

Gaza: It's not a War

Language is never neutral. The words we use shape what the world sees and what it is prepared to tolerate. To call Israel's ongoing campaign in Gaza a "war" is to disguise a one-sided campaign of extermination as a legitimate conflict. By every legal and moral measure, what is happening is not war but **a series of war crimes against a besieged civilian population**, culminating in the crime of genocide.

Wars are fought between combatants, governed by rules of engagement, and subject to international humanitarian law. Gaza, however, has no army to meet Israel's overwhelming force. What has unfolded since 2007 under siege - and with catastrophic escalation since 2023 - is the systematic destruction of a people's capacity to live, carried out with some of the world's most advanced weapons.

This essay will demonstrate why Gaza cannot be described as a war: first, by clarifying the definition of war and combatant; second, by documenting the scale of devastation inflicted on Gaza; third, by exposing the vast imbalance of Israeli military power and its external resupply; fourth, by analyzing the siege as a weapon of extermination; fifth, by applying the **Genocide Convention**; and finally, by stressing why language itself matters in the face of atrocity.

1. What Counts as War?

The **Geneva Conventions** and customary international law define wars as armed conflicts between organized combatants. A **combatant** is a person lawfully entitled to fight - typically members of a state's armed forces, or organized armed groups under a responsible command structure. Combatants may be targeted in battle, but they are also entitled to protection if captured as prisoners of war. Civilians, by contrast, may never be directly targeted.

This distinction is not academic - it is the cornerstone of the laws of war.

Gaza does not meet these criteria. It has no standing army, navy, or air force. Resistance groups exist, but they are fragmented, poorly equipped, and dwarfed by Israel's unmatched military capacity. The overwhelming majority of those killed are civilians. To describe this as war is therefore a categorical error: the framework of war assumes parity of combatants, yet in Gaza we see **one of the most advanced militaries on earth attacking an unarmed and besieged population**.

2. Gaza's Devastation Civilian Deaths and Injuries

By September 2025:

- The **official Health Ministry toll** records more than **63,600 deaths**, with women and children making up the vast majority.
- **Israeli intelligence data** leaked in August 2025 showed that **83% of the dead were civilians** - even by IDF's own standards.
- Experts estimate that the **true death toll may be 3-15 times higher** than the official death toll.
- At least **half a million have been wounded**, many suffering life-changing amputations, especially children.

Housing and Displacement

By mid-2025, **92% of homes** in Gaza were damaged or destroyed, leaving nearly the entire population displaced. Families survive under tarpaulins and tents among the rubble. Cities like Gaza City and Khan Younis have been reduced to wastelands.

Water and Sanitation

- *All six wastewater treatment plants* have been destroyed. Untreated sewage now flows directly into the Mediterranean, creating ecological and health catastrophe.
- **85% of desalination facilities** are either destroyed or inoperable without electricity and fuel. Families receive less than **3 liters of unsafe water per person per day**, far below the humanitarian survival minimum.
- Waterborne disease outbreaks are widespread, particularly among children.

Food and Agriculture

- More than **80% of farmland, orchards, and greenhouses** have been destroyed.
- Famine conditions exist across northern Gaza. Aid convoys have been repeatedly blocked or targeted.
- Hunger is used as a weapon. Images of children dying of starvation in hospitals and refugee camps haunt the global conscience.

Healthcare

- Hospitals have been systematically attacked. Out of 36 hospitals that existed, only 10-15 remain partially functional.
- **Maternity wards destroyed**, no anesthesia for surgeries, amputations performed without pain relief, and no supplies for dialysis or cancer treatment.
- More than 1,000 **doctors, nurses, paramedics, and ambulance drivers have been killed**, making Gaza the most dangerous place in the world for healthcare workers.

Education and Future Generations

- Schools, universities, and UN shelters have been bombed.
- Gaza's children - more than half the population - have lost not only homes and families but education and the promise of a future.

The cumulative effect is **the dismantling of an entire society's capacity to exist**.

3. Israel's Overwhelming Military Power

Personnel

Israel maintains one of the world's largest and most sophisticated militaries relative to population:

- **170,000 active duty, 465,000 reserves, and 35,000 paramilitary personnel** - a total of about **670,000** troops ready to mobilize.

Air Power

- **45 F-35I "Adir" stealth fighters**, some of the most advanced aircraft ever built.
- **174 F-16s** and **66 F-15s**, capable of both precision strike and air superiority.
- Reconnaissance planes, aerial refueling tankers, and AWACS for extended missions.
- A vast drone fleet (Heron, Hermes, Eitan), used for both surveillance and precision strikes.

Ground Forces

- Hundreds of **Merkava main battle tanks** (Mark 3 and 4).
- Thousands of armored personnel carriers, including the Namer and Achzarit.
- Precision artillery, rocket launchers, and armored engineering vehicles for urban demolition.

Naval Forces and Nuclear Deterrence

- German-built **Dolphin-class submarines**, believed to be armed with nuclear-capable cruise missiles, giving Israel a second-strike capability.
- A modern navy with corvettes, missile boats, and support ships.

Nuclear Arsenal

- Israel maintains a policy of ambiguity but is widely believed to hold **80-200 nuclear warheads**, deliverable by aircraft, ballistic missiles, and submarines.
- This makes Israel the sole nuclear power in the Middle East.

External Resupply

- The **United States** provides billions in annual military aid, continuous shipments of munitions, and advanced aircraft.
- **Germany** supplies submarines, warships, vehicle engines, and precision munitions, often subsidizing costs.
- In June 2025, **14 cargo planes from the U.S. and Germany** delivered fresh military supplies.

Against this unmatched arsenal, Gaza has no tanks, no jets, no navy, and no nuclear deterrent. The asymmetry is absolute.

4. Siege as a Weapon of Extermination

Since 2007, Gaza has endured a blockade - the longest siege in history. Since October 2023, it has tightened into total blockade.

- No electricity for hospitals.
- Food and medicine withheld at the border.
- Fuel and reconstruction materials banned.
- Humanitarian convoys obstructed or attacked.

Conventional sieges aim to force surrender of an opposing army. Gaza's siege aims to destroy civilian life.

5. Genocide, Not War

The **1948 Genocide Convention** defines genocide as acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial, or religious group. These include:

1. **Killing members of the group** – tens of thousands of Palestinians, mostly women and children, killed.
2. **Causing serious bodily or mental harm** – mass amputations, trauma, starvation, untreated disease.
3. **Inflicting conditions of life calculated to destroy** – destruction of homes, farms, water, healthcare, and shelter.
4. **Imposing measures to prevent births** – starvation, medical collapse, and destruction of maternity care obstruct reproduction.
5. **Forcibly transferring children** – teleologically, consigning children to mass graves achieves the obliteration of the next generation.

This is not speculation. The **International Association of Genocide Scholars (IAGS)**, **Amnesty International**, **Médecins Sans Frontières**, and Israeli human rights groups such as **B'Tselem** have all declared Israel's actions in Gaza genocide.

6. Why Language Matters

Calling this a war is not just inaccurate - it is complicit. War implies two sides fighting under laws of engagement. But Gaza is no battlefield. It is more like an armed man attacking an unarmed child. No one would call that a "fight."

To persist in calling Gaza a war is to sanitize atrocity, to normalize genocide, and to betray the victims.

Conclusion

Israel's actions in Gaza are not a war. They are **a series of war crimes against a besieged civilian population**, sustained by one of the world's most advanced militaries and continu-

ously resupplied by its allies. The campaign meets the legal definition of genocide and exceeds any plausible understanding of war.

This is not war. It is genocide - a war of extermination.

References

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