

# How Hamas Manipulates Gaza Fatality Numbers: Examining the Male Undercount and Other Problems

by [Gabriel Epstein \(/experts/gabriel-epstein\)](/experts/gabriel-epstein)

Jan 25, 2024

Also available in

[العربية \(/ar/policy-analysis/kyf-ttlab-hmas-badad-alcly-fy-ghzt-drast-dd-aldhkwr-alnaqs-wmshakl-akhry\)](/ar/policy-analysis/kyf-ttlab-hmas-badad-alcly-fy-ghzt-drast-dd-aldhkwr-alnaqs-wmshakl-akhry) /

[Farsi \(/fa/policy-analysis/chgwnh-hmas-shmar-tlfat-jng-ghzh-ra-dstkary-myknd-brsy-kmshmary-tlfat-mrdan-w\)](/fa/policy-analysis/chgwnh-hmas-shmar-tlfat-jng-ghzh-ra-dstkary-myknd-brsy-kmshmary-tlfat-mrdan-w)

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

[Gabriel Epstein \(/experts/gabriel-epstein\)](/experts/gabriel-epstein)

Gabriel Epstein is a research assistant in The Washington Institute's Koret Project on Arab-Israel Relations.



In-Depth Reports

**International media and NGOs have repeated the group's figures without caveats, giving credence to suspicions of Israeli misconduct and fueling accusations of war crimes and even genocide.**

**T**he Hamas-Israel war has produced undeniable devastation across the Gaza Strip. But since the terrorist group carried out its attack on October 7, questions have emerged about the reliability of fatality numbers reported by the Hamas-run Ministry of Health and associated entities. Principal concerns include the group's failure to distinguish between civilians and combatants, its apparent understatement of fatalities for fighting-age men, and an associated overemphasis on women and children's deaths. Hamas has extraordinary incentives to skew the numbers in this way, and international media and NGOs have repeated its figures without caveats, giving credence to suspicions of Israeli misconduct and fueling accusations of war crimes and even genocide.

In this Policy Note, Gabriel Epstein tracks Gaza fatality reporting since the war began to reveal how Hamas statistics are inconsistent, imprecise, and systematically manipulated to downplay the number of men and militants killed. He makes clear that without a better sense of the breakdown of Gaza fatalities—whatever the total number—one cannot issue definitive judgments about the character of Israel's military campaign.

[Click here to read a PDF of the study. \(https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/media/7168?disposition=inline\)](https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/media/7168?disposition=inline) ❖

## RECOMMENDED



BRIEF ANALYSIS

## Coordinated Iran Sanctions Require Coordinated Enforcement

Apr 19, 2024

◆  
Matthew Levitt

(/policy-analysis/coordinated-iran-sanctions-require-coordinated-enforcement)



ARTICLES & TESTIMONY

## China's Military Objectives and Operational Experience in the Middle East

Apr 19, 2024

◆  
Grant Rumley

(/policy-analysis/chinas-military-objectives-and-operational-experience-middle-east)



BRIEF ANALYSIS

## The Middle East's Perilous Moment: Policy Implications and Escalation Risks

Apr 18, 2024

◆  
Dana Stroul,  
Zohar Palti,  
Farzin Nadimi

(/policy-analysis/middle-east-s-perilous-moment-policy-implications-and-escalation-risks)

### TOPICS

Arab & Islamic Politics (/policy-analysis/arab-islamic-politics)

Arab-Israeli Relations (/policy-analysis/arab-israeli-relations)

Military & Security (/policy-analysis/military-security)

Peace Process (/policy-analysis/peace-process)

Terrorism (/policy-analysis/terrorism)

## REGIONS & COUNTRIES

Israel (/policy-analysis/israel)

Palestinians (/policy-analysis/palestinians)