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**Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner
for Human Rights and reports of the Office of the
High Commissioner and the Secretary-General**

Written statement submitted by Organization for Defending Victims of Violence, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status*

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement, which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[1 February 2026]

* Issued as received, in the language of submission only.

The Worsening Humanitarian and Human Rights Situation in the Gaza Strip

Introduction

This written statement is submitted to the Human Rights Council with the purpose of once again drawing attention to the ongoing genocide in the Gaza Strip. It seeks to ensure that the passage of time, the emergence of other (manufactured) crises, and media warfare do not obscure or marginalize the gravity of the situation in Gaza, nor diminish the urgency of addressing the serious and continuing violations documented by United Nations bodies.

Behind every statistic cited in United Nations reports lies a human life abruptly interrupted, a family displaced, and a future placed indefinitely on hold.

These reports consistently indicate that the human rights and humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip is profoundly dire and unsustainable. They document serious and ongoing violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law, underscoring the urgent need for serious attention and action by the Human Rights Council and the international community to bring an end to these violations and prevent further deterioration.

As United Nations reporting makes clear, the crisis in Gaza is not episodic or isolated, but sustained, cumulative, and deeply rooted in the lived reality of the civilian population.

The Dire Humanitarian Situation in the Gaza Strip

United Nations agencies continue to record staggering and devastating levels of civilian harm in the Gaza Strip, revealing the immense human cost of the ongoing crisis. According to UNRWA, between 7 October 2023 and 10 December 2025, at least 70,369 Palestinians were killed and 170,999 were injured. (1) These figures represent not abstract statistics, but the systematic loss of civilian life, encompassing vast numbers of women, children, and other civilians, whose protection lies at the very core of international humanitarian law.

Crucially, the suffering did not abate with announcements of ceasefires in late 2025. OCHA's Humanitarian Situation Update #353 documents continued civilian deaths and injuries in early 2026, underscoring that the threat to civilian life has remained acute, ongoing, and unresolved (2). This persistence of aggression starkly illustrates that, despite ongoing legal and diplomatic efforts, civilians in Gaza continue to face grave and immediate risks, with no effective relief from violence or protection from further killing by Israel. Settler colonial violence continues to destroy Palestinian homes, shelters, and essential civilian infrastructure throughout Palestinian territory. (3) The destruction of residential buildings, health facilities, schools, water and sanitation systems, and other infrastructure has compromised essential services and rendered many areas uninhabitable.

This widespread destruction has dismantled the conditions necessary for life, survival and recovery, significantly restricting access to shelter, health care, clean water, and sanitation.

A catastrophe of repeated and large-scale forced displacement has been unfolding since 7 October 2023, raising serious concerns among international observers regarding patterns consistent with ethnic cleansing and genocide. OCHA has documented successive displacement orders affecting vast areas of the Gaza Strip, compelling civilians to flee multiple times without access to safe routes, adequate shelter, or essential services. (4)

Such displacement, carried out amid ongoing hostilities and without guarantees of safety or return, amount to forcible transfer, prohibited under international humanitarian law. When assessed cumulatively, these patterns of displacement engage the prohibition of collective punishment and amount to grave breaches under the Fourth Geneva Convention.

These concerns have been further reinforced by findings of United Nations human rights mechanisms. In its report of 16 September 2025, the United Nations Commission of Inquiry, as reported by OHCHR, concluded that there are reasonable grounds to believe that acts committed in the Gaza Strip may amount to genocide under international law. The Commission emphasized that the cumulative pattern of killings, mass displacement, destruction of civilian infrastructure, and denial of life-sustaining conditions must be assessed not in isolation, but as part of a broader context engaging the most serious international crimes. (5)

At the same time, severe restrictions on humanitarian access have compounded civilian suffering. Persistent insecurity, destruction of infrastructure, and impediments to movement have obstructed the delivery of life-saving assistance. Despite limited facilitation of aid, OCHA confirms that humanitarian access remains grossly insufficient, undermining the obligation to allow and facilitate rapid and unimpeded humanitarian relief for civilians in need. (6)

Hospitals and health facilities throughout Gaza have operated under extreme shortages of fuel, medicines, and medical supplies. (7) Critical interruptions in health services have transformed otherwise treatable conditions into life-threatening emergencies.

The combined effects of overcrowding, destruction of sanitation systems, and contagion risks have created a severe public health crisis in violation of the fundamental human rights to health and life.

Taken together, these conditions create an environment in which mere survival becomes the sole objective individuals can pursue. This is incompatible with the protection owed to civilians under international humanitarian law.

The dire levels of food insecurity and limited humanitarian aid compound civilian suffering. According to UN reporting, Gaza's residents continue to face severe deprivation, and some populations are at heightened risk of death from hunger and disease as humanitarian efforts struggle to meet urgent needs. (8)

In the Advisory Opinion of 22 October 2025, the International Court of Justice reaffirmed that, as the occupying power with effective control over the Gaza Strip, Israel is under an unconditional obligation to agree to and facilitate relief schemes provided by the United Nations and its entities, including UNRWA, to ensure the survival of the civilian population and prevent further deterioration of humanitarian conditions. This obligation arises from the Fourth Geneva Convention and the Court's own orders requiring the unhindered provision of basic services and humanitarian assistance to address the catastrophic levels of deprivation.

The Court emphasized that obstructing or impeding the operations of impartial humanitarian organizations—such as by blocking access, restricting humanitarian personnel, or undermining UNRWA's ability to function—violates international humanitarian law and denies civilians their fundamental rights to life, food, health, and dignity.

Similarly, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights has repeatedly warned of the catastrophic consequences of continued violations in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. In his statement of 26 February 2025, High Commissioner Volker Türk stressed that any vision for a future in the Occupied Palestinian Territory is untenable so long as civilians are subjected to systematic deprivation, insecurity, and denial of their fundamental rights. He underscored that accountability, protection of civilians, and respect for international law are indispensable prerequisites for any sustainable resolution. (9)

Conclusion

The situation in Gaza reflects a sustained humanitarian and human rights crisis marked by widespread civilian harm, structural deprivation, and persistent violations of international law. The evidence documented by United Nations bodies leaves no room for ambiguity regarding the gravity of the situation or the legal obligations engaged. Against this backdrop, continued inaction risks entrenching impunity and normalizing conditions incompatible with the most fundamental principles of international humanitarian and human rights law.

Recommendations

The human rights and humanitarian situation in Gaza remain one of the most severe crises before this Council. We urge the Human Rights Council and Special Rapporteur to:

- Demand full, safe, and sustained humanitarian access throughout Gaza;
- Ensure the protection of civilians and civilian infrastructure in accordance with international humanitarian and human rights law;

Promote accountability for all violations, including conduct potentially amounting to serious war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Actively pursue and exert diplomatic and legal pressure on states to fulfill their obligations under international law by enforcing the International Criminal Court's arrest warrants issued against Benjamin Netanyahu and Yoav Gallant, in accordance with the Rome Statute.

The plight of Gazan civilians underscores the imperative for immediate and sustained international action.

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1. UNRWA, Situation Report #201 on the Humanitarian Crisis in the Gaza Strip and the Occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem (17 December 2025), available at: <https://www.un.org/unispal/document/unrwa-situation-report-201-on-the-humanitarian-crisis-in-the-gaza-strip-and-the-occupied-west-bank-including-east-jerusalem/>
 2. OCHA, Humanitarian Situation Update #353 – Gaza Strip (14 January 2026), available at: <https://www.un.org/unispal/document/ocha-humanitarian-situation-update-353-gaza-strip/>
 3. UNRWA, Situation Report #201, supra note 1.
 4. OCHA, Humanitarian Situation Update #353, supra note 2.
 5. OHCHR, Israel has committed genocide in the Gaza Strip, UN Commission finds (16 September 2025), available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2025/09/israel-has-committed-genocide-gaza-strip-un-commission-finds>
 6. OCHA, Humanitarian Situation Update #353, supra note 2.
 7. UNRWA, Situation Report #201, supra note 1.
 8. OCHA, Humanitarian Situation Update #353, supra note 2.
 9. OHCHR, HC Türk on the Occupied Palestinian Territory – Statement (26 February 2025), available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements-and-speeches/2025/02/hc-turk-occupied-palestinian-territory-any-plans-better-future-must>