Gaza Death Toll Hits 1,980 as Dozens Succumb to War Wounds

A Ministry of Health official warned Friday that the death toll in Gaza was expected to continue to rise as dozens succumbed to wounds sustained during the offensive and more bodies were recovered under the rubble of homes.

Healthy ministry spokesman Ashraf al-Qidra said that the death toll had hit 1,980 on Friday with at least 10,181 injured.

Dozens have been added to the death count despite a fragile calm maintained through back-to-back ceasefires in recent weeks.

Al-Qidra said that many of those injured are still in a critical condition, and are not expected to survive their wounds.

The low survival rate is also due in part to the continued lack of appropriate medical supplies and facilities for injured patients, while 18-hour daily power cuts and a lack of fuel for generators aggravate the condition of those hospitals still functioning.

The PLO estimates that that 17 hospitals and seven clinics were damaged during the assault, 10 hospitals and 44 primary health clinics were closed, 22 ambulances were damaged, and 83 health personnel injured, along with 19 health personnel who died in Israeli airstrikes.

The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs said in a report on Thursday that supplies of medicine had managed to return to their June levels, when medicines were running at about 70 percent of their required volume due to the Israeli siege and Egyptian limitations on imports into Gaza.
This is a stark improvement from July, however, when the UN body said that “27 per cent of essential medicines and 52 per cent of medical disposables were at zero stock.”

OCHA also said that bed occupancy in Gaza’s surgical wards had fallen from 100 percent to 80 percent as hospitals obtained permission from Israel to transfer some patients to East Jerusalem and Turkey for care.

At the height of the Israeli assault in early August, patients were routinely doubling up in beds or sleeping on the floor due to the lack of space as well as the Israeli shelling of a number of hospitals, which drastically reduced available capacity across the Strip.

Despite the improvements, the inability of medical authorities to properly administer to the injured during the bombardment has had lasting effects being felt as the death toll rises rapidly in the days since.

The massive scale of the destruction of residential neighborhoods – at least 16,800 homes were obliterated or severely damaged – means that it could also take weeks to find all of the dead beneath the rubble.

Al-Qidra said that civil defense and ambulance crews were currently working around the clock to search for the many who are still reported missing in Gaza.

As the days pass, however, the possibility of finding survivors under the rubble was fading and the focus was on recovering bodies.

He added that the ministry’s toll also kept increasing as many families had buried their dead without taking them first to the hospital, as these families had feared being targeted amid intense Israeli bombardment.

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