

Experts warn that asbestos released by bombs Israel drops on Gazans is silent killer



Palestinian civilians and rescuers help clear the rubble in the heavily bombed city center of Khan Yunis in the southern Gaza Strip following overnight Israeli shelling, October 10, 2023. (Photo by AFP)

Gaza City, October 10 (RHC)-- Experts warn that asbestos, a hazardous substance released by the bombs Israel drops on the besieged Gaza Strip, is a silent killer of the people at the regime's disposal.

Since October 2023, Israeli bombs have caused vast amounts of the hazardous chemical to be broken into tiny, airborne particles that can potentially cause cancer if breathed in.

Leading experts say cases of cancer will likely be reported “for decades” in the besieged Palestinian territory. Immediate dangers posed by Israel’s barbarism on the ground and in the air always take precedence over long-term hazards.

Liz Darlison is the CEO of the charity Mesothelioma UK. She believes the long-term effects of asbestos exposure will constitute a “tragedy that will unfold in the years ahead.” After an explosion that releases asbestos, there would simply be no “safe level of exposure.” “It’s heartbreaking to know that the legacy of this war will continue for many years.”

The asbestos exposure of people caught in the aftermath of each of Israel’s acts of barbarism can be compared to that around the World Trade Center when it collapsed in New York City on September 11, 2001. According to the WTC Health Program, 4,343 survivors and first responders have died from related illnesses since the attack compared to the 2,974 people who died on that September day.

Roger Willey is a leading asbestos expert. Willey sees it as “a death sentence... that’s going to be the same for the people in Gaza.” “The best thing to do if asbestos is disturbed and becomes airborne is to get in a car and drive as far away from it as possible.”

The UN has warned that only 11 percent of Gaza remains a “safe zone,” thereby making it simply impossible for the more than two million Palestinians crammed in the territory to stay away from the asbestos danger.

A human rights monitor says Israel is using banned white phosphorus munitions against people in the besieged Gaza Strip.

The World Health Organization has said large amounts of dust released from destroyed buildings are spreading hazardous materials that float into the air or seep into water supplies, risking serious health problems for Gaza’s 2.3 million people. According to a damage assessment from UNOSAT, 163,778 structures were damaged in the Gaza Strip based on images taken on September 3 and 6 amounting to 66% of the total.

In total, there are more than 128,000 buildings destroyed, or severely or moderately damaged in Gaza as a result of the Israeli campaign of death and destruction.

Israel has generated – through its barbaric campaign – an estimated 42 million tonnes of debris in Gaza since October 2023. The UN Environment Program estimates that several million tonnes of the debris may be contaminated. The International Committee of the Red Cross warns that the risk of unexploded ordnance is pervasive across Gaza.

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