Mass Displacement since October 7, 2023:
Flight from War, Genocide, and Expulsion in Gaza, Iran, Israel, Lebanon, and the West Bank

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Summary

Mass population displacement has been a significant feature of the violence experienced in Gaza, Iran, Israel, Lebanon, the West Bank, and other parts of the Middle East since October 7, 2023. To help grasp the full human toll of that violence, this report calculates the extent of forced displacement suffered across these war zones. These sites are highlighted given longstanding United States military and financial support for Israel's government, estimated to be at least $31.35 billion in two years of war.[2]

This report estimates that at least 5.27 million people have been forced to flee their homes in Gaza, Iran, Israel, Lebanon, and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem (as of early September 2025). This total includes an estimated 1.85 million displaced children under 18 years old.[3] Some of these people have since returned home, while many others have not.

As part of the post-October 7 wars, more people, likely in the thousands, have fled their homes in Syria and Yemen.[4] These cases of displacement are not included in this

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[2] Linda J. Bilmes, "Costs of United States Military Activities in the Wider Middle East since October 7, 2023," Costs of War, Watson School, Brown University, October 7, 2025. https://costsofwar.watson.brown.edu/paper/WiderMiddleEastCosts; William D. Hartung, "U.S. Military Aid and Arms Transfers to Israel, October 7, 2023 – September 2025," Costs of War, Watson School, Brown University, October 7, 2025. https://costsofwar.watson.brown.edu/paper/AidToIsrael

[3] The report calculates this figure by assuming that the age distribution of the displaced population mirrors that of each national population, thus multiplying the number displaced in each country by the percent of the total national population under 18. The report follows the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child in defining "children" as those under 18 years of age.

[4] Thousands have been displaced by war and other violence in both countries, however, the number of people displaced by Israeli and U.S. attacks is not clear. The United Nations and the Syrian Network for Human Rights have both cited "thousands" displaced by Israeli military operations and land seizures, as well as by the demolition of civilian homes since the fall of former President Bashar al-Assad in late 2024. See, United Nations Security Council, "Highlighting 'Alarming' Effects of Israel's Regional Incursions on Syria, Security Council Underscores Need to Protect Thousands of Refugees Pouring into Country," press release, October 23, 2024, https://press.un.org/en/2024/sc15861.doc.htm; United Nations, "United Nations Special Envoy for

report's estimate given a lack of data documenting how the post-10/7 wars have caused displacement in those countries.

Many Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, in particular, have been displaced multiple times. This report estimates that people displaced in Gaza have been displaced an average of three to four times each.[5]

Accounting for the experience of all those displaced on multiple occasions, the report estimates that people across the region have been displaced a total of 10.88 million times (in what Table 1, below, calls "displacement events").

This report shows how displacement in Gaza has been qualitatively different than displacement in many other wars and in the other parts of the region highlighted in this report: The displacement of Palestinians has not only been a consequence of people fleeing the violence of war but instead frequently appears to have been the aim of the Israeli government, which has systematically orchestrated mass expulsion. Human rights experts, scholars, legal authorities, and others have concluded such displacement appears to constitute the war crime of "forcible transfer," which is a crime against humanity under international law. Mass expulsion also appears to be a tool that has advanced the genocide of Palestinians in Gaza.

This report warns that displacement continues on a daily basis and could dramatically expand in scope and impact. The Israeli government, with apparent U.S.

Syria Geir O. Pedersen Briefing to the Security Council," press release, August 21, 2025, https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/united-nations-special-envoy-syria-geir-o-pedersen-briefing-security-council-21-august-2025; "The Iran-Israel War and Syria: Assessing Violations of Sovereignty, Civilian Harm, and State Responsibility under International Law," August 14, 2025, 6; Fadel Abdulghany, "Israeli Intervention in Syria and the Responsibility of the Transitional Government," translated from *The New Arab,* Syrian Network for Human Rights, June 17, 2025, https://snhr.org/blog/2025/06/17/israeli-intervention-in-syria-and-the-responsibility-of-the-transitional-government/. On U.S. airstrikes, see, Lolita C. Baldor, "U.S. Airstrikes in Syria Meant to Prevent Islamic State from Taking Power in Leadership Void," PBS News, December 10, 2024, https://www.pbs.org/newshour/world/u-s-airstrikes-in-syria-meant-to-prevent-islamic-state-from-taking-power-in-leadership-void. On Israeli and U.S. attacks on Yemen, see, e.g., Maysaa Shujaa Aldeen, "The Paradox of Intervention: How US Strikes in Yemen Empowered the Houthis," European Council on Foreign Relations, May 13, 2025, https://ecfr.eu/article/the-paradox-of-intervention-how-us-strikes-in-yemen-empowered-the-houthis/; A Yemeni Journalist, "'Relocation Is Better than Living in Constant Fear': After Recent U.S. strikes, a New Wave of Displacement Hits Yemen as People Seek Safer Options," *New Arab*, May 14, 2025, https://www.newarab.com/features/yemen-witnesses-fresh-displacement-wave-after-recent-us-strikes; Ismaeel Naar and Saeed Al-Batati, "When the U.S. and Israel Bomb the Houthis, Civilians Pay the Highest Price," *New York Times,* May 21, 2025, https://www.nytimes.com/2025/05/21/world/middleeast/houthi-militants-civilians-us-israel.html.

[5] The report calculates this estimate by dividing the total current number of displacement events experienced by people in Gaza alone (7,488,511) by the total estimated number of displaced people in Gaza (2,026,636), yielding an estimate of 3.70. Given that the report's calculation of displaced people in Gaza likely omits some displaced, the average may be closer to 3.5. For this reason and because people cannot be displaced a fraction of a time, the report uses "between three and four times" as its estimate. One prior estimate, based on a small sample size, reported an average of six. Danish Refugee Council, Agricultural Development Association, and Women's Affairs Centre, "Suffering by Design: The Human Cost of Repeated Displacement in Gaza," Danish Refugee Council, January 16, 2025, 8. https://drc.ngo/resources/documents/suffering-by-design-the-human-cost-of-repeated-displacement-in-gaza/

government support, has announced and appears to be carrying out plans to forcibly remove most or all of the remaining 2.1 million Palestinians from the Gaza Strip. The Israeli government may likewise accelerate mass displacement in the West Bank. If a full-scale war between Israel and the U.S. and Iran breaks out, millions of Iranians and Israelis could flee their homes for neighboring countries, Europe, the U.S., and other destinations.

The displacement of at least 5.27 million people to date plus the potential displacement of millions more underscores the urgency of ending the violence as quickly as possible, of allowing the displaced to return home as international law requires, of ensuring reparation for the displaced, and of holding the perpetrators accountable for crimes committed.

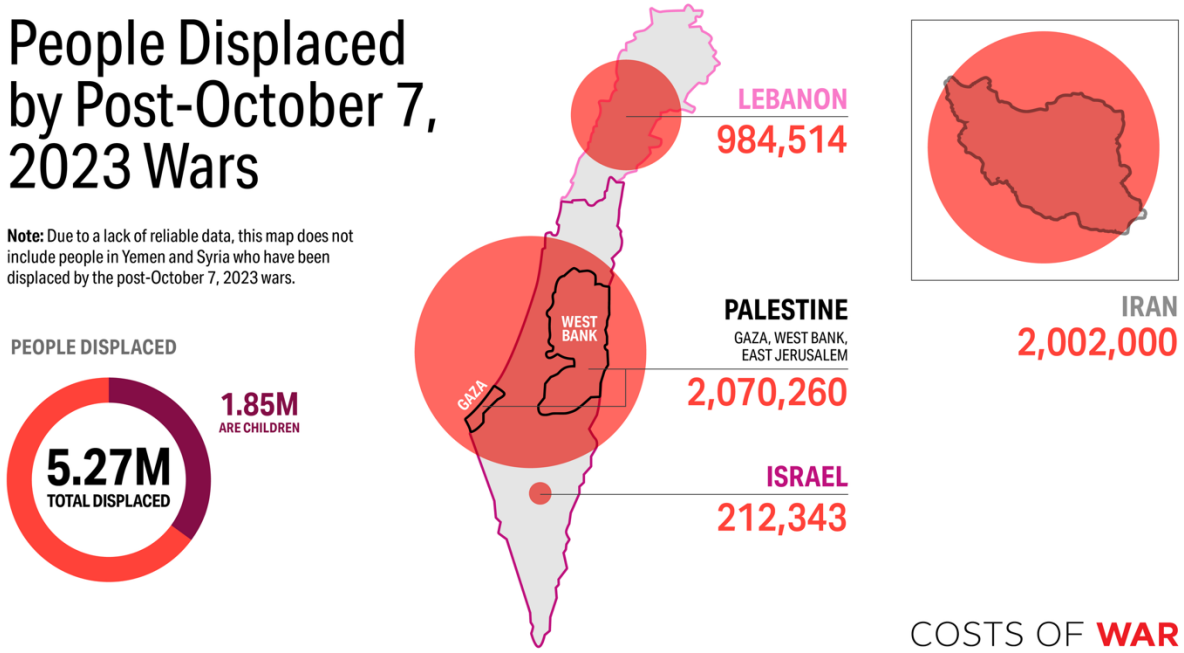
Table 1. Total Displacement Estimates in the Post-October 7, 2023 Wars

	PEOPLE DISPLACED	PERCENT OF PRE-WAR POPULATION DISPLACED	ESTIMATED DISPLACED CHILDREN <18[6]	TOTAL DISPLACE-MENT EVENTS
IRAN	2,002,000	2.21%	540,540	2,002,000
ISRAEL	212,343	2.29%	68,799	212,343
LEBANON	984,514	17.05%	317,014	1,133,251
PALESTINE	2,070,260	38.27%	925,406	7,536,343
TOTALS	**5,269,117**		**1,851,759**	**10,883,937**

Notes: Calculations are as of early September 2025. Palestine *refers to the Israeli-occupied Gaza Strip and West Bank including East Jerusalem. The name is used in displacement statistics by the International Displacement Monitoring Centre and other international organizations; the country, the State of Palestine, is recognized by most members of the United Nations. National population figures are from United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, "World Population Prospects 2024," accessed April 2025, https://population.un.org/dataportal/. See the text below for other sources.*

[6] See n.3.

Figure 1. Map of People Displaced in the Middle East since October 7, 2023*



Note: As of early September 2025. Due to a lack of reliable data, this map does not include people displaced in Yemen and Syria.

MAJOR FINDINGS AT A GLANCE

- War and mass violence since October 7, 2023 have **forcibly displaced an estimated 5.27 million people** in the Gaza Strip, Iran, Israel, Lebanon, and the West Bank (including East Jerusalem). Because the estimate is conservative, the actual total displaced could be significantly higher. It does not include others displaced in Syria and Yemen.

- An estimated **1.85 million of the displaced are children** under 18 years old.

- This warfare has caused an estimated **10.88 million separate "displacement events"**—meaning, distinct forced movements from a person's place of residence. The **vast majority—7.54 million—have affected Palestinians**. In Gaza, many have been displaced multiple times: an average of three to four times per individual.

- The displacement of **2.07 million Palestinians** (38.3% of the pre-war population) has involved **mass expulsion** systematically orchestrated by the Israeli state.

- Human rights experts, scholars, legal authorities, and others have found that mass expulsion in Gaza likely constitutes the **war crime of "forcible transfer,"** a potential **crime against humanity** under international law. Mass expulsion appears to be a **tool that has advanced the genocide of Palestinians.**

- At least **845 Palestinians living in United Nations facilities for displaced people have been killed by Israeli attacks**, with at least 2,554 injured.

- Initial estimates suggest at least **2 million people were displaced in Iran** during the June 2025 Israeli and U.S. attacks on that country; the true total may be much higher. Most of the displaced are presumed to have returned to their homes.

- Nearly **one million people in Lebanon** (17.1% of the 2023 population) were displaced after October 7, 2023. Most have returned home; around 90,000 people are currently still displaced within Lebanon.

- Around **212,343 have been displaced in Israel** (2.3% of the 2023 population).

- **Numbers are limited in what they can convey about displacement's damage.** The people behind the numbers can be difficult to see, and numbers cannot communicate how it feels to lose one's home. **Displacement has caused incalculable harm** to individuals, families, communities, and peoples physically, socially, emotionally, and economically.

Introduction

Forced displacement has been a widespread cost of war in Gaza, Iran, Israel, Lebanon, and the West Bank since October 7, 2023. This report estimates forced displacement suffered across these war zones.[7] Using the best available data, this report estimates that 5,269,117 people have been displaced since October 7, 2023 and as of early September 2025 (see Table 1, above). This figure is best rounded to 5.27 million given that this report's calculation is an estimate, not a precise count.

The report uses a conservative calculation methodology. For example, to avoid double counting the displaced, the report only counts internally displaced people (IDPs) and does not count people displaced across international borders, whom the international community and experts generally consider to be refugees or to be living in refugee-like situations. The total displaced could be significantly higher than 5.27 million.

For perspective, displacing 5.27 million people is equivalent to removing all or nearly all the residents of the states of Alabama or South Carolina; more than Maine, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont combined; or all the people of the Republic of Ireland.[8] Approximately 1.85 million of the displaced are likely children under 18 years old.[9]

Because some people, especially in Gaza, have been displaced multiple times, post-October 7, 2023 violence has caused an estimated 10.88 million separate "displacement events"—meaning, distinct forced movements from a person's current place of residence. The vast majority—7.54 million—have been Palestinians.

For thousands of Palestinians in Gaza, expulsion and flight have brought death or injury and other suffering rather than safety. The Israeli government has repeatedly attacked Palestinians in camps for displaced people as well as in areas the government had declared "safe zones." At least 845 Palestinians have been killed and 2,554 injured while in UN-run facilities housing the displaced (in addition to others killed in other camps).[10]

The U.S. government has been one of many combatants in the violence both directly and indirectly. The U.S. government has been the largest weapons supplier to the Israeli

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[7] The only comparable regional calculation appears to be in Nicholas R. Micinski and Kelsey Norman, "A Year of Escalating Conflict in the Middle East Has Ushered in a New Era of Regional Displacement," *The Conversation*, October 18, 2024, https://theconversation.com/a-year-of-escalating-conflict-in-the-middle-east-has-ushered-in-a-new-era-of-regional-displacement-240425. I thank the authors for their work and writing about the topic.

[8] United States Census Bureau, "State Population Totals and Components of Change: 2020-2024," December, 2024, https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/popest/2020s-state-total.html; United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, "World Population Prospects 2024," https://population.un.org/dataportal/.

[9] This estimate assumes that the age distribution of the displaced in each country is roughly equivalent to that of the country's total population. The report thus multiplies the percent of the total population in each country under 18 years old by the total displaced in that country. Population data comes from United Nations, "World Population Prospects 2024."

[10] UNRWA, "UNRWA Situation Report #187." See also, B'Tselem, "Our Genocide" and Human Rights Watch, "Hopeless, Starving, Besieged," 5–6.

military and provided military support, in addition to attacking Iran, Yemen, Syria, and Iraq directly.[11] In 2025, the U.S. military attacked Iranian nuclear sites and provided direct military support to Israel in the war that the latter initiated with Iran.[12] In the two years following October 7, 2023, the U.S. government has spent at least $31.35 billion on military support for Israel and related U.S. operations in Yemen and other parts of the region.[13]

Because of limited reporting and data, this report's total displacement calculation does not include what are likely to be thousands more people who have been displaced in Yemen, Syria, and Iraq following Israeli, U.S., and allied attacks on those countries. In Yemen, for example, recent U.S.-led airstrikes have hit hundreds of targets including residential buildings and neighborhoods, almost certainly resulting in the forced displacement of civilians as well as the deaths of dozens including Houthi Prime Minister Ahmed al-Rahawi.[14] The United Nations reports that Israel's 2024 attacks in Syria displaced "thousands."[15] A September 2025 Israeli airstrike on a residential building in Qatar may have displaced more people in addition to assassinating six in an Israeli attempt to kill members of Hamas's negotiating team.[16]

In the next sections, this report proceeds with an overview of data sources and a methodology for calculating wartime displacement. It next provides an overview of displacement in each affected place. The report then discusses how forced displacement in Gaza differs from that in Israel, Lebanon, Iran, and some other war zones. The report warns that displacement in Gaza and the West Bank could get significantly worse amid Israeli and U.S. politicians' statements about taking control of Gaza and displacing its entire population.

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[11] Bilmes, "Costs of United States Military Activities in the Wider Middle East since October 7, 2023";; Hartung, "U.S. Military Aid and Arms Transfers to Israel, October 7, 2023 – September 2025"; Congressional Research Service, "Assessing Recent U.S. Airstrikes in the Middle East Under the War Powers Framework," August 15, 2024, https://www.congress.gov/crs-product/LSB11157.

[12] Kelsey Davenport, "Israel and U.S. Strike Iran's Nuclear Program," *Arms Control Today*, July/August 2025, https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2025-07/news/israel-and-us-strike-irans-nuclear-program.

[13] Bilmes, "Costs of United States Military Activities in the Wider Middle East since October 7, 2023"; Hartung, "U.S. Military Aid and Arms Transfers to Israel, October 7, 2023 – September 2025."

[14] See, e.g., A Yemeni Journalist, "'Relocation Is Better." IOM has tracked 6,150 individuals displaced between January 1 and May 10, 2025, although they have not yet identified the source of the displacement (IOM Yemen DTM Rapid Displacement Tracking Yemen IDP Dashboard Reporting Period: 4 TO 10 May 2025, IOM Yemen DTM, May 11, 2025). See also, Naar and Al-Batati, "When the U.S. and Israel Bomb."

[15] United Nations Security Council, "Highlighting 'Alarming' Effects of Israel's Regional Incursions."

[16] Josef Federman and Jon Gambrell, "Israeli Strike in Qatar Targets Hamas Leaders as They Weigh Gaza Ceasefire Proposal," *Associated Press,* September 9, 2025, https://apnews.com/article/qatar-explosion-doha-e319dd51b170161372442831a8023db5; Marium Ali and Alia Chughtai, "Maps: Israel has attacked six countries in the past 72 hours," *Al Jazeera,* September 10, 2025, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/9/10/maps-israel-has-attacked-six-countries-in-the-past-72-hours.

Definitions for Terms Used in This Report

Definitions follow those of the international organizations that are the sources of data.

Displacement Events: The number of forced movements of individuals due to armed conflict. The same person can experience multiple displacement events, and thus these figures count each time a person is forced to move as a separate internal displacement. The term derives from and includes *internal displacements,* which refers to displacement events taking place entirely within one's country of habitual residence. Displacement events (and internal displacements) can also include people forced to flee disasters such as floods and earthquakes, however the report excludes these displacement cases from its calculations.

Internally Displaced Persons/People (IDPs): People who have been forced to flee or leave their homes or places of habitual residence because of or to avoid the violent effects of armed conflict and who remain within their countries of origin. IDPs can also include people forced to flee disasters such as floods and earthquakes, however this report excludes these IDPs from its calculations.

People Displaced: People who have been forced to flee or leave their homes or places of habitual residence because of or to avoid the violent effects of armed conflict. A person who is counted as displaced and returns to one's home or place of habitual residence remains counted as a displaced person.

Refugees: People outside their country of origin who have been granted protected "refugee" status, according to applicable international conventions and definitions, by the governments of countries to which people have fled. The refugee category also includes people in "refugee-like" situations who may neither have received protected status nor be an *asylum seeker* who has asked for but has not yet been granted refugee status.

Data Sources

The statistics that provide the basis for this report's calculations are the best available and come from the United Nations (UN) and leading international organizations. Multiple data sources were examined and used wherever possible to compare, check, and identify the most reliable figures. As with the definitions above, the report follows the standards by which these leading international organizations determine who qualifies as a person displaced by war or armed conflict.

These organizations and other international displacement experts do not suggest that armed conflict is necessarily the singular cause of displacement for those categorized as displaced by armed conflict. Instead, they document cases in which the violence of armed conflict bears primary responsibility for, or is the precipitating incident behind, people's flight from their home.

Because the vast majority of displacement since October 7, 2023, has taken place within each countries' borders, statistics for *internally* displaced people (IDPs) form the foundation of this report. This data comes primarily from the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC, part of the Norwegian Refugee Council), as well as from the United Nations (UN) International Organization for Migration (IOM), the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), and the Global Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM) Cluster.

Data from the annual reports of the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) forms the core of this report's estimates, employing the methodology described below. IDMC data for internally displaced people is widely considered authoritative. The International Organization for Migration calls IDMC, "a global reference point for data on IDPs."[17] A 2017 World Bank study recognized IDMC as "the leading provider of information and analysis on internal displacement worldwide."[18] In its publications, the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees regularly reports IDMC data on IDPs as authoritative.[19]

Methodology

This report uses two methodologies to estimate a) the total number of people displaced, and b) the total number of displacement events or cases (i.e., distinct forced movements of people). For both calculations, the report relies on data about people displaced within countries or territories—that is, internal displacement—and not data about people displaced across international borders—that is, refugees.

The report does this because the vast majority of those displaced since October 7, 2023, in Iran, Israel, Lebanon, and the Palestinian Territories have been displaced within the boundaries of their home countries or territories—rather than across international borders—and are thus considered "internally displaced people/persons" (IDPs). While data from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and other sources suggests that around 335,000–435,000 people have been displaced across international borders as refugees, this report excludes these figures.[20] This is done to avoid any possible double

[17] Migration Data Portal, "Forced Migration or Displacement," Geneva, International Organization for Migration, June 9, 2020, https://migrationdataportal.org/themes/forced-migration-or-displacement.
[18] Zara Sarzin, "Stocktaking of Global Forced Displacement Data," Policy Research Working Paper 7985, Washington, DC, World Bank Group, 2017, 5n3.
[19] See, e.g., UNHCR, "Global Trends," 2019.
[20] UNHCR reports 4,728 Israeli refugees and asylum seekers and 18,059 Lebanese refugees and asylum seekers (UNHCR, Refugee Data Finder, accessed May 15, 2025, https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics/download/?v2url=cb0cca). Data is not yet available for 2025, meaning there is no indication of how many Iranians fled Iran as refugees during the Israeli–U.S. June 2025 war. UNHCR does not provide refugee data for Palestinians. Others have estimated that approximately 110,000 Palestinians have fled Gaza to Egypt as refugees and asylum seekers between October 7, 2023, and May 2024 (e.g., Human Rights Watch, "Israel and Palestine Events of 2024" in *World Report 2025,* accessed September 8, 2025, https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2025/country-chapters/israel-and-palestine). One estimate of refugees from Lebanon, including Syrians and other non-Lebanese citizens, ranges from 200,000 to 300,000 in 2024. Dalal Harb and Houssam Hariri, "Displaced Families in Lebanon Yearn for Peace and a Return Home

counting of a displaced person initially as an IDP and later as a refugee (e.g., if someone was displaced first within their home country and then a second time across an international border).

Methodology for Estimating People Displaced

To estimate the total number of people displaced since October 7, 2023, this report employs the same methodology developed for a co-authored 2020 Costs of War report about displacement in wars the U.S. government has participated in since September 11, 2001.[21] Following international standards, the report defines a person as displaced if one is forced to flee or leave their home or place of habitual residence because of or to avoid the violent effects of armed conflict. A person who is counted as displaced but returns to their home or place of habitual residence remains counted as a displaced person.

The 2020 report developed its methodology because one cannot simply sum displacement statistics reported on an annual basis: international organizations tend to report the total number of people displaced at year's end, which means that anyone who remains displaced across two calendar years would be counted twice if one sums the numbers displaced in both years.

In some cases (e.g., Israel in 2024), it has been possible to calculate the number of people displaced in a given year because of the availability of disaggregated data about IDPs that includes displacement dates. When such disaggregated data has not been available, the 2020 methodology takes the total number of IDPs in a given year (Year X) and subtracts the total number of IDPs in the prior year (Year X^{-1}) to yield an estimate of the scale of new displacement in a given year. The equation is:

(Total IDPs in Year X)
– (Total IDPs in Year X^{-1})
Estimated Newly Displaced IDPs in Year X

Subtracting the total number of people displaced at the end of the one year from the total number of people displaced at the end of the next year does not necessarily yield the precise number of people newly displaced in a given year; instead, it provides the relative number of people displaced from year to year. During years when the total number of people displaced declined relative to the prior year (usually because people returned home and because fewer people fled their homes), the calculation yields a negative number of people displaced, which this methodology records as zero. To do otherwise—to record a negative number—would essentially erase cases of displacement and improperly underestimate displacement's true scale.

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in Lebanon," UNHCR, October 6, 2024, https://www.unhcr.org/news/stories/displaced-families-lebanon-yearn-peace-and-return-home.

[21] David Vine, et al., "Creating Refugees." See also our 2021 update, https://costsofwar.watson.brown.edu/paper/update-creating-refugees-displacement-caused-united-states-post-911-wars

This methodology already underestimates the true scale of displacement in keeping with its conservative approach. For example, even when the total number of people displaced declines from one year to the next (yielding a count of zero), some number of additional individuals generally become displaced people either through new displacement or when babies are born to displacees and are counted among the displaced. The methodology also underestimates the scale of displacement given that someone displaced who returns to their home in the same year typically would not be counted as displaced in an end-of-year enumeration (known as a "stock" count). While this methodology is imperfect, it at least provides a *low-end* estimate of people displaced over time.

Methodology for Estimating the Total Number of Displacement Events

"Displacement events" figures reflect the total number of times people are forced to flee from their place of habitual residence.[22] This includes both people who experience multiple displacement events and people who are displaced and then return home within a single calendar year (who often are not counted as displaced in annual statistical reporting). This calculation is simpler. In most cases, the report adds up the number of displacement events recorded by the IDMC and other reliable sources across years in each place after subtracting displacement events that occurred before October 7, 2023.

This report's estimate of total displacement events should be treated as an underestimate because tracking secondary, tertiary, and other cases of multiple displacement is a perennial methodological and operational problem.[23] In parts of Gaza, for example, at times there has been no tracking of secondary displacement.[24] See the "Data Challenges" appendix for a discussion of these and other data challenges.

In what follows, I provide my specific displacement calculations and review the contours of displacement in Israel, Lebanon, the occupied Palestinian Territories, and Iran.

Israel

The October 7, 2023, attacks by Hamas and allied groups and the subsequent war between Israel and Hezbollah have caused mass displacement in Israel. By the end of 2023, approximately 200,000 people in Israel were internally displaced according to IDMC (citing

[22] As defined above, the term derives from and encompasses what displacement experts refer to as "internal displacements." See, IDMC, "Global Report on Internal Displacement [GRID] 2025," Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, 2025, v.

[23] For a new review of methodologies and methodological challenges involved in tracking IDPs, see this forthcoming chapter and the handbook in which it will appear. Melissa Weihmayer and Nassim Majidi, "Research Methodologies and Challenges in IDP Contexts," in *Oxford Handbook on Internal Displacement*, eds. David James Cantor, et al. (Oxford University Press, forthcoming).

[24] IDMC, Global Internal Displacement Database [GIDD], Palestine disaggregated data 2023–2024, accessed April 24, 2025, https://www.internal-displacement.org/database/displacement-data/.

local media and government sources) (see Table 2, below).[25] Of these, approximately 120,000 people in areas near the Gaza Strip fled or were evacuated from their homes by the Israeli government. The displaced fled the attacks orchestrated by Hamas, including mass killings and the widespread burning and destruction of civilian homes, as well as continuing rocket and mortar attacks by Hamas and allied militias.[26]

As a result of fighting between Hezbollah and Israel, around 80,000 fled or were evacuated from parts of northern Israel near the Lebanese border; by the end of 2024, around 68,000 were still considered displaced from northern Israel.[27] A February 2025 report suggested that just 39% of all displaced Israelis have returned home; 19% reported that "they had been dismissed from their job or placed on unpaid leave, or…their business had closed due to the war (among those who had been self-employed)."[28] The 251 hostages seized by Hamas and taken into Gaza are another kind of forced displacement, but it is unclear whether they are included in this report's total figures, which are drawn from IDMC.[29]

In 2024, IDMC counted 743 additional displacement events (aka internal displacements) caused by a) people fleeing the threat of Iranian military attacks in April 2024; b) new evacuations from northern Israel after the escalation of cross-border military fighting between the Israeli military and Hezbollah; and c) the Israeli government's own eviction of hundreds of Bedouins from their homes in Israel.[30] In 2025, the Israeli–U.S. war

[25] Some early reports citing the Israeli Ministry of Tourism (which helped coordinate evacuations) indicated that as many as 250,000 people in Israel fled or were evacuated by the Israeli government in 2023 (e.g., Ruth Marks Eglash, "Israel Grapples with Country's Biggest Internal Displacement in History," *Jewish Insider,* November 6, 2023, https://jewishinsider.com/2023/11/israel-internal-displacement-hamas-terror-attacks-oct-7-kibbutz/). This report follows IDMC's later estimate, released in 2024, given that IDMC drew on Israeli government data for its calculations, thus suggesting that the Israeli government revised its own data.
[26] See, Amnesty International, "'You Feel Like You Are Subhuman': Israel's Genocide Against Palestinians in Gaza," 2024, 56, 59. https://www.amnesty.org/en/wp content/uploads/2024/12/MDE1586682024ENGLISH.pdf
[27] IDMC, GIDD, Israel disaggregated data 2023–2024, accessed April 24, 2025, https://www.internal-displacement.org/database/displacement-data/.
[28] The survey was a small one of just over 90 people; it thus has a large margin of error of more than 8%. Daphna Aviram-Nitzan and Omer Cohen, "The Financial Situation of Evacuees in Israel 15 Months After the Outbreak of the War," Israel Democracy Institute, February 25, 2025, https://en.idi.org.il/articles/58555.
[29] The 251 are assumed to be included among those counted as displaced from parts of Israel bordering Gaza, although they are not technically "internally displaced" people. Associated Press, "How Many Hostages Are Left in Gaza?" March 18, 2025, https://apnews.com/article/israel-palestinians-hamas-war-remaining-hostages-gaza-dbedb436b04fac1c790a794a4ef03853.
[30] "Almost all" of the displacement events involved Bedouins in the Negev desert displaced during the demolition of their homes by the Israeli government. IDMC has "medium confidence in this figure" and considers it an underestimate because "there is no systematic monitoring of internal displacement due to conflict and violence across the country." IDMC, GRID 2025, 47, 110. See also, Amnesty International, "Israel/OPT: Over 300 Palestinian-Bedouin face forced evictions following mass home demolitions in Negev/Naqab," May 9, 2024, https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2024/05/israel-opt-over-300-palestinian-bedouin-face-forced-evictions-following-mass-home-demolitions-in-negev-naqab/. While Bedouins living in Israel generally consider themselves Palestinians, most are Israeli citizens, which is why they appear in the count of Israelis displaced, following IDMC practice.

with Iran led to the displacement of approximately 11,600 people in Israel amid Iranian missile attacks.[31]

IDMC says it considers its displacement figures for Israel to be "an underestimate" because "there is no systematic monitoring of internal displacement due to conflict and violence across the country."[32] IDMC notes that other estimates of displacement due to rocket fire in 2024 are higher. Because these reports were hard to verify, it used a "conservative estimate." IDMC further notes that it "does not include evacuations to bomb shelters which are located within one's homes. This is because it does not constitute a movement outside of their habitual place of residence. We only include movements when people seek shelter outside of their homes."[33] It is unclear if any Israelis have been displaced by Houthi attacks on Israel.

To grasp the scale of the estimated 211,600 displaced in Israel (a country of 9.26 million people), the equivalent scale of displacement in the U.S. would be like displacing everyone in the state of Tennessee to surrounding states.[34]

[31] A member of the Israeli parliament cited 10,000 displaced in early July. A non-profit research organization in Israel cited 13,197 homeless. This figure uses the approximate mid-way point between the two figures. Zev Stub, "2,000 New Immigrants among 10,000 Israelis Still Displaced after War, MK Says," *Times of Israel*, July 2, 2025, https://www.timesofisrael.com/2000-new-immigrants-among-10000-israelis-still-displaced-after-war-mk-says/; Alma Research, "Summary of Iran-Israel War on the Israeli Front- Operation Rising Lion (June 2025), Alma Research and Education Center, June 30, 2025, https://israel-alma.org/summary-of-iran-israel-war-on-the-israeli-front-operation-rising-lion-june-2025/.

[32] IDMC, GIDD, Israel disaggregated data 2023–2024.

[33] IDMC, GIDD, Israel disaggregated data 2023–2024.

[34] United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, "World Population Prospects 2024," https://population.un.org/wpp/assets/Files/WPP2024_Summary-of-Results.pdf; Census Bureau, Annual Estimates of the Resident Population for the United States, Regions, States, District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico: April 1, 2020, to July 1, 2024 (NST-EST2024-POP), December 2024.

Table 2. People Displaced in Israel in the Post-October 7 Wars

YEAR	PEOPLE DISPLACED	SOURCES
2023	200,000	Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre [IDMC], *Global Report on Internal Displacement* [GRID] 2024; IDMC Global Internal Displacement Database [GIDD] 2023[35]
2024	743	IDMC, GIDD 2024; IDMC, GRID 2025[36]
2025	11,600	*Times of Israel;* Alma Research and Education Center[37]
TOTAL	**212,343**	

Table 3. Displacement Events in Israel in the Post-October 7 Wars

YEAR	DISPLACEMENT EVENTS	SOURCES
2023	200,000	IDMC, GIDD2023[38]
2024	743	IDMC, GRID 2025[39]
2025	11,600	*Times of Israel;* Alma Research and Education Center[40]
TOTAL	**212,343**	

[35] IDMC has "medium confidence in this figure" and considers it an underestimate because "there is no systematic monitoring of internal displacement due to conflict and violence across the country." IDMC, "Global Report on Internal Displacement 2024," Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, 2024, 122, 42; IDMC, Global Internal Displacement Database [GIDD], Israel disaggregated data 2023–2024, accessed April 24, 2025, https://www.internal-displacement.org/database/displacement-data/.

[36] IDMC reported 68,000 people who "remained internally displaced as a result of conflict mostly in the north of the country." The report would record this as 0 as per the methodology (to avoid double counting), but the 743 displaced are identified clearly as being displaced in 2024 rather than in another year. IDMC, GRID 2025, 110. IDMC reports having "medium confidence in this figure."

[37] Stub, "2,000 New Immigrants"; Alma Research, "Summary of Iran-Israel War."

[38] Subtracts 2,736 Israelis and Bedouins displaced prior to October 7 from the yearly total of 202,736. IDMC, GIDD, Israel disaggregated data 2023–2024.

[39] "Almost all" of the displacement events involved Bedouins in the Negev desert displaced during the demolition of their homes by the Israeli government. IDMC has "medium confidence in this figure" and considers it an underestimate because "there is no systematic monitoring of internal displacement due to conflict and violence across the country." IDMC, GRID 2025, 47, 110.

[40] Stub, "2,000 New Immigrants"; Alma Research, "Summary of Iran-Israel War."

Lebanon

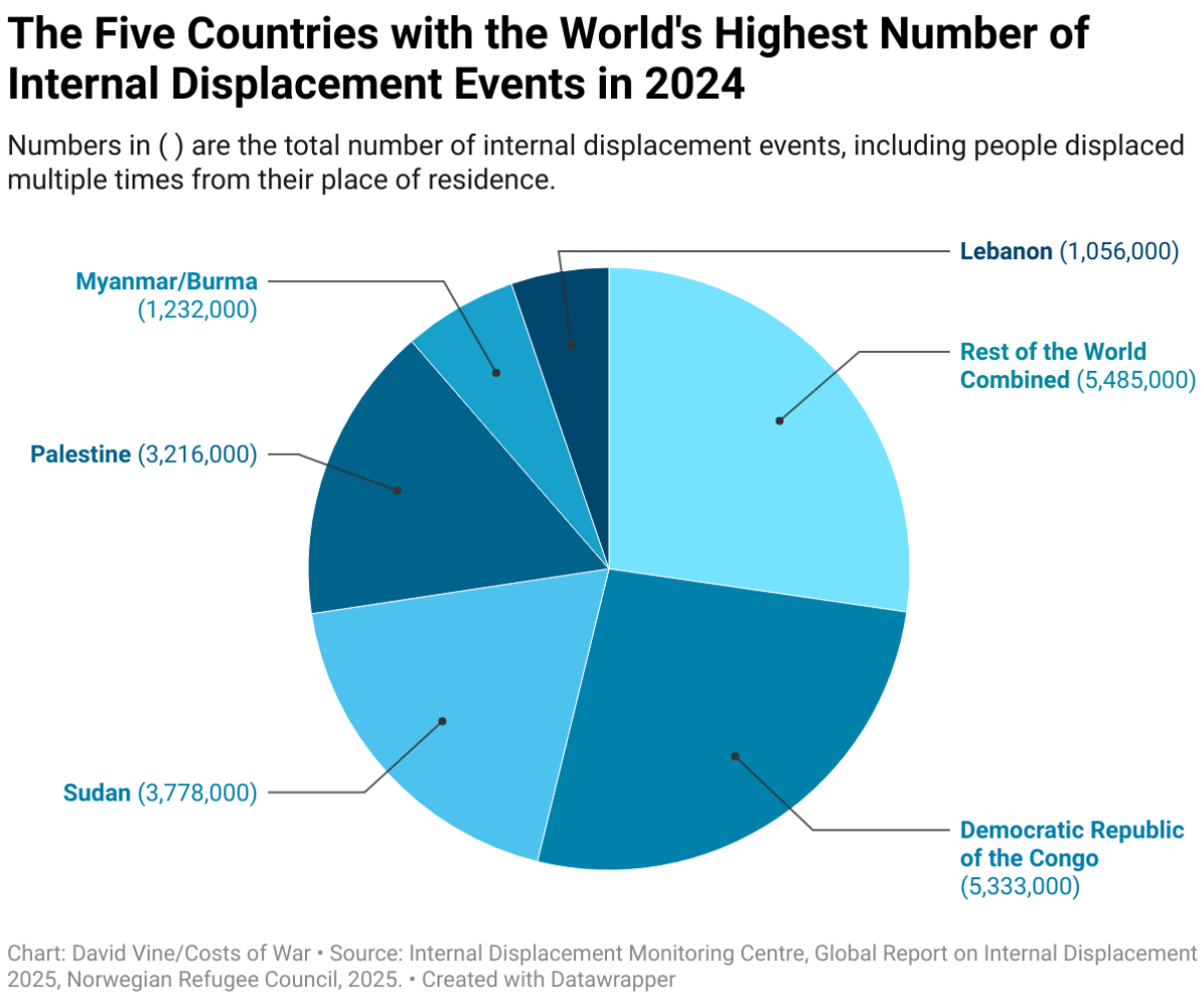
Warfare between Hezbollah and the Israeli military beginning on October 8, 2023, resulted in the displacement of some 76,018 people in southern Lebanon in 2023.[41] Subsequent attacks by Israel beginning in September 2024 led to the displacement of almost one million people, initially in Lebanon's south and later throughout all 26 of the country's districts. In the south, "around 95 percent of agricultural households in the most affected districts were displaced."[42]

Most of the displaced remained internally displaced within Lebanon, however an estimated 200,000–300,000 were considered refugees after crossing from Lebanon into Syria (despite the ongoing danger of its civil war). In addition to Lebanese citizens, these refugees included migrant workers and some Syrians who have lived in Lebanon since fleeing the Syrian Civil War.[43] Again, these displaced people are not included in this report's calculation to avoid the danger of double counting internally displaced people and refugees crossing international borders.

In 2024, people in Lebanon suffered the world's fifth highest total number of internal displacement events (1.056 million), affecting around one-sixth of the country, after the Democratic Republic of the Congo (5.3 million), Sudan (3.8 million), Palestine (3.2 million), and Myanmar/Burma (1.2 million).[44] In a country of around 5.8 million people, more than one in every six people was displaced in 2024.[45] In the U.S., that scale of displacement would be the equivalent of displacing roughly all the inhabitants of California, Washington, Oregon, and Arizona combined.[46]

[41] IDMC explains that its reported 2023 figure (74,471) omits the last five days of the year. The figure is updated to include those days with data from the International Organization of Migration (IOM). IDMC has "high confidence" in its baseline figure of 74,471. IDMC, GRID 2024, 122; International Organization of Migration, Displacement Tracking Matrix, Lebanon Mobility Snapshot, Round 18, January 4, 2024.
[42] IDMC, GRID 2025, 51. Note that a significant proportion of Lebanon's population consists of displaced Palestinians and Syrians displaced by that country's civil war.
[43] Micinski and Norman, "A Year of Escalating Conflict."
[44] IDMC, GRID 2025.
[45] United Nations, "World Population Prospects 2024."
[46] Census Bureau, "Annual Estimates."

Figure 2. Countries with the Most Internal Displacement Events in 2024



As of April 30, 2025, there were around 90,020 people still displaced within Lebanon.[47] Most of those displaced in 2024 appear to have "returned to their communities," according to the International Organization for Migration, although the IOM emphasizes that returns "cannot be considered permanent and should be viewed as a snapshot in time, as many people remain on the move."[48] Interviews with Israeli reservist soldiers deployed to southern Lebanon reveal that some Israeli military units engaged in "systematic and deliberate flattening of civilian infrastructure" in October and November 2024 to prevent entire Shiite villages from returning to their homes.[49]

[47] International Organization for Migration, Displacement Tracking Matrix, Lebanon Mobility Snapshot, Round 86, May 2025, https://dtm.iom.int/lebanon.
[48] International Organization for Migration, Displacement Tracking Matrix, Lebanon Mobility Snapshot, Round 86.
[49] Meron Rapoport and Oren Ziv, "'Render It Unusable': Israel's Mission of Total Urban Destruction," *+972 Magazine*, May 15, 2025, https://www.972mag.com/israel-gaza-total-urban-destruction/.

Table 4. People Displaced in Lebanon in the Post-October 7 Wars

YEAR	PEOPLE DISPLACED	SOURCES
2023	76,018	IDMC, GRID 2024; International Organization of Migration Displacement Tracking Matrix [IOM DTM], Lebanon Mobility Snapshot, Round 18, 2024[50]
2024	908,496	IDMC, GIDD2024[51]
2025	-	IOM DTM, Round 86, 2025[52]
TOTAL	**984,514**	

Table 5. Displacement Events in Lebanon in the Post-October 7 Wars

YEAR	DISPLACEMENT EVENTS	SOURCES
2023	77,589	IDMC, GIDD2023; IDMC, GRID 2024[53]
2024	1,055,662	IDMC, GIDD2024[54]
2025	-	No new displacement confirmed.
TOTAL	**1,133,251**	

Gaza and the West Bank including East Jerusalem

While the forced displacement of a single person, a single family, a single community should be cause for alarm, the scale of displacement for Palestinians in the territories occupied by Israel is massive and hard for most outsiders to comprehend. Nearly all the people living in Gaza—90% or more—have been forcibly displaced.[55] Many have been

[50] See n.41. IDMC, GRID 2024, 122; International Organization of Migration, Displacement Tracking Matrix, Lebanon Mobility Snapshot, Round 18.
[51] As per the methodology, 2023 figures are subtracted from those for 2024 (984,514).
[52] No new displacement identified. IOM DTM reports 90,020 people living as IDPs as of April 25. Recorded as 0 as per the methodology. International Organization for Migration, Displacement Tracking Matrix, Lebanon Mobility Snapshot, Round 86.
[53] Subtracts displacement events prior to October 7 (61,890) in IDMC disaggregated data from IDMC's figure (139,479). IDMC has "high confidence" in its figures. IDMC, GRID 2024; IDMC, GIDD, Lebanon disaggregated data 2023.
[54] IDMC has "high confidence in this figure." IDMC, GIDD, Lebanon disaggregated data 2024.
[55] "UNRWA Situation Report #168 on the Humanitarian Crisis in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, Including East Jerusalem," April 23, 2025, https://www.unrwa.org/resources/reports/unrwa-situation-report-168-

displaced multiple times.[56] This report estimates that people displaced in Gaza have been displaced an average of three to four times each.[57] A small-scale study found people displaced six times on average between October 2023 and October 2024. Some had been displaced up to 19 times.[58] In the West Bank and East Jerusalem, growing numbers of Palestinians have been forcibly displaced from their homes by the Israeli military and police forces, government-backed Israeli settlers, Israeli government demolition orders, and other violent causes since October 7, 2023.[59]

After the 2023 attacks on Israel by Hamas and allied forces, the people of Gaza have experienced near constant Israeli attacks in which forced displacement has featured prominently. Six days after October 7, 2023, the Israeli military issued its first forced displacement order. It called on people living in an area inhabited by more than 1.1 million people—around half of Gaza's 2.2 million population—to leave their homes and move southward within 24 hours.[60] Many quickly fled. Dozens more forced displacement orders have followed, uprooting hundreds of thousands.[61] By the end of 2023, most people in Gaza had been forced to flee their homes at least once, and more than 1.7 million individuals were living displaced.[62] In less than 3 months, the people of Gaza experienced a total of 3.4 million displacement events (see Table 7, below).

In the West Bank, more Palestinians were displaced in 2023 than in any year since the United Nations began tracking displacement (in 2009). Settler violence and death threats between October 7 and December 31, 2023, appear to have resulted in the

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situation-gaza-strip-and-west-bank-including-east-jerusalem. "Nearly all of the Gaza Strip's population has been displaced, often various times," writes IDMC (IDMC, GRID 2025, vi).

[56] UNRWA, "UNRWA Situation Report #168"; IDMC, GRID 2025, vi.

[57] The report calculates this estimate by dividing the total current number of displacement events experienced by people in Gaza alone (7,488,511) by the total estimated number of displaced people in Gaza (2,026,636), yielding an estimate of 3.70. Given that the report's calculation of displaced people in Gaza likely omits some displaced, the average may be closer to 3.5. For this reason and because people cannot be displaced a fraction of a time, the report uses "between three and four times" as its estimate.

[58] Danish Refugee Council, et al., "Suffering by Design," 8.

[59] B'Tselem, "Our Genocide," 20, 28, 47–48; *UN News*, "UN Rights Office Sounds The Alarm over Forced Displacement in the West Bank," United Nations, June 26, 2025, https://news.un.org/en/story/2025/06/1164971; Amnesty International, "'You Feel Like You Are Subhuman,'" 67; IDMC, GIDD, Palestine disaggregated data 2023–2024; OCHA oPT, "West Bank Monthly Snapshot: Casualties, Property Damage and Displacement as of 31 July 2025," July 31, 2025, https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/occupied-palestinian-territory/west-bank-l-monthly-snapshot-casualties-property-damage-and-displacement-31-july-2025.

[60] Aditi Bhandari, Prasanta Kumar Dutta and Mariano Zafra, "Israeli Military Orders Gazans to Leave Northern Half of Territory," *Reuters*, October 13, 2023, https://www.reuters.com/graphics/ISRAEL-PALESTINIANS/MAPS/movajdladpa/#israeli-military-orders-gazans-to-leave-northern-half-of-territory.

[61] There is no clear total count of displacement orders. Between October 7, 2023, and September 30, 2024, there were 59 (Amnesty International, "'You Feel Like You Are Subhuman'"). Amid rapidly escalating mass expulsion in 2025, there were 24 forced displacement orders in just the 24 days between March 18 and April 11 (United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, "Gaza: Increasing Israeli 'Evacuation Orders' Lead to Forcible Transfer of Palestinians," Press Briefing Notes, April 11, 2025, https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-briefing-notes/2025/04/gaza-increasing-israeli-evacuation-orders-lead-forcible-transfer).

[62] IDMC, GRID 2025, 45.

displacement of more than 1,200 Palestinians. Hundreds more were displaced by Israeli military actions, housing demolitions, and land access restrictions.[63]

IDMC considers its figures for Gaza and the West Bank to be underestimates because they do not count secondary displacement in parts of Gaza and because of "the difficulties involved in tracking IDPs staying with host families, the repeated movement of IDPs following general evacuation orders, the evacuation of UNRWA shelters on the orders of the Israeli military as well as access constraints linked with the overall security situation." The lack of systematic data collection mechanisms for the West Bank means that displacement figures there are also likely underestimates.[64] The numbers also do not account for thousands of Palestinians forcibly displaced to prisons and detention centers, often without charge.[65]

In 2024, displacement continued at a similar scale. Over the course of the year, Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank suffered the third highest number of total internal displacement events (aka "internal displacements") in the world (3.2 million). The 3.2 million internal displacement events experienced by Palestinians represented 16% of the world total in 2024.[66]

Forced displacement in Gaza is unusual on a global scale because Palestinians in the Strip are, with rare exception, trapped and unable to leave Gaza (an area that's around one-third the size of Los Angeles and one-quarter the size of London).[67] While fleeing across borders to escape war and violence is challenging anywhere, Israel's more than 15-year-old blockade of Gaza has prevented virtually all Palestinians from freely leaving. Still, an estimated 110,000 escaped to Egypt and other countries (at personal costs for entering Egypt ranging from $4,500–$10,000) between October 2023 and May 6, 2024, when Israel began preventing all departures.[68] In the following six months, the Israeli government allowed around just 320 patients to exit Gaza for critically needed medical care. Thousands needing medical treatment are on waiting lists to go to Egypt.[69]

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[63] United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs - Occupied Palestinian Territory [OCHA oPT], "About 4,000 Palestinians displaced in the West Bank in 2023," February 21, 2024, https://www.ochaopt.org/content/about-4000-palestinians-displaced-west-bank-2023.

[64] IDMC, GIDD, Palestine disaggregated data 2023–2024, accessed April 24, 2025, https://www.internal-displacement.org/database/displacement-data/.

[65] Human Rights Watch, "Israel and Palestine Events of 2024."

[66] Estimates for Palestinians are "likely to be a significant underestimate" according to IDMC, GRID 2024, 5, 45.

[67] Lauren Raab and Lorena Iñiguez Elebee, "How Big Are Israel and Gaza? Smaller Than You Might Think," *Los Angeles Times,* October 20, 2023, https://www.latimes.com/world-nation/story/2023-10-20/israel-gaza-how-big-maps-california; AJLabs, "If Gaza Were in Your City, How Much Would Be Destroyed?" *Al Jazeera,* November 13, 2023, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/longform/2023/11/13/if-gaza-was-in-your-city-how-much-would-be-destroyed.

[68] Human Rights Watch, "Israel and Palestine Events of 2024"; Rana Sabbagh and Mohammad Abu Shahma, "'Only Those With Money Can Leave': Gazans Pay Thousands to Escape Through Egypt," Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project, January 25, 2024, https://www.occrp.org/en/feature/only-those-with-money-can-leave-gazans-pay-thousands-to-escape-through-egypt.

[69] Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2025*: Israel and Palestine.

For the vast majority of the more than 2 million people in Gaza, there has been no flight to safety and no safety in a strip of land where there are no safe places. Israeli displacement orders and military strikes continue to force Palestinians to move, displaced again and again. Conditions for the displaced have been described as "inhumane,"[70] "abhorrent," causing "profound and systematic harm,"[71] and "desperately crowded, unsanitary and unsafe" almost everywhere they have sought refuge.[72] Amnesty International explains,

> As the spaces targeted by "evacuation" orders expanded, internally displaced people ran out of land where they could set up their tents, forcing some to sleep next to solid waste dumps or next to sewage pipelines. All the while, Israel failed to abide by its obligations as the occupying power to ensure the safety and well-being of displaced Palestinians, including their access to basic necessities, such as safe and adequate shelter, food, medicine, water and sanitation facilities, in the areas to which people were displaced.[73]

Physicians for Human Rights Israel describes how displacement has been part of a self-reinforcing spiral producing ill health and death: "Displacement led to overcrowding, overcrowding accelerated disease, and disease spread unchecked amid collapsing sanitation."[74]

Palestinians have also been killed by Israeli forces in areas that the Israeli military has declared as "safe zones" and "humanitarian zones."[75] A minimum of 845 Palestinians living in UN facilities for the displaced have been killed by Israeli attacks; at least 2,554 have been injured.[76]

Others have been killed while fleeing along declared and informal evacuation routes. Media images and individual testimonies have shown dead bodies lying along roads as long lines of people have fled on foot and in wheelchairs, in cars, trucks, and buses, in mule and horse-drawn carts, and in other means of transport. Conditions have resembled those of

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[70] United Nations Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, "Legal Analysis of the Conduct of Israel in Gaza Pursuant to the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide," *A/HRC/60/CRP.3*, September 16, 2025, para. 108, https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/sessions-regular/session60/advance-version/a-hrc-60-crp-3.pdf.

[71] Danish Refugee Council, et al., "Suffering by Design," 13, 50.

[72] Amnesty International, "'You Feel Like You Are Subhuman,'" 200.

[73] Amnesty International, "'You Feel Like You Are Subhuman,'" 24.

[74] Physicians for Human Rights Israel, "Destruction of Conditions of Life: A Health Analysis of the Gaza Genocide," 24, https://www.phr.org.il/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/Genocide-in-Gaza-PHRI-English.pdf.

[75] Human Rights Watch, "Hopeless, Starving, Besieged," 5–6; B'Tselem, "Our Genocide," Israel, July 2025, 20.

[76] UNRWA, "UNRWA Situation Report #187." Amnesty International reports, "Hamas fired rockets from densely populated areas, including camps for displaced civilians … makeshift tented camps …. schools and camps where internally displaced people were taking shelter, including places designated by Israel as 'humanitarian zones.'" Amnesty concluded that Hamas "therefore violated their obligations to take all feasible precautions to protect civilians and civilian objects under their control against the effects of attacks, and to avoid locating, to the extent feasible, military targets in or around densely populated areas. However, these violations do not release Israel from its own obligations under international humanitarian law." Amnesty International, "'You Feel Like You Are Subhuman,'" 61.

the 19th century "Trail of Tears" in which U.S. military personnel drove around 16,000 Native American people westward off their lands in the east and an estimated 4,000 died along the route of starvation, disease, and exposure.[77]

Displacement in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, continued in 2024–2025, following years of state-backed displacement that has shrunk land controlled by Palestinians and expanded Israeli settlements.[78] Palestinians have been displaced by government demolitions of homes and other property, military and police operations, land seizure orders, and violence by Jewish settlers. Settlers have displaced Palestinians through home invasions and occupations, beatings and severe armed assaults, arson attacks, armed threats, the expulsion of shepherds and farmers from grazing areas and farmland, property theft, crop destruction, and other means.[79] The United Nations has documented at least 2,374 settler attacks between January 1, 2024, and July 31, 2025.[80]

The Israeli state has supported much of the settler violence, including through the creation of Regional Defense Battalions and settlement security squads and the distribution of thousands of firearms to settlers following October 7, 2023. In other cases, police, military, and other state actors have done nothing to prevent settlers from forcing Palestinians from their land.[81] In total, settler violence has displaced 39 Palestinian communities with eight more partially displaced since October 2023.[82]

Amid this backdrop, displacement in the West Bank has escalated especially in 2025: military raids and Israeli displacement orders have displaced nearly 40,000 Palestinians to date. The raids (backed in some cases by Palestinian Authority forces) forced virtually all the residents of the Jenin, Tulkarm, Nur Shams, and El Far'a refugee camps to flee (these camps date to the original displacement of Palestinians during the war that followed Israel's declaration of independence in 1948).[83] Around three-quarters of the displaced appear to be displaced to this day.[84]

This year, likewise, has seen the escalation of Israeli displacement of Palestinians in Gaza. In the Strip, military attacks and displacement orders led to 859,990 cases of forced displacement between March 18 and August 27. Across just four days between March 30

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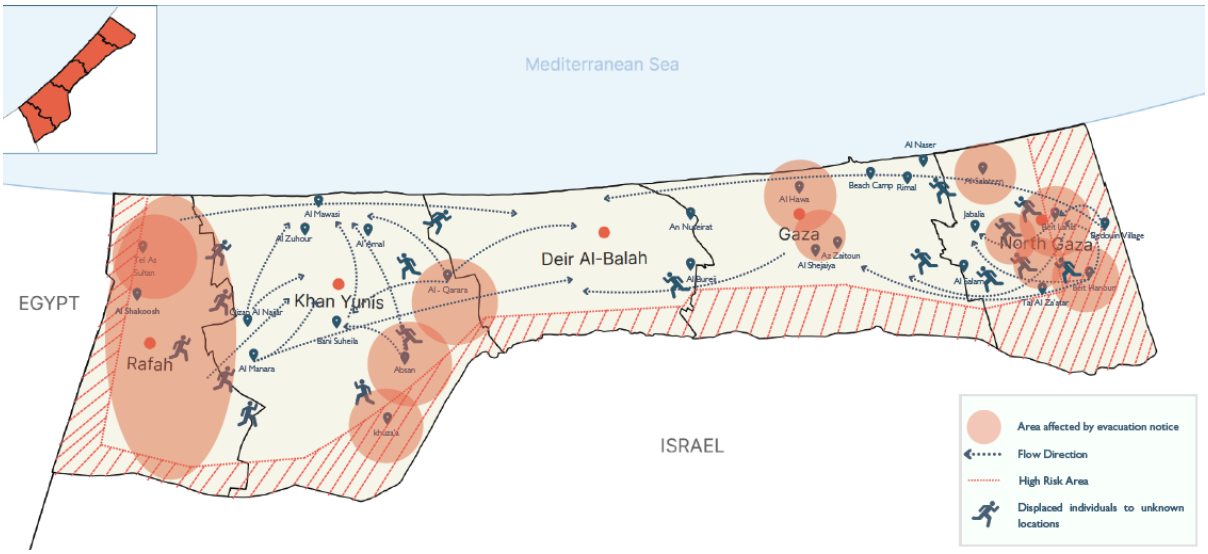
[77] See, e.g., Dee Brown, *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee: An Indian History of the American West* (Henry Holt, 1970); Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, *An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States* (Beacon Press, 2014); David Vine, *The United States of War: A Global History of America's Endless Conflicts from Columbus to the Islamic State* (University of California Press, 2020), 83.
[78] IDMC, GIDD, Palestine disaggregated data 2023–2024.
[79] B'Tselem, "Our Genocide," 20, 28, 47–48.
[80] OCHA oPT, "West Bank Monthly Snapshot: Casualties, Property Damage and Displacement as of 31 July 2025," July 31, 2025.
[81] B'Tselem, "Our Genocide," 20, Amnesty International, "'You Feel Like You Are Subhuman,'" 67.
[82] B'Tselem, "Our Genocide," 47.
[83] See n.90 and especially OCHA oPT, "West Bank Monthly Snapshot 31 July 2025." See also, Nurit Yohanan, "As IDF Demolishes Hundreds of Houses in West Bank Camps, Residents Are Determined to Return," May 22, 2025, https://www.timesofisrael.com/as-idf-demolishes-hundreds-of-houses-in-west-bank-camps-residents-are-determined-to-return/.
[84] Yolande Knell, "The Israeli Army Took Over My Home, Used It Like a Hotel, Then Set It on Fire," BBC, September 9, 2025, https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cj3ye45lrl1o.

and April 2, the Israeli military displaced almost 100,000 people, as depicted below in Figure 3.[85] By May 2025, an estimated 92 percent of housing units in Gaza had been damaged or destroyed.[86] Less than a year into the violence, Israeli attacks, demolitions, and fighting with Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups already had created 14 times more debris than all other conflicts globally combined since 2008.[87]

Figure 3. Map Depicting the Forced Displacement of an Estimated 95,960 People in the Gaza Strip, March 30–April 2, 2025



Notes: Shaded circles and ovals represent areas affected by forced displacement orders. Arrows depict the movement of displaced people. Cross-hatching represents areas of high risk of death given near-total Israeli military control and targeting of any non-Israeli military personnel. Used with permission: Site Management Cluster Occupied Palestinian Territories, "Population Movement Monitoring Flash Update #7, 30 March–2 April, Global Camp Coordination and Camp Management Cluster, April 2025, https://www.cccmcluster.org/resources/gaza-population-movement-monitoring-flash-update-7.

[85] Site Management Cluster Occupied Palestinian Territories, "Population Movement Monitoring Monthly Update #2, August 1-31," Global Camp Coordination and Camp Management Cluster, September 2025, https://www.cccmcluster.org/resources/population-movement-monitoring-monthly-update-2; Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, "Gaza: Increasing Israeli 'Evacuation Orders' Lead to Forcible Transfer of Palestinians," press briefing, April 11, 2025, https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-briefing-notes/2025/04/gaza-increasing-israeli-evacuation-orders-lead-forcible-transfer; OCHA oPT, Humanitarian Situation Update #288, Gaza Strip, May 14, 202,https://www.ochaopt.org/content/humanitarian-situation-update-288-gaza-strip.

[86] OCHA oPT, "Reported Impact Snapshot, Gaza Strip, infographic, May 14, 2025, https://www.ochaopt.org/content/reported-impact-snapshot-gaza-strip-14-may-2025.

[87] United Nations Institute for Training and Research, "Gaza: Debris Generated by The Current Conflict Is 14 Times More Than the Combined Sum of All Debris Generated by Other Conflicts Since 2008," UNITAR.org, August 1, 2024, https://unitar.org/about/news-stories/news/gaza-debris-generated-current-conflict-14-times-more-combined-sum-all-debris-generated-other.

Table 6. People Displaced in the Gaza Strip and West Bank including East Jerusalem in the Post-October 7 Wars

YEAR	PEOPLE DISPLACED	SOURCES
2023	1,707,498	IDMC, GIDD 2023[88]
2024	324,513	IDMC, GIDD 2024[89]
2025	38,249	OCHA oPT 2025[90]
TOTAL	2,070,260[91]	

Table 7. Displacement Events in the Gaza Strip and West Bank including East Jerusalem in the Post-October 7 Wars

YEAR	DISPLACEMENT EVENTS	SOURCES
2023	3,421,604	IDMC, GIDD 2023[92]
2024	3,216,490	IDMC, GIDD 2024[93]

[88] Approximately 6,200 people were displaced in the Palestinian territories before October 7, and it is unclear if some remained displaced at the end of 2023 and whether they are thus included in this figure. Any impact on the total figure would be minimal. IDMC writes it "has medium confidence in this figure." IDMC, GIDD, Palestine disaggregated data 2023–2024.
[89] As per the methodology, I subtract 2023 figures from 2024 IDMC figures (2,032,011). IDMC, GIDD, Palestine disaggregated data 2023–2024.
[90] As of early September. This figure only represents people displaced in the West Bank and thus likely underestimates displacement given that it does not count any of the estimated 10% in Gaza who were not previously displaced and may have been displaced for the first time in 2025. The total includes 32,590 newly created West Bank IDPs (OCHA oPT, "West Bank Monthly Snapshot: Casualties, Property Damage and Displacement as of 31 July 2025," July 31, 2025) + 1,609 displaced by state actions and settler violence in the West Bank (OCHA oPT, "Data on demolition and displacement in the West Bank," interactive graphic, accessed September 5, 2025, https://www.ochaopt.org/data/demolition) + 4,050 people displaced in the West Bank's El Far'a refugee camp who have mostly returned home (OCHA oPT, "West Bank Monthly Snapshot: Casualties, Property Damage and Displacement as of 31 March 2025," April 2025). OCHA oPT, "Breakdown of Data on Demolition and Displacement in the West Bank," accessed May 15, 2025, https://app.powerbi.com/view?r=eyJrIjoiY2NjMTVhOTgtNDZlOS00Y2RkLWFkNzAtZjUyYjRlZTZiZTBjIiwidCI6IjBmOWUzNWRiLTU0NGYtNGY2MC1iZGNjLTVlYTQxNmU2ZGM3MCIsImMiOjh9; OCHA oPT, "Data on demolition and displacement in the West Bank," interactive graphic, accessed September 5, 2025, https://www.ochaopt.org/data/demolition.
[91] Does not include an estimated 110,000 refugees displaced across international borders to avoid double counting, although the total is likely an underestimate for this and other reasons.
[92] IDMC says it has "medium confidence in [its] figure" and considers it "an underestimate."
[93] IDMC has "medium confidence in this figure" and reports it is "likely a significant underestimate."

2025	898,249	Site Management Cluster 2025; OCHA oPT 2025[94]
TOTAL	7,536,343[95]	

Iran

The U.S.-Israeli war with Iran of June 13-23, 2025 appears to have displaced millions in Tehran and other parts of the country. The IDMC currently estimates that 2,002,000 or more people were displaced during the conflict. This estimate is based on news reports indicating that 2,000 fled initial Israeli attacks and that through war's end "millions" fled Tehran alone; UN sources likewise report that "millions…fled major cities for fear of further attacks."[96]

The 2,002,000 figure is a low-end estimate; another estimate suggests that 9 million fled Iranian cities.[97] Six million people entered a single Iranian province during the war, according to Iran's deputy police chief.[98] IDMC's full-year global report for displacement in 2025 will provide a more authoritative calculation of wartime displacement.[99]

Israeli and U.S. attacks hit nearly all regions of Iran and a total of 122 cities.[100] Civilian infrastructure, including train and air travel systems, suffered "substantial damage"

[94] "More than 860,000" displacement events (calculated as 860,000) in Gaza through September 3, 2025 (Site Management Cluster Occupied Palestinian Territories, "Statement on Escalating Forced Displacement in Gaza," Global Camp Coordination and Camp Management Cluster, September 3, 2025) plus the number of IDPs in the West Bank calculated four notes above.
[95] Does not include an estimated 110,000 refugees displaced across international borders to avoid double counting, although the total could be an underestimate for this and other reasons.
[96] IDMC, Internal Displacements Updates Iran, accessed September 7, 2025, https://data.humdata.org/dataset/idmc-event-data-for-irn; United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, "Iran: UN Fact-Finding Mission, Special Rapporteur Call for Civilian Protection and Respect for Human Rights as Israeli Attacks Cause Extensive Suffering," June 23, 2025, https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2025/06/iran-un-fact-finding-mission-special-rapporteur-call-civilian-protection-and.
[97] Alia Chughtai, "Visualising 12 Days of the Israel-Iran Conflict," *Al Jazeera,* June 26, 2025, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/6/26/visualising-12-days-of-the-israel-iran-conflict.
[98] Moziar Motamedi, "Tehran Is in Shock – and We Have Fled with Heavy Hearts," *Al Jazeera*, June 21, 2025, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/6/21/tehran-is-in-shock-and-we-have-fled-with-heavy-hearts.
[99] Among several open questions about displacement during the June 2025 war is the extent to which the conflict fueled or hastened the forced return of Afghan refugees living in Iran to Afghanistan. For many months, Afghans have faced increasing constraints on living in Iran and growing pressure to return to Afghanistan. Between January and August 2025, 1.94 million Afghans returned, 1.15 million of whom were deported, according to the United Nations. The number of people leaving Iran escalated significantly during the period coinciding with the June war, although it is difficult to know with certainty the role the war played given other pressures to leave such as the government-announced July 6 deadline for many Afghans to exit Iran. UNHCR Comprehensive Overview of Response to Emergencies, "Iran-Afghanistan Returns Emergency Response as of 27 August 2025," August 29, 2025, https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/118305.
[100] HRANA News Agency, "Twelve Days Under Fire: A Comprehensive Report on the Iran-Israel War," Human Rights Activists News Agency, June 28, 2025, https://www.en-hrana.org/twelve-days-under-fire-a-comprehensive-report-on-the-iran-israel-war/.

in Tehran and other parts of the country.[101] In total, one estimate suggests that more than 21 million people—almost a quarter of the country—were exposed to Israeli airstrikes, underlining the breadth of the war's impact.[102]

Some fled soon after Israel's initial airstrikes hit military installations and residential neighborhoods where the Israeli military sought to assassinate Iranian nuclear scientists and military officials in their homes.[103] More fled after Israel issued "evacuation orders" (similar to those issued in Gaza and Lebanon) for a neighborhood of 330,000 people in southern Tehran and people living near military sites. On June 16, President Donald Trump posted on social media, "Everyone should immediately evacuate Tehran!" Tehran is a city of around 10 million with 14–15 million in the larger metropolitan area.[104]

The flight of people and generalized fear produced hours-long lines at gas stations. ATMs limited cash withdrawals. Roads leaving Tehran and other cities were gridlocked for hours in the heat of summer[105] with what a journalist who fled described as "a sea of vehicles filled with families, pets, and belongings."[106]

"We left Tehran with heavy hearts, not knowing when we might return. The buildings were already mostly empty of residents. The feeling that we may not return to the same intact neighbourhoods was unavoidable, as was the terror we feel for those who wanted to leave but could not, whether because they are nursing a sick family member or because they simply lacked the means to do so."[107] An Iranian human rights organization reported 22 deaths due to people unable to receive planned dialysis treatments as well as power cuts affecting home oxygen supplies.[108]

Most Iranians displaced by the war are presumed to have been able to return home, with some returning to find their homes damaged by attacks.[109] Although the period of displacement was relatively brief for those who returned, the impact of short periods of

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[101] Fatemah Jamalpour, "Iranians Displaced by Israeli Assault Unsure Whether to Return Home After Ceasefire," Drop Site News, June 25, 2025, https://www.dropsitenews.com/p/iran-israel-war-displacement-tehran; HRANA News Agency, "Twelve Days Under Fire"; Motamedi, "Tehran Is in Shock."
[102] Ameneh Mehvar, "Q&A: Twelve Days that Shook the Region: Inside the Iran-Israel War," ACLED, July 4, 2025, https://acleddata.com/qa/qa-twelve-days-shook-region-inside-iran-israel-war.
[103] HRANA News Agency, "Twelve Days Under Fire"; Motamedi, "Tehran Is in Shock."
[104] Julian Borger, "Israel Issues Tehran Evacuation Order as Iran Threatens to Leave Nuclear Weapons Treaty,' *Guardian*, June 17, 2025, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/jun/16/iran-threatens-to-leave-nuclear-weapons-treaty-as-israeli-bombing-enters-fourth-day; Nils Adler, "Trump Warns Tehran Residents to 'Evacuate Immediately'. But Can They?" *Al Jazeera*, June 17, 2025, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/6/17/trump-asks-tehran-residents-to-evacuate-immediately-but-can-they.
[105] HRANA News Agency, "Twelve Days Under Fire"; Motamedi, "Tehran Is in Shock."
[106] Motamedi, "Tehran Is in Shock."
[107] Motamedi, "Tehran Is in Shock."
[108] HRANA News Agency, "Twelve Days Under Fire."
[109] Mohammad Lotfollahi, "'Feels Like Heaven': Iranians Return to Tehran, Uncertain of Future," *Al Jazeera,* June 26, 2025, https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2025/6/26/feels-like-heaven-iranians-return-to-tehran-uncertain-of-future; Aaron Boxerman and Leily Nikounazar, "Iranians and Israelis Begin Tense Return to Normal," *New York Times,* June 25, 2025, Lifehttps://www.nytimes.com/2025/06/25/world/middleeast/iran-israel-cease-fire.html.

displacement should not be underestimated. Being forced to flee for one's life can have psychological, physical health, economic, and other effects. Most who returned feared that the war might restart and that they might be forced to flee again. "For many returning to Tehran," wrote one reporter, "the relief of sleeping in their own beds is tempered by the constant fear that the bombing could resume at any moment."[110] Amid signs that Israel and the U.S. might attack Iran again, many Iranians are surely afraid that war and displacement will return.

Prior Israeli attacks on Iran between October 7, 2023, and the June 2025 war may have caused additional civilian displacement, while also killing and injuring civilians and military personnel. These include attacks on military sites and the assassination of Hamas political leader Ismail Haniyeh in a Tehran guesthouse run by the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps. Israeli attacks on Iranian officials and an Iranian consulate in Syria similarly may have caused localized Syrian displacement.[111]

Table 8. People Displaced in Iran in the Post-October 7 Wars

YEAR	PEOPLE DISPLACED	SOURCES
2023	-	No documented displacement.
2024	-	No documented displacement.
2025	2,002,000	IDMC 2025[112]
TOTAL	2,002,000	

Table 9. Total Displacement Events in Iran in the Post-October 7 Wars

YEAR	DISPLACEMENT EVENTS	SOURCES
2023	-	No documented displacement.
2024	-	No documented displacement.
2025	2,002,000	IDMC 2025[113]
TOTAL	2,002,000	

[110] Lotfollahi, "'Feels Like Heaven.'"
[111] For a timeline of Israeli attacks (and Iranian military retaliation), see Kevin Huggard and Mallika Yadwad, "The Road to the Israel-Iran War: A Timeline," Brookings Institute, July 23, 2025, https://www.brookings.edu/articles/the-road-to-the-israel-iran-war/.
[112] This may be a significant underestimate. IDMC's data combines their triangulated estimate of 2,000 people displaced from Tehran early in the U.S.-Israeli war on Iran and a separate triangulated estimate of 2,000,000 displaced throughout the war. IDMC will produce a more authoritative calculation in their end-of-year report for 2025 displacement. See, IDMC, Internal Displacements Updates Iran.
[113] IDMC, Internal Displacements Updates Iran.

Forced Displacement, Mass Expulsion, and Genocide

Considerable evidence suggests that displacement in Gaza and, to date, on a smaller scale in the West Bank are fundamentally different in nature than displacement in Israel, Lebanon, Iran, and other parts of the region. Most of the displacement in Israel, Lebanon, Iran, Yemen, and Syria has been akin to displacement found in war zones where people flee for their lives, seeking to save themselves from bombing, attacks, and other dangers of war. This kind of displacement can be characterized as a form of "flight" from war in contrast to the categorically different displacement phenomenon of "mass expulsion" experienced by Palestinians.

In the case of flight, "the decision to escape rests on the evaluation, on the part of the individual or group, of the risks of staying against the prospects of salvation through escape," writes historian Sven Tägil. In the case of mass expulsion, on the other hand, "those it affects do not even have a theoretical choice. They are forced by decree"—one that is either literally stated or, in some cases, does not need to be stated explicitly. "Any conceivable motivation on their own part to stay or to move becomes," as Tägil says, "irrelevant."[114] The displacement of Palestinians thus is best understood as a form of mass expulsion, which is commonly "directed against larger groups of people" and intended to be "permanent and irreversible."[115]

In Gaza, two researchers explain, "displacement is not a *consequence* of the conflict" as it is in many war zones, "but is rather one of its *main objectives*, as it forms part of an organised strategy on the part of the state of Israel." They explain that "the purpose is expulsion from a territory in order to expand into it" and "the expulsion is intended to be permanent." They conclude that this "organised forced displacement" is "not so different from the case of the Rohingya in Myanmar, where genocide, expulsion and land grabbing went hand in hand."[116]

Israeli government officials have become increasingly explicit that the mass expulsion of Palestinians is their goal in Gaza and at least parts of the West Bank. After the start of new offensives in March 2025, the Israeli military has described its actions as a "broad attack that includes the displacement of most of the population of the Gaza Strip."[117] In around two months between March and May, 2025, the military displaced around 436,000 Palestinians.[118] As with past displacement, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin

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114 Sven Tägil, "From Nebuchadnezzar to Hitler: The Question of Mass Expulsion in History up to World War II," in *The Uprooted: Forced Migration as an International Problem in the Post-War Era*, Göran Rystad, ed., (Lund University Press, 1990), 61.
115 Tägil, "From Nebuchadnezzar to Hitler," 62, 61.
116 Emphasis added. Blanca Garcés and Giulia Porfirione, "Expulsion with No Exit: One Year of War in Gaza," CIDOB Notes Internacionals 309, October 2024, 2, https://doi.org/10.24241/NotesInt.2024/309/en.
117 Will Gretsky and Leah Sarnoff, "Israel's Netanyahu Says 'It Appears' Hamas leader Mohammed Sinwar Was Killed," *ABC News,* May 21, 2025, https://abcnews.go.com/International/israels-netanyahu-hamas-leader-mohammed-sinwar-killed/story?id=122044336.
118 United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs Occupied Palestinian Territory, "Humanitarian Situation Update #288 Gaza Strip," May 14, 2025.

Netanyahu and other officials have said the mass displacement of the Palestinian population is "for its own protection."[119]

Starting in August 2025, the Israeli military issued new displacement orders for around one million people living in and around Gaza City as part of orders to demolish the entire city above and below ground.[120] As of this writing, tens of thousands have already been displaced with thousands killed or injured (see Figure 4, below, for an illustration of this August 2025 displacement).

Israeli forces have begun demolishing multi-story apartment buildings and other structures, flattening significant parts of the city as it has other parts of the Strip. The Israeli military claimed to have destroyed 50 high-rise buildings across two days in September, which it said Hamas used for military purposes; unknown numbers of people are currently trapped under the rubble of the buildings.[121]

Netanyahu and other Israeli officials have likewise endorsed a mass expulsion plan—often described as U.S. President Donald Trump's plan[122]—to displace Palestinians outside Gaza while the U.S. government takes control and turns the Strip into the "Riviera of the Middle East."[123] While ambiguity remains about the details of the plan, Israeli government officials have promised mass displacement within and beyond Gaza. In March, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu stated his support for the "realization of the Trump plan" for what some Israeli and U.S. leaders euphemistically call "voluntary migration."

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[119] Jason Burke and Julian Borger, "Gaza Will Be Entirely Destroyed, Israeli Minister Says," *Guardian,* May 6, 2025, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/may/06/hamas-israel-hunger-war-in-gaza.

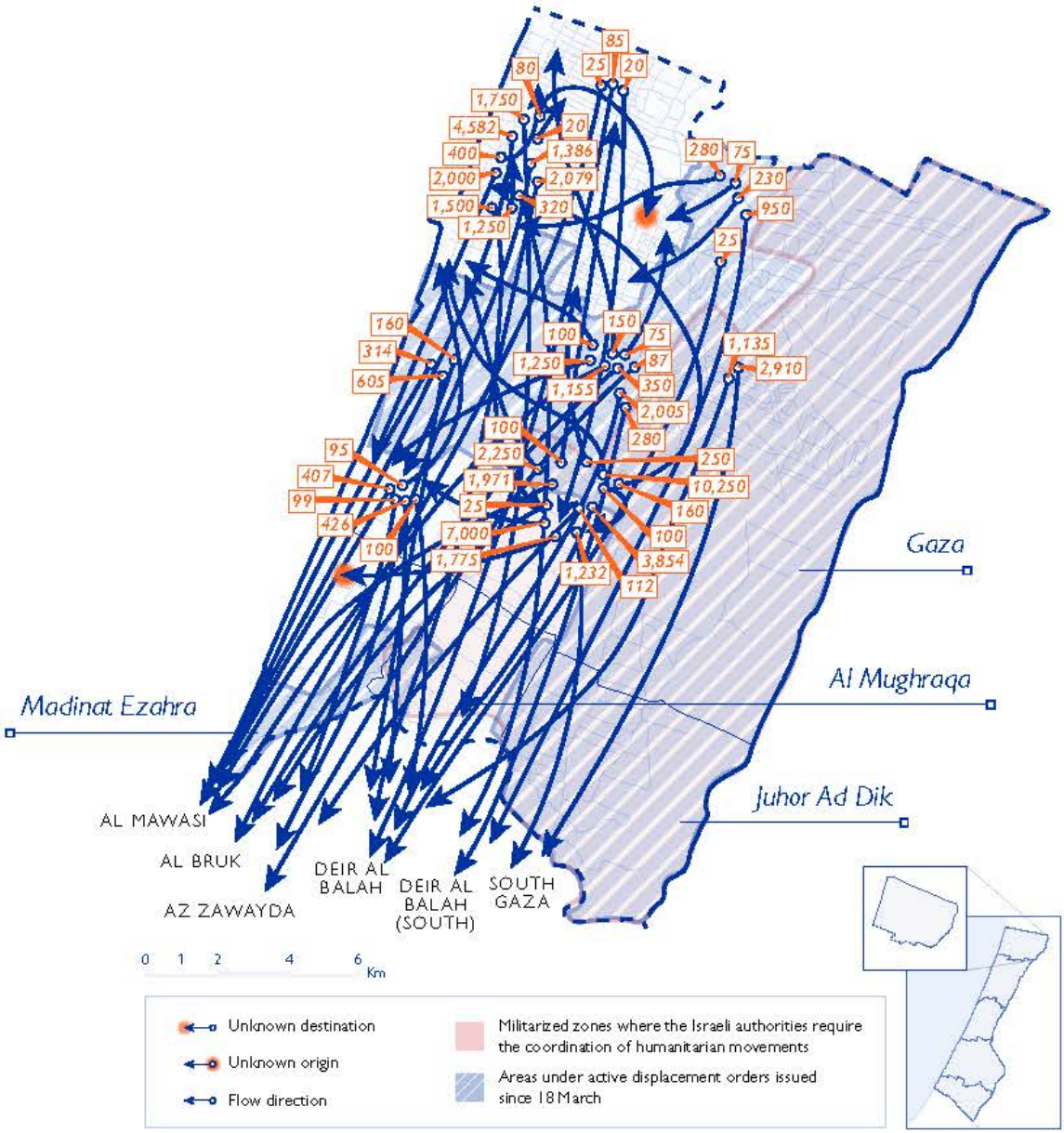
[120] Yaniv Kubovich, "IDF Warns Netanyahu Government's Demands to Demolish Gaza City Could Take Over a Year," *Haaretz*, August 24, 2025, https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2025-08-24/ty-article/.premium/idf-warns-netanyahu-governments--demands-to-demolish-gaza-city-could-take-over-a-year/00000198-d8e6-dd20-a5fc-fce72cb50000; Associated Press, "Israeli Military Urges Full Evacuation of Gaza City ahead of Expanded Military Operations," September 9, 2025, https://apnews.com/article/israel-palestinians-hamas-war-news-09-09-2025-295b21cdd06f65594b23ffd12fba9234.

[121] Associated Press, "Israeli Military Urges Full Evacuation"; Zeena Saifi and Thomas Bordeaux, "Satellite Images Reveal Wide Destruction in Gaza City as Israel Steps Up Assault," CNN.com, September 9, 2025, https://edition.cnn.com/2025/09/12/middleeast/satellite-images-destruction-gaza-city-israel-intl-cmd.

[122] Trump has said Palestinians would be "resettled in far safer and more beautiful communities" and not have the right to return to return to Gaza: "No, they wouldn't because they're going to have much better housing. In other words, I'm talking about building a permanent place for them." Lee Keath, "Trump Doubles Down on Plan to Empty Gaza. This Is What He Has Said and What's at Stake," *AP,* February 12, 2025, https://apnews.com/article/trump-gaza-plan-palestinians-israel-3f12eb51869da2221afbb22b0bcf47ba. See also, Karen DeYoung and Cate Brown, "Gaza Postwar Plan Envisions 'Voluntary' Relocation of Entire Population," *Washington Post,* September 2, 2025, https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2025/08/31/trump-gaza-plan-riviera-relocation/.

[123] Netanyahu was quoted saying, "I am ready to end the war on clear terms that will ensure Israel's security--all the hostages returned home, Hamas lays down its weapons, its leadership is overthrown, Gaza is completely demilitarized and the Trump plan is implemented" (Gretsky and Sarnoff, "Israel's Netanyahu Says"). See also, Courtney Kube, Carol E. Lee and Gordon Lubold, "Trump administration working on plan to move 1 million Palestinians to Libya," *NBC News,* May 16, 2025, https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/national-security/trump-administration-working-plan-move-1-million-palestinians-libya-rcna207224.

Figure 4. Forced Displacement in Gaza City, August 1–31, 2025



Notes: This map shows the 57,839 forced displacement movements occurring in Gaza City in August 2025. Arrows show the direction of people fleeing with numbers representing the approximate number of distinct displacement events originating in different parts of the city. Used with permission. Site Management Cluster Occupied Palestinian Territories, "Population Movement Monitoring Monthly Update #2, August 1-31," Global Camp Coordination and Camp Management Cluster, September 2025, https://www.cccmcluster.org/resources/population-movement-monitoring-monthly-update-2.

Netanyahu added, "This is the plan. We are not hiding it."[124] That same month, the Israeli cabinet approved the creation of a Voluntary Emigration Bureau charged with moving Palestinians out of Gaza and to other countries.[125]

"Gaza will be entirely destroyed," cabinet member Bezalel Smotrich has said. "Civilians will be sent to … the south to a humanitarian zone without Hamas or terrorism, and from there they will start to leave in great numbers to third countries."[126] The Israeli government appears to have begun secret negotiations with the Republic of Congo, Libya, Indonesia, Ethiopia, and other countries to which it hopes to displace Palestinians, according to media reports.[127]

Global human rights experts, lawyers, and others warn that Israel's mass expulsion could constitute war crimes and crimes against humanity. UN Secretary General António Guterres and a UN spokesperson likewise warned in February 2025 against "any form of ethnic cleansing" following President Trump's comments about taking over Gaza and moving Palestinians to other countries.[128]

UN human rights chief Volker Türk has warned that the Israeli offensive begun in May 2025 "appears to be a push for a permanent demographic shift in Gaza that is in defiance of international law and is tantamount to ethnic cleansing."[129] U.S. Senators Chris Van Hollen and Jeff Merkley conclude that "the facts demonstrated overwhelmingly that Israel is … implementing a plan to ethnically cleanse Gaza of Palestinians and dealing a death blow to the vision of a future Palestinian state that would include Gaza and the West

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[124] Rapoport and Ziv, "'Render It Unusable.'" See also, e.g., Chris Van Hollen and Jeff Merkley, "The Netanyahu Government is Implementing a Plan to Ethnically Cleanse Gaza of Palestinians. America is Complicit. The World Must Stop It: Van Hollen, Merkley Report Following 2025 CODEL to Gaza Border, Israel, West Bank, Jordan, and Egypt," September 11, 2025, 17; Jonathan Lis and Nir Hasson, "Netanyahu Made Clear Israel Will 'Occupy' Gaza under New Military Plan, Official Says," Haaretz, May 5, 2025, https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2025-05-05/ty-article/.premium/israeli-security-cabinet-unanimously-approves-expansion-of-military-operations-in-gaza/00000196-9ed7-d460-abf6-ffdf546e0000. This explicitness of the plan is not entirely new. "Senior officials in the Israeli government and the war cabinet have repeatedly declared their intent to forcibly displace the population, declaring their policy goal throughout the conflict, from the early days of the war to over a year later," Human Rights Watch has shown (HRW, "Hopeless, Starving, Besieged," 144, 9).

[125] Jonathan Lis and Yaniv Kubovich, "Israeli Government Approves Bureau for 'Voluntary Emigration' of Palestinians From Gaza," Haaretz, March 23, 2025, https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2025-03-23/ty-article/.premium/israeli-government-approves-bureau-for-voluntary-emigration-of-palestinians-from-gaza/00000195-c2ed-dcee-a7b7-fffdc83c0000.

[126] Burke and Borger, "Gaza Will Be Entirely Destroyed."

[127] Citing *Zman Israel*, the *Times of Israel*'s Hebrew language site, Shalom Yerushalmi, "Israel in Talks with Congo and Other Countries on Gaza 'Voluntary Migration' Plan," *Times of Israel,* January 3, 2024, https://www.timesofisrael.com/israel-in-talks-with-congo-and-other-countries-on-gaza-voluntary-migration-plan/; Barak Ravid, "Scoop: Israel seeks U.S. help on deals to move Palestinians out of Gaza," Axios, July 18, 2025, https://www.axios.com/2025/07/18/israel-send-palestinians-gaza-indonesia-ethiopia.

[128] United Nations, "Guterres Calls for Full Gaza Ceasefire, Rejecting 'Ethnic Cleansing,'" press release, February 5, 2025, https://news.un.org/en/story/2025/02/1159821. .

[129] United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, "Türk Deplores Gaza Escalation, Pleads for Global Action to Stop More Killings," press release, May 16, 2025, https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2025/05/turk-deplores-gaza-escalation-pleads-global-action-stop-more-killings.

Bank."[130] Others concur that ethnic cleansing has already taken place, although the term has no specific meaning or significance under international law.[131]

The Israeli government's claims to be undertaking lawful forms of displacement to protect the safety of Palestinians in Gaza have been widely rejected as false.[132] Palestinians have faced killing, injury, disease, hunger, and other seriously unsafe conditions both during so-called Israeli "evacuation" processes and in areas declared to be "safe zones." Contrary to the requirements of international law, the Israeli government has shown through its statements and actions that it has no intention of returning most or all of the displaced after fighting has ended. The massive destruction of civilian infrastructure shows that the Israeli government has made "large parts of Gaza uninhabitable" as a tool of displacement and ultimately genocide.[133]

Prime Minister Netanyahu acknowledged in a May 2025 Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee meeting, "We are destroying more and more homes, they have nowhere to return to. The only inevitable outcome will be the desire of Gazans to emigrate outside of the Gaza Strip." In the same meeting, the Israeli prime minister indicated that Palestinians in Gaza would only receive humanitarian aid on the condition of not returning to their homes.[134]

Far from "evacuations" to protect the safety of Palestinians in Gaza and allow them to return home at the end of fighting, the Israeli government's mass expulsion of Palestinians likely constitutes the war crime of "forcible transfer" in violation of the Geneva Conventions and the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (to which Palestine, though not Israel, is a member).[135]

Beyond constituting a war crime (a serious enough charge), displacement appears to have served as a tool to advance the genocide of Palestinians: Mass expulsion combined

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[130] Van Hollen and Merkley, "The Netanyahu Government is Implementing," 1.
[131] E.g., HRW, "Hopeless, Starving, Besieged," 2–3, 9.
[132] See also, B'Tselem, "Our Genocide"; HRW, "Hopeless, Starving, Besieged," 2; Amnesty International, "'You Feel Like You are Subhuman,'" 13.
[133] Van Hollen and Jeff Merkley, "The Netanyahu Government is Implementing," 1; HRW, "Hopeless, Starving, Besieged," 3. See also, e.g., Miriam Berger, Imogen Piper, Hazem Balousha and Evan Hill, "Israel Is Demolishing Northern Gaza and Fortifying Military Positions, Imagery Shows," Washington Post, December 23, 2024, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2024/12/23/gaza-north-israel-jabalya-palestinians/.
[134] Avraham Bloch, "Main thing stopping Gaza emigration is host countries, Netanyahu says," *Jerusalem Post,* May 11, 2025, https://www.jpost.com/israel-news/politics-and-diplomacy/article-853568.
[135] United Nations Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, "Legal Analysis of the Conduct," para. 109; United Nations Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, "Detailed findings on the Military Operations and Attacks Carried Out in the Occupied Palestinian Territory from 7 October to 31 December 2023," *United Nations A/HRC/56/CRP.4*, June 10, 2024, paras. 438–440; Danish Refugee Council, et al., "Suffering by Design," 13, 20; Amnesty International, "'You Feel Like You Are Subhuman,'" 24; HRW, "Hopeless, Starving, Besieged," 3. HRW (p. 2) explains, "Israel is the occupying power in Gaza and as such its conduct is governed by international humanitarian law (IHL). Under IHL – or the laws of war – forcible transfer, which means the forced displacement of any civilian inside an occupied territory, is prohibited, and, if committed with criminal intent, is a war crime. The only exception to this fundamental prohibition is when an occupying power evacuates people for their security or for an imperative military reason."

with Israel's large-scale destruction of infrastructure and the denial of food and life-saving humanitarian aid constitute actions, as the Genocide Convention says, "deliberately inflicting on the group [i.e., Palestinians] conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part."[136]

In finding that Israel is committing genocide, Physicians for Human Rights Israel concluded that "repeated statements [by the highest-ranking state officials] endorsing the total destruction, starvation, and the permanent displacement of Palestinians in Gaza, combined with policies operationalizing such aims, reflect not rogue positions but official state intent."[137]

Israel's pattern of killing displaced Palestinians seeking refuge in displaced persons camps, so-called safe zones, and other displacement settings[138] provides yet more evidence that mass expulsion has been a fundamental component of Israel's genocide.

Imminent Risk of Greater Displacement and Mass Expulsion

As serious and widespread as displacement has been since October 7, 2023, there is an imminent risk that the scale and damage inflicted by mass displacement and expulsion will escalate dramatically. This is clear from the Israeli invasion of Gaza City and the mass expulsion of its entire population coupled with other steps the Israeli government is taking to implement a plan to move most or all Palestinians from Gaza to other countries. In other words, the entire remaining population of Gaza—around 2.1 million people—is at risk of mass expulsion from the Strip.

At the time of finalizing this report, some fear Israel and/or the U.S. may reignite a war with Iran.[139] Any conflict between the countries risks a full-scale war, which could displace many millions more in Iran as well as in Israel and any other countries affected by the fighting such as Qatar and others hosting U.S. military bases.[140]

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[136] "Genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group." *Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide*, December 9, 1948, Art. 2.

[137] Physicians for Human Rights Israel, "Destruction of Conditions of Life: A Health Analysis of the Gaza Genocide," July 2025, 46.

[138] UNRWA, "UNRWA Situation Report #187"; B'Tselem, "Our Genocide," 20–21; Amnesty International, "'You Feel Like You Are Subhuman,'" 206. Amnesty International documents how "Israel ordered attacks on residential areas where large numbers of displaced civilians, including multi-generational families, were sheltering…. The timing of many attacks at night, when people would have been sleeping, the number of families residing at each address and the number of members of each family present indicate that the scale of civilian deaths and injuries was understood and intentional."

[139] E.g., Trita Parsi, "The Next Israel-Iran War Is Coming," *Responsible Statecraft*, August 11, 2025, https://quincyinst.org/2025/08/11/the-next-israel-iran-war-is-coming/.

[140] Prior to the June war, some warned that a full-scale war could result in the largest refugee and displacement crisis since World War II if the conflict caused the collapse of the Iranian government or the outbreak of a civil war. See, e.g., Alex Nowrasteh, "A US Attack on Iran Could Cause the Largest Refugee Crisis in History," CATO at Liberty blog, June 18, 2025, https://www.cato.org/blog/us-attack-iran-could-cause-largest-refugee-crisis-history.

Conclusion: The Dehumanization of Numbers and the Urgency of Stopping the Violence

Numbers can only tell us so much about displacement. Numbers can become dangerously numbing and distance us from the experience of the displaced. Especially when numbers are so large, when displacement reaches the millions, it is easy to forget what—*who*—the numbers represent. One can lose any sense of how it would feel to flee for one's life, to lose one's home, to have one's connection to a place torn asunder, to have one's community shattered. One easily can forget that the numbers reflect individual people with individual names and lives that have been damaged forever. Grappling with the human impacts of displacement on this scale requires conscious effort and attention to the individual lives involved.[141]

"Imagine the victim of an earthquake, a hurricane, a flood, or a terrorist attack," suggests psychologist Mindy Fullilove who has described how involuntary displacement in a range of settings can cause a phenomenon called "root shock": "Root shock is the traumatic stress reaction to the destruction of all or part of one's emotional ecosystem" rooted in one's home. Root shock, she writes, "has important parallels to the physiological shock experienced by a person who, as a result of injury, suddenly loses massive amounts of fluids. Such a blow threatens the whole body's ability to function."[142]

If one has seen images of entire cities flattened and buildings in ruins in Gaza or heard of or read such descriptions, one can at least attempt to imagine how it might feel to be in such an environment. As Fullilove writes, a person "suffers from root shock as [one] looks at the twisted remains of the known universe, searching for the road to the supermarket, which used to be there, but is now a pile of rubble. Imagining such a person—and knowing that these tragedies can happen to any of us—we open our hearts and our wallets to the Red Cross and other relief organizations that show up immediately to be … the transfusion of an environment to those who are naked to the elements."[143]

However, Fullilove adds, root shock "does not end with emergency treatment, but will stay with the individual for a lifetime," potentially affecting "generations and generations."[144]

Documenting the full impacts of displacement from the individual to the societal levels across all the settings described in this report is beyond the scope of the report but remains vital work for scholars, journalists, and affected peoples themselves. More qualitative and oral history research will be particularly important. Ultimately, neither qualitative nor quantitative methods can adequately measure or convey the effects of forced displacement. Still, it is important to attempt to quantify how many people have

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[141] Parts of this section are inspired by Vine, et al., "Creating Refugees."
[142] Mindy Thompson Fullilove, Root Shock: How Tearing Up City Neighborhoods Hurts America, and What We Can Do about It (New York: One World, 2004), 11.
[143] Fullilove, Root Shock, 12.
[144] Fullilove, Root Shock, 12.

been displaced as one indicator of the scale of the damage brought about by post-October 7, 2023 violence.

The displacement of at least 5.27 million people to date plus the potential displacement of millions more underlines the urgency of ending the violence as quickly as possible, of allowing the displaced to return home as international law requires, of ensuring reparation for the displaced, and of holding perpetrators accountable for crimes committed.

Appendix: Data Challenges

The reliability of displacement statistics under the best of circumstances is a perennial methodological challenge.[145] The problem reflects the scale of displacement; the difficulty of data collection in war zones, camps and centers for the displaced, and other contexts where displaced people often do not want to call attention to themselves; the challenge of capturing cases of multiple displacement in many contexts; and the fact that reporting data about the displaced frequently has political, economic, and diplomatic consequences.[146] International organizations and displacement scholars have not reached a consensus about whether displacement statistics tend to underestimate or overestimate the number displaced.

Organizations such as the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) are aware of these challenges and thus rely on multiple sources of data and expertise in compiling their counts of the displaced. Practitioners and scholars likewise have worked over many years to improve methodological best practices and, in turn, the accuracy and reliability of displacement statistics.[147] Still, as scholar Zara Sarzin writes, while existing figures "provide important insights into the forced displacement crisis…they ought to be taken with a great degree of caution. Data users should be aware of their limitations and of the [possibility of] corresponding error margins."[148]

Given these challenges, the report errs on the side of a conservative estimate. Over time, scholars, practitioners, and governments have improved the reliability of displacement data both in general and in specific cases. Readers should likewise note that data for 2025 comes from the best available preliminary reporting. IDMC (like other international organizations) checks and corrects data errors over time, providing final yearly statistics several months into the new year. Ultimately, this report provides a basis for others to improve on its calculations.[149]

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[145] See, e.g., Weihmayer and Majidi, "Research Methodologies and Challenges" and the book in which it appears, David James Cantor, et al., eds., *Oxford Handbook on Internal Displacement* (Oxford University Press, forthcoming).

[146] On the last point, governments have vested financial and political interests in the number of refugees, IDPs, and returnees within or beyond their borders. For example, displacement figures can potentially affect levels of international aid for host governments, media and political perceptions of hosts, inter-governmental negotiations of many kinds, among other factors. Organizations like IDMC are aware of these dynamics

[147] See, e.g., Weihmayer and Majidi, "Research Methodologies and Challenges" and Sarzin, "Stock Taking."

[148] Sarzin, "Stock Taking," 6, 7.

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