltration and exploitation of international organizations.** Since the start of the war, media reports and publications exposed cases of infiltration and abuse of UN and humanitarian organizations by Hamas,⁴¹ most notably UNRWA.⁴²
- **Hamas' mistreatment of Israeli of Israeli hostages.** UN agencies operating in Gaza ignored in their reports and statements the accumulating evidence and testimonies about serious abuses and torture of Israeli hostages and their holding in civilian homes and facilities, including hospitals.⁴³

³⁹ *Hamas warehouses in Gaza are overflowing with stolen humanitarian aid.* Jerusalem Post. <https://www.jpost.com/israel-hamas-war/article-820030>; *PA leader Abbas: "Hamas-affiliated gangs primarily responsible" for Gaza aid looting.* The Times of Israel. (May 3, 2025), <https://www.timesofisrael.com/pa-leader-abbas-hamas-affiliated-gangs-primarily-responsible-for-gaza-aid-looting/>; *Statement by UNICEF on the theft of lifesaving therapeutic food for thousands of children in Gaza.* (September 19, 2025), <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/statement-unicef-theft-lifesaving-therapeutic-food-thousands-children-gaza>; *US drone observes aid truck looted by Hamas in Gaza.* U.S. Central Command. (November 1, 2025). <https://www.centcom.mil/MEDIA/STATEMENTS/Statements-View/Article/4327585/us-drone-observes-aid-truck-looted-by-hamas-in-gaza/>; *UN under fire as USAID investigators probe Hamas diversion of aid to Gaza.* Fox News. (November 4, 2025), <https://www.foxnews.com/world/un-under-fire-usaid-investigators-probe-hamas-diversion-aid-gaza>; *Hamas 'hoarded baby milk to manufacture hunger crisis.'* The Telegraph. (December 10, 2025). <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/world-news/2025/12/10/hamas-hoarded-baby-milk-to-manufacture-hunger-crisis/>.

⁴⁰ *Hamas tells Gaza residents to stay put as Israel ground offensive looms.* Reuters. (October 13, 2023). <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/hamas-tells-gaza-residents-stay-home-israel-ground-offensive-looms-2023-10-13/>; *Hamas actively preventing Palestinians from leaving Gaza.* Economic Times. (October 16, 2023) <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/hamas-actively-preventing-palestinians-from-leaving-gaza-israel-defence-forces/articleshow/104444023.cms>; *IDF: Gaza resident says Hamas preventing evacuations; thousands return north.* The Times of Israel. (October 26, 2023), <https://www.timesofisrael.com/idf-gaza-resident-says-hamas-preventing-evacuations-thousands-return-north/>.

⁴¹ For example: <https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2025/08/idf-targets-terrorists-disguised-as-aid-workers.php>;

⁴² On UNRWA, see: "The Connection Between UNRWA and Hamas in Gaza" <https://govextra.gov.il/unrwa/unrwa/>.

⁴³ A striking example is UN Women's silence, which was publicly condemned and also addressed in a letter by the Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs of July 28, 2024 available on this link: <https://govextra.gov.il/media/0p2pwdzv/unwomen-letter-july-28-2024.pdf>

All these practices by Hamas, and other terrorist groups in Gaza, pose a grave threat to civilians and cause immense complications to the provision of humanitarian assistance. However, in all UN humanitarian reporting on the war, such actions were very rarely reported as a verified fact, and were never attributed to Hamas or any other group.

In an active war zone, independent verification of reported incidents is challenging and dangerous. This fact, however, did not prevent UN agencies and officials from parroting numerous unverified reports on IDF operations from dubious sources, usually with the vague caveat "reportedly". At the same time, a plethora of media reports, testimonies, images and videos depicting Hamas' humanitarian violations in the war were not mentioned at all in the UN's narrative, not even under "reportedly". When claims of alleged Israeli misconduct are almost always cited and claims by Israel, sometimes on the same incidents, are almost always ignored, the double standard is glaring.

5. Abuse of Humanitarian Authority Through Sensational Headlines and Clickbait Claims

Beyond aggregate figures, statements by UN senior officials and spokespersons produced a steady stream of dramatic headlines during the war which collapse under minimal scrutiny yet were never corrected. Below are just a few notable examples.

Before dissecting the statistical manipulations behind those irresponsible statements, it should be clarified that exposing these wild, even cynical, exaggerations of the war's human toll, should in no way be seen as an attempt to dismiss the damage and suffering that did indeed occur. Like most forms of disinformation, those factual distortions sometimes had a kernel of truth which was then exaggerated and stripped of its operational and legal context. UN officials who knowingly released baseless or highly inflated figures, maybe for headline grabbing or virality, in practice took part in a continuous information manipulation campaign fueled by Hamas and its supporters.

5.1 The "14,000 Babies in 48 Hours" Claim

In May 2025, the newly appointed UN humanitarian chief Tom Fletcher warned that "*14,000 babies in Gaza will die in the next 48 hours unless aid reaches them*".⁴⁴

UN warns 14,000 babies could die within 48 hours under Israel siege of Gaza

⁴⁴ UN humanitarian chief: Thousands of Gazan babies will die without aid. BBC (May 20, 2025) <https://www.bbc.com/news/videos/cdr550j818po>.

However, as a later clarification by OCHA made clear, the figure was a distorted take on an IPC projection that approximately 14,100 cases of severe acute malnutrition were expected to occur among children aged six to 59 months over the course of an **entire year**, between April 2025 and March 2026.⁴⁵ Transforming this IPC projection into a warning that “*14,000 babies will die in the next 48 hours*” required recasting **malnutrition cases** as **certain deaths**, children under 5 as “babies” and a **twelve-month** analytical timeframe into a **48-hour** emergency window.

Several days after Fletcher made that statement, and only after it was widely condemned as a “grotesque inaccuracy”⁴⁶ and a “blood libel”⁴⁷, he appeared in another televised interview and expressed “regret” for it. Obviously, his feeble retraction did not receive even a fraction of the international exposure and attention that his initial statement received. It remains the single case of a UN retraction of false information throughout the war.

5.2 How an Unfounded Child Amputees Narrative Escalated

The killing and maiming of children is one of the worst horrors possible in war, which naturally and rightly evokes strong emotions. Every such case is a tragedy of its own. However, when organizations entrusted with reporting and preventing this phenomenon consistently publish inflated figures and unsubstantiated claims, they erode their credibility and neutrality and thereby undermine their own mission.⁴⁸

Throughout much of the war, two closely related claims have circulated as UN-endorsed facts despite lacking any supportive evidence: first, that “*ten children are losing one or both of their legs every day*” in Gaza; and second, that Gaza is “*home to the largest cohort of child amputees in modern history*”.

The chain begins with a broad assertion made by UNICEF’s spokesperson James Elder on December 1, 2023, that “*around 1,000 children had had an upper or lower limb amputated over the past weeks*”⁴⁹. He did not name his source for that figure and even

⁴⁵ *UN retracts aid chief's claim that 14,000 Gazan babies will die in 48 hours without aid*. Jerusalem Post (May 21, 2025) <https://www.jpost.com/israel-news/article-854868>.

⁴⁶ <https://www.thejc.com/news/politics/lords-slam-mps-for-grotesque-inaccuracy-over-gaza-baby-death-claim-tjwk8unh>

⁴⁷ <https://x.com/IsraelMFA/status/1925178760862585286>

⁴⁸ Notably, the UN agencies involved in this case have been systematically inflating statistics about alleged Israeli “violations” against children long before October 7th. See: “Methodological Manipulations and Institutional Failures in the UN’s CAAC reports on Israel”, May 2024, available for download at: <https://govextra.gov.il/mda/caac/home/>.

⁴⁹ *Press briefing by the United Nations information service*. The United Nations Office at Geneva, December 1, <https://www.ungeneva.org/en/news-media/bi-weekly-briefing/2023/12/press-briefing-united-nations-information-service>.

Hamas' MoH had not made any such claim around that time.⁵⁰ A month later the NGO Save the Children converted Elder's total figure into an average daily rate and limited it to lower limbs: "more than 10 children per day, on average, have lost one or both of their legs"⁵¹ - a statistic shocking enough to make headlines, for example on CNN.⁵²

Almost half a year later, on 25 June 2024, UNRWA's chief Philippe Lazzarini recited Save the Children's 10-children-per-day statistic again in a speech, presenting it as if it reflected the ongoing contemporary situation. He then used it to make a projection, saying that this daily rate "*means around 2,000 children [were amputated] after more than 260 days of this brutal war*".⁵³ His claims, which were not based on any evidence, were cited by major media outlets like Le Monde and the BBC⁵⁴ and on social media platforms.⁵⁵



Finally, on 9 October 2024, the baseless claim became an official UN position when it was included in an OCHA briefing to the UN Security Council.⁵⁶ Like in previous citations, OCHA's deputy director referred to the 10-per-day figure as the current rate of amputations in children, citing UNRWA as its source. She added the claim that Gaza is "*home to the largest cohort of child amputees in modern history*" without citing its source. This claim, which does not seem to be substantiated by any publicly available comparative analysis, is a precise quote of the British-Palestinian medic Ghassan Abu Sittah from an interview published by *The New Yorker* on 21 March 2024.⁵⁷ Notably, Abu Sittah has a record of advancing sensational and false claims that were later contradicted

⁵⁰ according to reporting by Reuters in January 2024, Gaza's Ministry of Health **had not published any official tally of child amputees at that time**. <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/gazas-child-amputees-face-further-risks-without-expert-care-2024-01-04/#:~:text=While%20Gaza%20health%20authorities%20do%20not%20have%20an%20official%20tally>

⁵¹ GAZA: *More than 10 children a day lose a limb in three months of brutal conflict*. Save the Children International. (January 4, 2024), <https://www.savethechildren.net/news/gaza-more-10-children-day-lose-limb-three-months-brutal-conflict>. This publication came out after 92 days of war, therefore UNICEF's claim of 1,000 amputations translated to "more than 10" per day.

⁵² <https://edition.cnn.com/2024/01/08/middleeast/gaza-children-losing-legs-disease-intl-hnk>

⁵³ *UNRWA reports 10 children lose legs every day in Gaza*. Le Monde. (June 25, 2024) https://www.lemonde.fr/en/international/article/2024/06/25/unrwa-reports-10-children-lose-legs-every-day-in-gaza_6675697_4.html.

⁵⁴ See for example in Le Monde (https://www.lemonde.fr/en/international/article/2024/06/25/unrwa-reports-10-children-lose-legs-every-day-in-gaza_6675697_4.html#); The BBC: <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cv22g81djdyo>

⁵⁵ See for example in Al Jazeera's Instagram channel: <https://www.instagram.com/p/C8phbMxvMu6/>

⁵⁶ *Lisa Doughten (OCHA) briefing on the situation in Gaza - Security Council*. (October 9, 2024). <https://www.un.org/unispal/document/lisa-doughten-ocha-briefing-sc-9744th-meeting-09oct24/>.

⁵⁷ *The children who lost limbs in Gaza*. The New Yorker. (March 21, 2024). <https://www.newyorker.com/news/dispatch/the-children-who-lost-limbs-in-gaza>.

by independent investigations.⁵⁸ Helped by the UN's endorsement, Abu Sittah's evidence-free claim, which contradicts previous UN assessments in other conflicts,⁵⁹ has gained the status of a credible fact and was cited numerous times, including in academic publications,⁶⁰ parliamentary debates⁶¹, NGO campaign⁶² and more.

As noted above, there were no official MoH statistics on child amputations at the time UNICEF's spokesperson made his December 2023 claim. An official figure was published only more than a year later, in January 2025, when the MoH reported that approximately **800 children** had undergone upper or lower limb amputation between 7 October 2023 and the end of 2024.⁶³ It then became evident that the collective of UN agencies pushing this narrative outdid even a key Hamas propaganda arm by repeatedly disseminating a daily rate **which is more than six times greater than the rate reflect in the January 2025 figure from Gaza's MoH.**⁶⁴ Still, at least one senior UN official continued to parrot exaggerated statistics on this topic all the way up to the October 2025 ceasefire.⁶⁵

5.3 UN misreporting of UN reports

The following example illustrates how some UN sources were willing to misrepresent reports by other UN sources only to gain a headline, albeit a false one.

⁵⁸ For example, Abu Sittah's supposedly first-hand account of an operating-room ceiling collapse was later contradicted by independent investigations, which found that the explosion—caused by a misfired Palestinian Islamic Jihad rocket—impacted only the hospital parking area, not the hospital building itself.

⁵⁹ To give one example, UNICEF has cited estimates that approximately 86,000 people underwent amputations during the civil war in Syria (See: "No end in sight to seven years of war in Syria: Children disabled by violence risk being forgotten and stigmatised", March 12, 2018, <https://www.unicef.ie/pr-news/syria-children-disabled/>), with some studies indicating that around a quarter of amputees were children (Tatar, Y., Kablan, N., & Yurtseven, M. (2021). "Incidence and demographic characteristics of Syrian Civil War-related amputations: A multi-center study", Turkish Journal of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, 67(1), 48–55. <https://doi.org/10.5606/tftrd.2021.5058>). On that basis alone, the number of child amputees in Syria would exceed Gaza's figures by an order of magnitude.

⁶⁰ <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2772653325000486>;
[https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(25\)01082-7/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(25)01082-7/fulltext)

⁶¹ <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Lords/2025-01-16/debates/77444ACC-DFC0-42D4-8F46-D7952CBAFAD7/GazaHealthcareSystemSupport#contribution-FA0C5F97-32FA-41BF-BD0D-0238E5832544>; <https://patriciafergusonmp.uk/westminster-hall-debate-children-armed-conflict/>

⁶² <https://www.savethechildren.org.uk/blogs/2026/how-save-the-children-helps-in-gaza>

⁶³ *4,500 amputations reported in Gaza amid Israeli war: Health official*. Anadolu (January 11, 2025) <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/4-500-amputations-reported-in-gaza-amid-israeli-war-health-official/3447324>.

⁶⁴ 800 amputees by January 2025 is equivalent to a daily average of 1.7 since the start of the war.

⁶⁵ In September 2025 UNRWA's Commissioner General Lazzarini again made a baseless claim posting on X that the number of child amputees in Gaza since the war began was estimated to be "up to 4,000". <https://www.unrwa.org/newsroom/official-statements/unrwa-commissioner-general-gaza-gaza-now-home-highest-number-child>.

On 13 May 2025, UN News reported that “*since the aid blockade began on 2 March [2025], 57 children have reportedly died from the effects of malnutrition, according to the Ministry of Health.*”⁶⁶ This formulation was subsequently repeated by international media outlets including The Guardian.⁶⁷



However, the same figure had already appeared in a different formulation a few days earlier in a WHO *Emergency Situation Update*, which stated that “*the MoH has reported 57*



malnutrition-related deaths since October 2023”.⁶⁸ This directly contradicts UN News’ reframing of the figure as referring only to children and only to deaths occurring after 2 March 2025 (i.e. a **72-day period**); in reality, it covered the cumulative number of **all** allegedly malnutrition-related deaths **in the war up to that point (i.e. a 578-day period)**.

Furthermore, retrospective mortality data published by the Gaza Ministry of Health itself in July 2025⁶⁹ **only two out of the 57 quoted malnutrition-related deaths occurred after 2 March**.⁷⁰ Therefore, UN News created a false impression that, by average, a child was dying of malnutrition each day between 2 March and 7 May while Hamas’ figures reflected an average of roughly one death of all ages per month. Like in the previous example, a UN body inflated even Hamas’ propaganda sources just to manufacture statistics that are shocking enough to make headlines and go viral.

5.3 Reliance on controversial research

One agency which consistently outdid Hamas’ propaganda in the statistics it published during the war is UN Women. In May 2025 it claimed that 28,000 women and girls were

⁶⁶ Gaza: 57 children reported dead from malnutrition, says WHO. UN News. (May 13, 2025). <https://news.un.org/en/story/2025/05/1163166>.

⁶⁷ The Guardian, “A grim lottery: as Israel bombs hospitals, some Gaza children are granted rare exit permits”, 15 May 2025, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/may/15/a-grim-lottery-as-israel-bombs-hospitals-some-gaza-children-are-granted-rare-exit-permits>.

⁶⁸ *oPt Emergency Situation Update 58*. World Health Organization. (May 12, 2025). <https://reliefweb.int/report/occupied-palestinian-territory/opt-emergency-situation-update-58-7-oct-2023-7-may-2025>.

⁶⁹ The Media Office of the Ministry of Health in the Gaza Strip (July 24, 2025). <https://t.me/MOHMediaGaza/6768>.

⁷⁰ Ibid. The MoH July publication indicated that 54 of the 57 claimed malnutrition-related deaths cited by WHO in mid-May occurred during 2023–2024. From the three remaining, one was reported in February 2025, one in March 2025, and one in April 2025. **In other words, only two of the 57 quoted malnutrition-related deaths occurred after the suspension of aid on 2 March.**

killed in Gaza during the war,⁷¹ more than the total number of women, children (of both sexes) and elderly (of both sexes) which Hamas' MoH claimed were killed by that time, as reported by OCHA.⁷² The inflated figure was based on a article published on The Lancet which used a controversial capture-recapture methodology to claim that Gaza's MoH under-reported mortality by approximately 41%.⁷³ This claim allowed UN Women to transform Hamas' fatality statistics since the start of the war (which notably include also fatalities from Palestinian fire, as seen by the al-Ahli case) into the clickbait statistic that "one woman and one girl on average are killed every hour in attacks by Israeli forces."

Since the publication of the capture-recapture article, now well over a year ago, there is no evidence that its assessment of unreported mortality was correct. This did not prevent UN Women from referring to it again in April 2026 to claim that 22,000 women have been killed in Gaza by the end of 2025.⁷⁴ The equivalent Hamas figure as of 31 December 2025, as published by OCHA, was 10,983, exactly half of UN Women's claim.⁷⁵

An earlier academic paper from February 2024 by the same lead author with similarly alarmist, and soon-to-be-refuted, fatality projections also received de-facto UN endorsement. It predicted an excess mortality in Gaza of between 58,000 and 85,000 people within the following six months if the war continued.⁷⁶ Although the paper, like the one mentioned above, was neither peer reviewed nor published in any academic journal, its conclusions were immediately endorsed by a senior WHO official who cited them before a UK parliamentary committee to call for taking the "right political action."⁷⁷ Needless to say, that catastrophic projection did come even close to materializing.

⁷¹ <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news-stories/news/2025/05/un-women-estimates-over-28000-women-and-girls-killed-in-gaza-since-october-2023>

⁷² <https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/occupied-palestinian-territory/reported-impact-snapshot-gaza-strip-28-may-2025-1500>

⁷³ https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2025-05/invisible_no_more_-_estimating_the_death_toll_of_women_and_girls_in_gaza-compressed.pdf

⁷⁴ <https://www.un.org/unispal/wp-content/uploads/2026/04/advocacy-brief-the-cost-of-war-in-gaza-on-women-and-girls-technical-note-en.pdf>

⁷⁵ <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/reported-impact-snapshot-gaza-strip-15-april-2026>

⁷⁶ Zeina Jamaluddine et. Al., War in Gaza: scenario-based excess mortality projections, January 2024, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/380864814_War_in_Gaza_scenario-based_excess_mortality_projections.

⁷⁷ The official was Dr Richard Brennan, Regional Emergency Director for Eastern Mediterranean Region speaking to the UK Parliament's International Development Committee on Tuesday 27 February 2024: <https://committees.parliament.uk/oralevidence/14345/pdf/>.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The UN's public record of post-7-October Gaza war is significantly distorted, misleading and biased against Israel and in favor of Hamas. It continues, however, to feed public discourse, policy debates and legal proceedings related to this war with manipulated information which fails to meet the most basic standard of factual accuracy and objectivity. This institutional failure has had a profound negative impact on the UN's credibility and effectiveness on the ground. It allowed Hamas to continue using civilians in Gaza as human shields and abusing humanitarian aid with impunity, while fueling hate and antisemitism towards Israelis and Jews throughout the world. By blatantly taking a side in the conflict, the UN's reporting on the war may well have prolonged it.

To correct the damage caused by this UN failure and prevent its recurrence, the UN's top leadership must ensure that the following steps are taken:

1. **Set the UN record straight:** issuing appropriate corrections and disclaimers addressing the flaws in UN reports and statements since October 7.
2. **Going forward, ensure accurate, objective, neutral and impartial UN reporting:** setting clear and transparent reporting and public communications guidelines as well as effective oversight and accountability mechanisms.

To help apply those measures, the following additional steps are recommended:

UN donors have an interest and a responsibility to ensure that their taxpayers' money is not used by UN agencies to misinform their public and policymaking processes.

Media outlets which are genuinely committed to truthful and accurate reporting should treat UN sources, especially on Israel-related issues, with caution and fact check them carefully. Identifying reporting flaws such as those shown in this document does not require journalists to risk their lives in a war zone, just to use the internet.

Academics and researchers have an important role to play in subjecting the highly politicized humanitarian information sphere to rigorous scientific scrutiny, including the methodologies and reporting practices applied by UN agencies.

Given the evident lack of sufficient information quality assurance within the UN, **Companies developing and operating AI engines** are advised to consider lowering the reliability ranking of the UN sources, particularly regarding Israel.

Governments and parliaments should launch independent reviews of the UN's reporting on Gaza and, based on their findings, reconsider policies made on its basis.

Together, these steps could mitigate the harmful consequences of the UN's misreporting on Gaza since 7 October and create an information environment conducive for ensuring the UN's information integrity in future, highly politicized conflicts.