After faulting ‘fog of war’ for cloudy Hamas casualty numbers, UN’s new stats still don’t appear to add up

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A day after a U.N. spokesman attributed a nearly 100% overcounting of Gazan women and children casualties to ‘[the fog of war](https://www.jns.org/un-blames-fog-of-war-for-major-overcounting-of-gazan-child-fatalities/),’ the global body now says that the overall death toll in Gaza due to the war remains the same.

After extensive media coverage of his response to JNS last week—that the ‘fog of war’ was to blame for overcounting fatalities in Gaza for children and women, which the United Nations then reduced by about 42% and about 50% respectively—Farhan Haq, deputy spokesman for U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres, sought to clarify the U.N. position during a Monday press conference.

The overall Hamas-provided death toll has not changed; however, the terror organization opted to classify the dead as either ‘identified’ or ‘unidentified,’ according to Haq.

‘I don’t think the numbers are meant to get back to the previous breakdown of numbers,’ Haq told JNS, of the new figures. ‘As we have made clear, those are not the verified numbers, which is what the new ones are.’

‘What is clear is that the numbers in all categories will rise as the unidentified corpses are identified,’ Haq added. ‘That’s part of a process of ensuring that all the death tolls in all categories are properly verified.’

It wasn’t clear what an ‘unidentified’ death meant. The Hamas-run Gazan health ministry stated on April 6 that it had ‘incomplete data’ for more than 11,000 of the Gazan fatalities it claims to have documented. That means it lacked a key data point about each, including identity number, full name, date of birth or date of death.

The numbers don’t appear to add up.

U.N. Office of the Coordinator of Humanitarian Affairs cited Hamas figures when it [reported](https://www.ochaopt.org/content/hostilities-gaza-strip-and-israel-reported-impact-day-213) on May 6 that there have been 34,735 fatalities, including more than 9,500 women and more than 14,500 children.

Two days later, OCHA cited the same Hamas figures and reported that of 34,844 casualties, 24,686 were ‘identified,’ including 4,959 ‘identified’ women and 7,797 ‘identified’ children.

Taken together, the May 6 and May 8 OCHA announcements suggest that there are at least 4,541 ‘unidentified’ women and at least 6,703 ‘unidentified’ children—or at least 11,244 ‘unidentified’ women and children combined.

**‘This isn’t math’**

But how could there be both 11,244 ‘unidentified’ women and children and, per OCHA’s May 6 figures—24,686 ‘identified’ deaths out of 34,844, presumably the rest ‘unidentified’—10,158 ‘unidentified’ deaths?

According to those figures, that would mean there are no ‘unidentified’ male fatalities. Hamas claims that adult males make up 40% of all the ‘identified’ casualties. It would also mean that there would be no ‘unidentified’ casualties among the elderly—a category Hamas claims makes up 8% of all ‘identified’ casualties.

Anne Bayefsky, director of the Touro Institute on Human Rights and the Holocaust, and president of Human Rights Voices, told JNS that the United Nations has ‘systematically blasted false numbers of Palestinian casualties across the globe since Oct. 8.’

‘Their source has always been Hamas knowing full well that Hamas has a vested interest in lying about the numbers,’ she said. ‘They run civilian and combatant casualty figures together knowing full well that it is legal to kill Hamas combatants and the lawfulness of civilian casualties depends on entirely different standards. Which they misrepresent, too.’

The global body’s ‘so-called ‘humanitarian’ figures count the Israeli humanitarian need at zero,’ she added. ‘This isn’t math. It’s antisemitism.’

David Adesnik, senior fellow and director of research at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, told JNS that it has been known for months that the Gazan Media Office ‘makes impossible assertions about the number of women and children killed in Gaza.’

‘GMO’s numbers are even outlandish compared to those of the Hamas-controlled Gaza health ministry, which has its own track record of fabrication,’ he said. ‘But one expects Hamas to lie. What’s much harder to explain is how the supposed experts at the U.N. could be so credulous for so long.’