



## Factsheet

# Israel Weaponizes Water in its Genocidal Campaign against Civilians in Gaza Strip

Widespread Collapse of Public Health Minimum Standards Has Created Unlivable Conditions in the Gaza Strip

August 2024

## ■ Introduction

The Israeli Occupying Forces (IOF) continue their notorious policy of violating civilians' rights and depriving them of basic needs such as healthcare, food, and water. They use starvation, dehydration, and medicines as a bargaining chip to forcibly displace the Palestinians from large areas of the Gaza Strip by deliberately making it uninhabitable and their survival nearly impossible as the destruction of vital infrastructure fosters an environment that facilitates the swift transmission of diseases and epidemics.

IOF deliberately target and destroy Gaza's healthcare system, rendering it impossible to treat diseases and thereby leaving those who survive face death from diseases and epidemics. This evidences Israel's persistence to commit the crime of genocide against the Gaza Strip's population, yet the international community fails to pressure the occupying power to comply with and implement the International Court of Justice (ICJ) rulings and UN Security Council resolutions calling for immediate ceasefire. The international community also fails to take urgent and effective action to provide essential services and humanitarian aid to address the dire living conditions of Gaza Strip population.

Displaced people in Gaza live in devastating conditions amid limited access to safe water, sanitation facilities, and hygiene requirements, jeopardizing their health, education, and livelihoods. For 10 months, IOF have been deliberately targeting water sources to dehydrate civilians and thereby force them to evacuate their residential neighborhoods for military purposes.

This Factsheet outlines the water and sanitation crisis in the Gaza Strip amid the ongoing Israeli genocidal campaign since 07 October 2023, and highlights the unprecedented damage inflicted that has created a major humanitarian disaster with long-term repercussions on the already strained healthcare and environmental systems resulting from a 17-year siege before the current aggression. The Factsheet frames these deliberate Israeli violations against water and sanitation system within the broader framework of IOF's persistence to commit genocide against the people of the Gaza Strip. IOF has used a policy of dehydration against them and deprived them of their right to have access to clean and safe water, in a flagrant violation of all international conventions and instruments.

## ■ Facts and figures

- IOF have destroyed 67% of water and sanitation facilities and infrastructure<sup>1</sup>. Damaged facilities include 194 water production wells, 40 high volume water reservoirs, 55 sewage pumping stations, 76 municipal desalination plants, four waste water treatment plants and nine warehouses for spare parts, in addition to the destruction of two main water quality testing laboratories<sup>2</sup>.
- The Gaza Strip residents are living on just one-fifth of the water available before the war. Over the past month, only 60,000<sup>r</sup> out of the 300,000 cubic liters needed are being pumped<sup>r</sup>, which is 20% of Gaza's water requirement<sup>3</sup>. UN estimates that the average Gaza is living on only 3 liters of water per day for all needs<sup>4</sup>, well below the WHO's emergency standard of 15 liters<sup>5</sup>.
- Israel has destroyed 70% of all sewage pumps in central and southern Gaza Strip, and 100% of all sewage treatment plants in Gaza City and northern Gaza<sup>6</sup>.
- Gaza City and northern Gaza lack potable water due to the destruction and damage inflicted to all groundwater wells accompanied with lack of fuel required to operate the water wells that remained or had been repaired. The water quantity available in Gaza City is limited and only covers 40% of Gaza City and northern Gaza<sup>7</sup>.
- Gaza Strip Municipalities frequently share their inability to provide water and sanitation services to residents, including the Municipality of Deir al-Balah and Khan Younis, which have reported that the water and sanitation sector have ceased their operations due to a lack of fuel, suspending services for 700,000 people, including both the city's residents and displaced people<sup>8</sup>.
- Gaza Strip residents obtain water through three sources. 90% of Gaza's water supply comes from the coastal aquifer but it is brackish, contaminated and unfit for human consumption for several reasons, including overextraction that has led to seawater

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<sup>1</sup> OCHA, Humanitarian Situation Update #179 on Gaza Strip: <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/humanitarian-situation-update-179-gaza-strip>

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

<sup>3</sup> Information obtained by PCHR from the Coastal Municipalities Water Utility (CMWU) on 12 July 2024.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid

<sup>5</sup> WHO, Technical Notes on Drinking-Water, Sanitation and Hygiene in Emergencies: <https://cdn.who.int/media/docs/default-source/wash-documents/who-tn-09-how-much-water-is-needed.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> OXFAM: How Israel Has Weaponised Water in its Military Campaign in Gaza: [Final version\\_ Gaza water Policy Paper\\_17July.pdf | Powered by Box](#)

<sup>7</sup> Ibid

<sup>8</sup> Municipality of Deir al-Balah on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/wHagiNJpbeadoJsq/>

intrusion and sewage infiltration. The remaining 10% of water not pumped from the Coastal Aquifer comes primarily from small seawater desalination plants and three Israeli Mekorot lines supplying water to Gaza, the Middle Area and Khan Yunis governorates.

- 55% of the available potable water in Gaza is purchased by the Palestinian Water Authority from the Israeli Water Company Mekorot, with the cost being deducted monthly from Palestinian tax revenues, known as revenue clearance<sup>9</sup>, and that is to at least compensate for the severe water shortage caused by the denial of Palestinians' ability to invest in and benefit from their natural resources.
- 97 percent of the water drawn from Gaza's coastal aquifer does not meet WHO standards<sup>10</sup>. Some 1.8 million people require some form of humanitarian Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) assistance, of which children comprise some 52 percent<sup>11</sup>.
- 66% of the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip suffer from the spread of waterborne diseases such as cholera, chronic diarrhea, and gastrointestinal diseases, due to the lack of drinkable water and the shutdown of all water desalination plants as a result of the ongoing Israeli aggression<sup>12</sup>. Since the beginning of the war, over 100,000 Hepatitis A cases have been reported; this number that could be counted amid the collapse of the epidemiological surveillance due to the continued aggression.<sup>13</sup>
- Thirty-four Palestinians have died from malnutrition and dehydration, mostly children<sup>14</sup>. IOF deliberately debilitate any efforts to repair water and sanitation facilities with 5 members of Gaza Municipality staff killed while they were on duty operating water wells<sup>15</sup>.
- Israel has stricken down years of efforts in developing Gaza's infrastructure by destroying the water and sanitation system. These efforts culminated with local and international contributions of halting the daily flow of more than 108,000 cubic meters of untreated

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<sup>9</sup> Wafa Agency: the statement of Mazen Ghoneim, Head of Palestinian Water Authority on 12 June 2024:

<https://www.wafa.ps/Pages/Details/97602>

<sup>10</sup> The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), and the Palestinian Water Authority (PWA) Issue a joint Press Release on the World Water Day on March 22nd, 2024:

<https://www.pcbs.gov.ps/post.aspx?lang=en&ItemID=4716>

<sup>11</sup> UNICEF: <https://www.unicef.org/sop/what-we-do/wash-water-sanitation-and-hygiene>

<sup>12</sup> Wafa Agency: 66% of Palestinians in Gaza suffer from waterborne diseases, says Environment Authority:

<https://english.wafa.ps/Pages/Details/141071#:~:text=RAMALLAH%2C%20Thursday%2C%20January%2025%2C,closure%20of%20all%20water%20desalination>

<sup>13</sup> Information obtained by PCHR's researcher during an interview with Dr. Maher Shameya, Assistant Undersecretary of the Ministry of Health on 11 July 2024.

<sup>14</sup> UN experts declare famine has spread throughout Gaza Strip – Press Release:

<https://www.un.org/unispal/document/un-experts-declare-famine-pr-09jul24/>

<sup>15</sup> Gaza Municipality: The Israeli Occupation Targets Gaza Municipality Staff Involved in Operating Water Wells:

<https://gaza-city.org/news/l-htl-l-yktl-5-mn-to-km-lto-r-fy-bldy-ghz-laa-mlyn-fy-tshghyl-b-r-lmy-h/15006>

sewage from Gaza into the Mediterranean Sea<sup>16</sup>. With the shutdown of wastewater treatment plants and destruction of many during the war, the Gaza Strip is back to square one becoming uninhabitable.

- According to UNICEF, tests on sewage samples confirm the presence of poliovirus as sewage flows through displaced persons' tents due to infrastructure destruction, causing a health crisis in Gaza Strip<sup>17</sup>. WHO states that the decimation of the health system, lack of security, access obstruction, constant population displacement, shortages of medical supplies, poor quality of water and weakened sanitation have created the "perfect environment" for vaccine-preventable diseases to spread - with polio just one of them are increasing the risk of vaccine-preventable diseases, including polio.<sup>18</sup>

### ■ Impact of the Collapsed Water System on Public Health in the Gaza Strip

Residents of the Gaza Strip are currently living in overcrowded places after more than 2 million people were forcibly displaced from their neighborhoods to a deplorable environment with no access to safe water, effective sanitation systems, or basic hygiene and its requirements. The ongoing Israeli war keeps besetting Gaza by unparalleled humanitarian crisis, including the increase of contaminated and salinized water and the spread of diseases and epidemics among displaced people many times, due to the deliberate destruction of water and sanitation systems.

Unprecedented population density can simultaneously reduce the quantity of safe water per person and increase the likelihood of pathogen and disease transmission since displaced families share the same toilets, with around 14,000 people sharing 25 toilets<sup>19</sup>. This means approximately 600 people share a single toilet, which exceeds UNHCR's highest standards that refugees from different households may share a communal toilet with a total of up to 50 people. This heightened level of shared

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<sup>16</sup> RAND Corporation: The Public Health Impacts of Gaza's Water Crisis:

[https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research\\_reports/RR2500/RR2515/RAND\\_RR2515.pdf](https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR2500/RR2515/RAND_RR2515.pdf)

<sup>17</sup> Palestinian Ministry of Health in Gaza, New Health Disaster:

<https://www.facebook.com/MOHGaza1994/posts/808519878119623/>

<sup>18</sup> WHO: Polio Stalks Gazans as "Anarchy" Spreads:

<https://news.un.org/en/story/2024/07/1152281#:~:text=But%20more%20than%20nine%20months,perfect%20environment%E2%80%9D%20for%20vaccine%2Dpreventable>

<sup>19</sup> OCHA: Humanitarian Situation Update #190 | Gaza Strip: <https://www.ochaopt.org/ar/content/humanitarian-situation-update-190-gaza-strip>

sanitation facilities can interfere with adequate hygiene practices and expose vulnerable refugees to harassment and sexual and gender-based violence<sup>20</sup>.

Despite the limited capacity of the disease surveillance system and its inability to detect and track health conditions across the entire Gaza Strip, it has recorded over a million cases of infectious diseases in the central and southern Gaza areas. Skin diseases, Upper respiratory tract infection (URI), hepatitis, meningitis, dysentery, and watery diarrhea are running rampant in Gaza, leading to deaths among children. Epidemics have increased more than fivefold compared to pre-war phase due to the lack of safe water, acute food insecurity, weak herd immunity, shortages of medicines and detergents, overcrowded shelters, deteriorating environmental conditions, and the destruction of infrastructure and sanitation systems leading to water contamination<sup>21</sup>.

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***“There is no water in the toilets, and we relieve ourselves in buckets. My husband empties them early in the morning at dumpsters which is far from the shelter.”***  
**S.A., a displaced person in Jabalia refugee camp’s shelters in northern Gaza Strip.**

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Dr. Maher Shamiya, Assistant Undersecretary of the Ministry of Health, stated to the PCHR’s researcher that “MOH in Gaza has recorded over 100,000 cases of Hepatitis A, resulting from chronic water scarcity and contaminated water. Many cases of fatigue, diarrhea, and muscle weakness are running rampant among the people, particularly in shelters due to gastrointestinal infections caused by drinking contaminated water. Toxicity levels in the body increase with the mixing of water with contaminated metals, and cases of scabies spread among Gaza Strip population due to sewage infiltration to water taps. Moreover, water scarcity and drinking insufficient quantities of water have led to renal colic from salt deposits in the urinary tract, while dehydration spreads among children and the elderly, causing body weakness, skin cracks, and posing a significant threat to public health.”

Dr. Shamiya added, "IOF's attacks on the infrastructure and networks of water and sanitation that are so close to each other has led to infiltration of sewage to water

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<sup>20</sup> UNHCR: WASH: <https://www.unhcr.org/ar/what-we-do/protect-human-rights/public-health/water-sanitation-and-hygiene>

<sup>21</sup> PCHR: Gaza Strip Patients are Victims of Genocide report: <https://pchrgaza.org/ar/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/pchr03.pdf>

pumped by the municipality, which is also contaminated, causing a serious threat to public health. Some families have been forced to drink tap water, significantly increasing threat to the public health. IOF have destroyed the only public health laboratory, so people now drink water that is not tested, not knowing if it is clean and safe or how many metals and minerals in it."

MOH's figures and statistics show a significant increase in disease outbreaks compared to pre-war<sup>22</sup>. For example, an average of 2000 cases of diarrhea in children monthly used to be reported but today, after 10 months of the war, water-associated diseases account for approximately 26 per cent of childhood diseases in Gaza and are a primary cause of child morbidity<sup>23</sup>.

In protracted conflicts: Children under 5 are more than 20 times more likely to die from diarrheal disease linked to unsafe water and sanitation than violence in conflict<sup>24</sup>. This occurs amid a deteriorating situation in the remaining hospitals that already lack the equipment and expertise to manage the huge number of patients and injured.

The Environmental Quality Authority said that 66% of the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip suffer from the spread of waterborne diseases such as cholera, chronic diarrhea, and gastrointestinal diseases, due to the lack of drinkable water and the shutdown of all water desalination plants as a result of the ongoing Israeli aggression. Gaza Strip residents are now drinking contaminated water that may be even mixed with sewage

***"My son 'Oday, was infected with Hepatitis A due to water scarcity inside the shelter that houses around 6000 displaced people, as we all share 6 toilets that lack hygiene and even water."***

***- Mohammad Al-Louh (31), displaced in a school in central Deir Al-Balah.***

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<sup>22</sup> WHO: Risk of Disease Spread Soars in Gaza as Health Facilities, Water and Sanitation Systems Disrupted. <https://www.emro.who.int/media/news/risk-of-disease-spread-soars-in-gaza-as-health-facilities-water-and-sanitation-systems-disrupted.html>

<sup>23</sup> UN Environment Programme: State of Environment and Outlook Report for the occupied Palestinian territory 2020: <https://www.unep.org/resources/report/state-environment-and-outlook-report-occupied-palestinian-territory-2020>

<sup>24</sup> UNICEF: Water Under Fire: <https://www.unicef.org/reports/water-under-fire-2019>

water, as warned by WHO Regional Director who stated that some Gaza residents are drinking sewage water<sup>25</sup>.

Impacts of water contamination are evident in the health of the Gaza population, with infectious diseases spreading easily due to Israeli restrictions on the entry of hygiene supplies and many people unable to purchase available hygiene products due to their high prices. Gaza residents lack mechanisms to adapt to the water scarcity, as most families resort to reusing water for multiple needs. They are forced to reduce their usual practices of washing and bathing to conserve the limited water supply, which has negatively impacted their health and exacerbated the spread of infectious diseases.

Residents of Gaza City and northern Gaza fear complete outage of water in the city and thereby the outbreak of epidemics, diseases and dehydration. Mohammed Ziyad (43), father of 7 and currently displaced in a school shelter on Yaffa Street, eastern Gaza City, said to PCHR's researcher:

*"We suffer from scarcity of water at the school shelter overcrowded with 4000 Internally Displaced People IDPs. We can barely meet our most basic needs of water amid lack of clean potable water that has sometimes forced us to drink from tap water for also not being able to afford to buy potable water. As a result, my children suffered from diarrhea and severe colic. In the latest Israeli invasion, we were displaced from eastern Gaza City to the western areas and slept on the rubble of destroyed houses, during which, we had difficult access to water and having to walk 6 kilometers to fill two jerrycans of water, around 20 liters for each jerrycan. And this quantity does not meet the most basic needs of my 7 children. Gaza's water situation is catastrophic, and I am always worried my children might catch any disease or suffer from dehydration due to the scarce and contaminated water."*

*"The rate of water pumping through networks has reduced to 60,000 liters daily, constituting around 20% of the water pumped before the Israeli war that used to be around 300,000 liters of water a day."*

**CMWU**

According to PCHR's field documentation, the Coastal Municipalities Water Utility (CMWU) said to PCHR's researcher, "the water situation in the Gaza Strip is catastrophic and the water system has suffered complex crisis as it is an integrated system but getting worse day by day;

<sup>25</sup> Wafa Agency: WHO Regional Director: Some Gaza residents are drinking sewage water and eating animal feed: <https://english.wafa.ps/Pages/Details/144754>



even after the war ends, the remaining water facilities will collapse. Around 60% of the water facilities and networks have been destroyed or severely damaged with only 40% remaining facilities from which our crews extract and pump water not enough to meet the most basic needs of the population." They added, "the services provided by the CMWU during the war are indispensable to human survival." They also denied reports of Israel allowing entry of equipment necessary for the operation of Gaza water facilities since the beginning of the war as it only allowed limited deliveries of fuel. Moreover, CMWU emphasized generators have stopped working due to many malfunctions emerging from working for 10 months and needing repairs.

Regarding the situation in Gaza City and northern Gaza, CMWU said, "the situation is catastrophic. For example, in Jabalia during the latest Israeli invasion, IOF destroyed all groundwater wells (18) amid no supply lines for Israel's national water company "Mekorot", thereby leaving the city with no sources of potable water. Moreover, denying entry of spare parts and equipment necessary for the repair of wells and lack of the fuel necessary for the operation of the remaining generators have inflicted catastrophic conditions to the civilian population in large areas of northern Gaza Strip. Similarly, civilians who remained in al-Shuja'iyya neighborhood, eastern Gaza, have endured a lot following the destruction of wells and Israel halting water pumping through the Mekorot supply line and even destroying it during the military ground invasion, forcing it out of service. As a result, the Gaza Municipality has become incapable of providing water services for the whole population across the city.

Gaza and northern Gaza has recorded extreme levels of dehydration amid blackout of water and shortage of fuel necessary for the operation of the remaining wells in addition to the Israeli company's cutting its water supplies into eastern Gaza City and unavailability of spare parts to operate the electricity generators needed to extract, pump and distribute water for people. Moreover, the recurrent Israeli evacuation orders have aggravated people's ongoing suffering due to the scarcity and contamination of water amid scenes of chaos and panic as people become incapable of obtaining safe and clean water or even contaminated water to meet their most basic needs of water.

'Asem al-Nabeeh, Director of Public Relations in the Gaza Municipality, said to PCHR's researcher, "as dehydration crisis gets worse in Gaza City due to the Israeli invasion of eastern Gaza, particularly Shuja'iyya neighborhood, the municipal crews find it extremely difficult to access the main valves there while the Israeli Water Company's

supply line was damaged and went out of service in al-Mentar area and other areas. This has negatively affected the water crisis in the vast majority of Gaza, particularly the western areas that are overcrowded with IDPs. Also, IOF's ground invasion of the southwestern areas of the city has aggravated the suffering of IDPs crammed full in central Gaza City's neighborhoods of al-Naser and Sheikh Redwan amid scarcity of water due to the damage inflicted to most of wells, rendering it difficult for the municipal teams to supply water to the people." He added that the water crisis in Gaza is ongoing, and the current water supply only covers 40% of the city with insufficient, limited and irregular access to water."

Ádel Ábed Salamah Átallah, owner of a private water desalination plant, said to PCHR's researcher: "the plant repeatedly stops working due to power outage and lack of fuel needed for the operation of generators as well as the damage to the solar panels in the plant's vicinity after being bombed by IOF, not to mention the recurrent evacuation orders. We resort to buying fuel from the black market, a liter of which may cost us 15 times double the original price as we need it to operate the plant so we can provide only a small quantity of water for people. Before the war, the plant used to provide 100-120 cups of potable water, but during the war only the quantity of fuel can determine how much water can be supplied."

▪ **Israel uses water as a method of warfare during its aggression on the Gaza Strip**

Israel has a systematic policy of maintaining the minimum supply of water to Palestinians across the occupied Palestinian territory and has a long record of crimes relevant to weaponizing water as part of its colonial plans and policies in the Gaza Strip and West Bank, including occupied Jerusalem. Israel has always undermined any possibility of developing and investing in the Gaza water infrastructure in the best way that meets the needs of the Palestinian population. On the other side, Israel has planned and developed an effective and advanced water system to meet its settlers' needs until 2050. Israel provides its citizens, whether within Israel or settlers in the West Bank, with around 250 liters of water per day while the Palestinian in the West Bank and Gaza Strip has capita of only 100 liters per day.<sup>26</sup>

After its disengagement from Gaza in 2005, Israel tightened its siege and restrictions at the Gaza Strip's border crossings through banning the entry of essential items necessary for the development of the main infrastructure, including 70 percent of

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<sup>26</sup> Israel no longer dries up: this is how we became a water powerhouse, Yedioth Ahronoth: <https://www.ynet.co.il/environment-science/article/hkklebjvj>

the technical equipment that is needed to maintain water and sanitation networks<sup>27</sup> under the pretext of being under "dual use"<sup>28</sup> items list, and this is prohibited by international law.

Israel uses its security concerns to justify its violation of the rights of Palestinian civilians in the Gaza Strip in disregard for its international obligations as an occupying power, among them ensuring the welfare of civilians and their access to supplies essential to their survival, including safe drinking water and sanitation facilities.

Amid Israel's military aggression ongoing since October 7th, IOF have used Palestinians' humanitarian needs as a method of warfare to force civilians to evacuate their residences. On 09 October 2023, the Israeli Defense Minister ordered the blockage of electricity, food, water and fuel supplies to the Gaza Strip.<sup>29</sup> Moreover, the Israeli Minister of Energy, Katz, ordered the cuts to electricity and water.<sup>30</sup> Both statements evidence Israel's deliberate intent to commit the crime of genocide.

This statement was followed by unprecedented widescale military operations and attacks on all aspects of life in Gaza, where the vital infrastructure and water and sanitation facilities have been targeted amid a systematic policy of starvation and dehydration against the population and spread of diseases and epidemics, posing a largescale risk to the public health. Israel's conduct violates Article 33 of the Fourth Geneva Convention and Rule 103 of the Customary International Law<sup>31</sup> and explicitly proves that Israel deliberately deprives civilians of supplies indispensable to the survival of civilians, amounting to a war crime under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> A study by RAND Organization on the Public Health Impacts of Gaza's Water Crisis:

[https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research\\_reports/RR2500/RR2515/RAND\\_RR2515.pdf](https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR2500/RR2515/RAND_RR2515.pdf)

<sup>28</sup> List of dual use goods and equipment, Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT), an unofficial translation of the list by Gisha:

[https://gisha.org/UserFiles/File/LegalDocuments/procedures/merchandise/170\\_2\\_EN.pdf](https://gisha.org/UserFiles/File/LegalDocuments/procedures/merchandise/170_2_EN.pdf)

<sup>29</sup> Official Account for the Israeli Defense Minister on X platform:

<https://x.com/yoavgallant/status/1711335592942875097>

<sup>30</sup> official account of Israeli Energy Minister on X platform:

[https://twitter.com/Israel\\_katz/status/1712083122227909116?t=nd9aPqyMtpUXy4A0HhqFMw&s=09](https://twitter.com/Israel_katz/status/1712083122227909116?t=nd9aPqyMtpUXy4A0HhqFMw&s=09)

<sup>31</sup> International Committee of Red Cross, Customary International Law, Rule 103:

<https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/customary-ihl/v1/rule103>

<sup>32</sup> Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, Article 8 (2) (b):

<https://www.icc-cpi.int/sites/default/files/2024-05/Rome-Statute-eng.pdf>

**The Israeli authorities claim they are investigating a footage posted on social media showing Israeli forces blowing up a main water reservoir in Rafah known as "[Canada Well](#)" noting that IOF have destroyed 67% of the water and sanitation facilities and infrastructure, without any prior video documenting any of these incidents. This incident is a new grim reminder of Israel's blatant disregard for the ICJ rulings that have ordered Israel to take all provisional measures within its power to prevent the commission of the crime of genocide.**

IOF's attacks on the water and sanitation vital infrastructure and facilities and hindering clean water deliveries through cutting fuel supplies necessary for the operation of wells, water desalination plants and sewage treatment constitute a serious violation of the International Humanitarian Law (IHL), which prohibits (attack, destroy, remove or render useless, for that purpose, objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population, such as drinking water installations)<sup>33</sup>. Moreover, these attacks violate the core principles of the IHL, particularly principle of distinction.<sup>34</sup>

Moreover, IHL ensures protection for the humanitarian relief personnel, which Israel has disregarded when they targeted five Gaza Municipality staff members in charge of water distribution to the people of Gaza as these employees are entitled to the protection given to relief personnel.<sup>35</sup> Under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, intentionally directing attacks against personnel involved in a humanitarian assistance mission in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations is a war crime in international armed conflicts.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, Article 14:  
<https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/protocol-additional-geneva-conventions-12-august-1949-and-0>

<sup>34</sup> International Committee of Red Cross, IHL Databases, Rule 7:  
<https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/customary-ihl/v1/rule7>

<sup>35</sup> 5 Gaza municipality employees killed in Israeli bombing: sources:  
<https://english.news.cn/20240621/63256166dfb748bd99fe3574957d267b/c.html>

<sup>36</sup> International Committee of Red Cross, IHL Databases, Rules 31 and 32:  
<https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/customary-ihl/v1/rule31>  
<https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/customary-ihl/v1/rule32>

The forcible displacement of 2 million Palestinians has increase water stress in southern Gaza Strip, with water systems in the south ill-equipped to meet the rising demand. Also, constantly moving populations complicate delivery of water supplies.<sup>37</sup> Thus, the Israeli evacuation orders and the ensuing conditions imposed on IDPs amount to a crime of genocide as outlined in Article 2 (C) of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide and with same terms as in Article 6 (c) of Rome Statue.<sup>38</sup>

### ▪ **Conclusion and Recommendations:**

PCHR concludes that Israel uses water as a method of warfare during its ongoing military campaign on the Gaza Strip and deliberately inflicts conditions of life calculated to bring about the population's physical destruction, including dehydration of people and depriving them of their right to access safe and clean water. Israeli deliberately and systematically destroys the vital facilities indispensable to people's survival and protracts crises so they will not end by the end of the war.

As the Israeli aggression enters its tenth month and efforts have so far failed to conclude a ceasefire amid no real pressure exerted on Israel and impunity prevailing for the Israeli perpetrators that has encouraged them to commit further violations, Israel is acting as if uniquely above the law by defying ICJ's rulings ordering Israel to take provisional measures within its power to prevent the commission of crime of genocide. PCHR emphasizes these violations constitute grave breaches of Israel's obligations, including protection of civilians as codified in the Fourth Geneva Convention and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, amounting to war crimes and crimes against humanity that are prohibited under Rome Statute.

PCHR believes that Israel's continuous commission of violations unfolds its persistence to commit the crime of genocide against the people in Gaza, in flagrant defiance of the ICJ's provisional measures to enable the provision of urgently needed basic services and

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<sup>37</sup> International Committee of Red Cross, IHL Databases, Rule 131:  
<https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/customary-ihl/v1/rule131>

<sup>38</sup> Palestinian Centre for Human Rights, Position Paper: "Amounting to Genocide: Legal Characterization of Displacing the People of the Gaza Strip:  
<https://pchrgaza.org/ar/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/pchrgaza-1.pdf>

humanitarian assistance to address the adverse conditions of life faced by Palestinians in the Gaza Strip.

In light of the above, PCHR:

- Calls on the Special Rapporteur on the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation to declare the Gaza Strip a disaster-stricken area due to the Israeli grave violations against Palestinian civilians after causing the collapse of the safe water and sanitation systems that has led to the spread of waterborne diseases and epidemics.
- Calls for compelling Israel to impose an immediate ceasefire as it is a number one priority and holding it accountable for the crimes it committed, particularly use of water as a method of warfare.
- Demand opening of the border crossings and allowing the immediate entry of sufficient fuel required for the operation of remaining wells and water and sewage treatment plants in addition to repairing what can be repairable to save the Gaza Strip from a humanitarian disaster.
- Calls for allowing the entry of generators, submersible water pumps, spare parts and portable toilets and washrooms for IDPs.
- Stresses that Israel as an occupying power shall realize the right to safe drinking water and sanitation services for the Gaza Strip population and hereby shall bear the costs of repairing and reconstructing the plants, wells and pipelines it damaged during the war. Also, Israel should ensure the operation of the remaining vital infrastructure of water and sanitation services and carry out repairs and reactivate of all the Israeli water company supply lines.
- Calls on all international relief organizations to activate programs to reconstruct and repair temporary safe water networks and sanitation systems to cope with the current emergency situation.
- Demands personal hygiene assistance to maintain the health and wellbeing of IDPs, particularly women, children and elderlies.
- Urges the need to reconstruct the areas and shelters overcrowded with IDPS after they had been bombed and parts of their infrastructure destroyed and to support them amid the stress on its environment facilities that are ill-equipped to meet the rising demand of that huge number of IDPs.