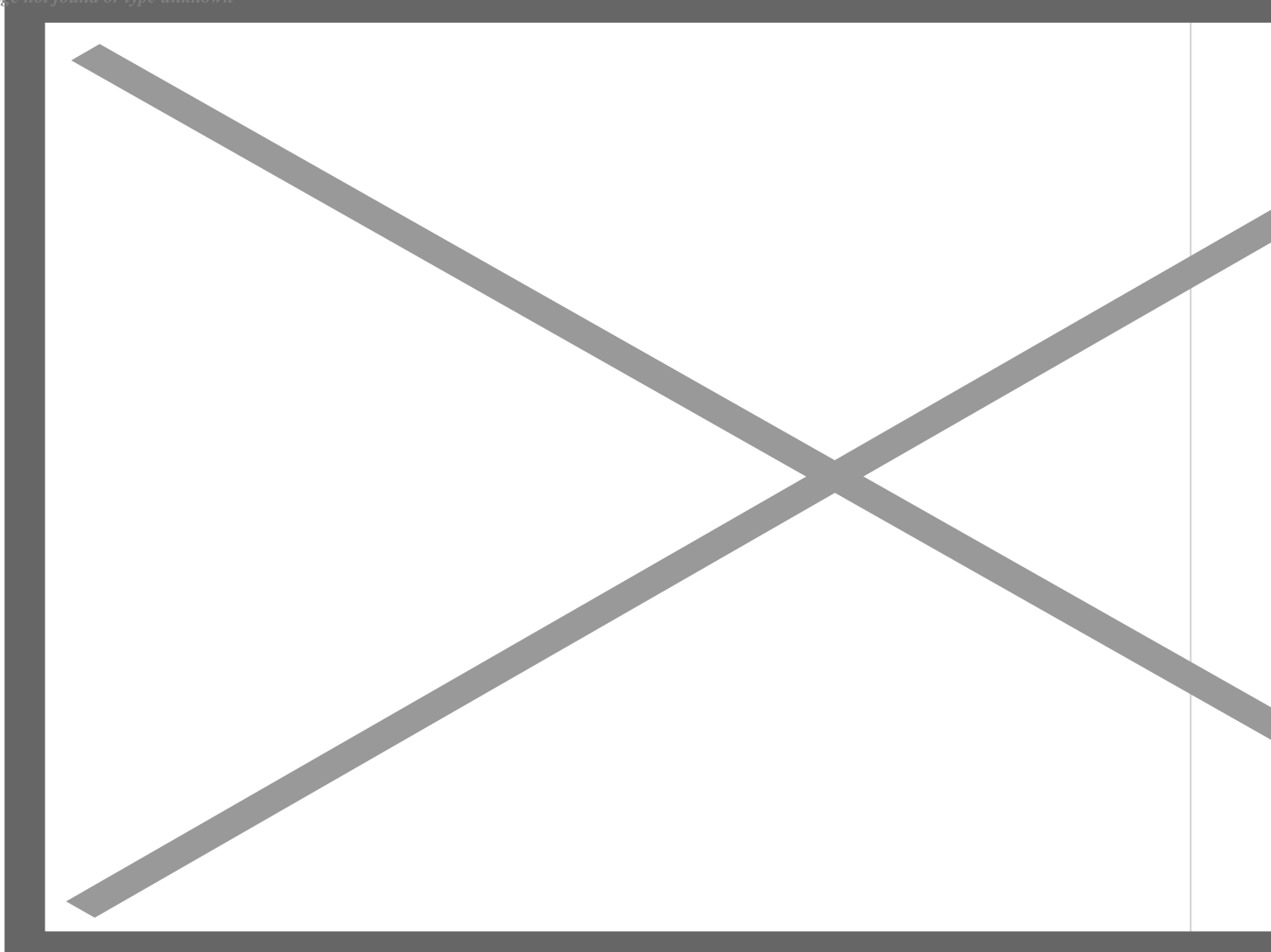


United Nations says Gaza has become a graveyard for thousands of children

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United Nations, November 1 (RHC)-- The Gaza Strip is now a graveyard for thousands of children, the United Nations has said, as it warned of the prospect of more dying of dehydration amid Israel's war on the besieged enclave.

The Israeli army has widened its air and ground attacks on Gaza – including houses and hospitals – which has been under relentless air raids since the surprise offensive by the Palestinian group Hamas on October 7 that killed 1,400 people in Israel, according to Israeli officials.

More than 8,500 Palestinians, mostly children and women, have been killed, Gaza's health ministry said.

"Our gravest fears about the reported numbers of children killed becoming dozens, then hundreds, and ultimately thousands were realised in just a fortnight," James Elder, a spokesperson for the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), said in a statement on Tuesday.

"The numbers are appalling; reportedly more than 3,450 children killed; staggeringly this rises significantly every day." "Gaza has become a graveyard for thousands of children. It's a living hell for everyone else."

Catherine Russell, the executive director of UNICEF, also said that at least 6,300 children have been injured due to the Israeli attacks. This means that on average, 420 Palestinian children are killed or injured every day in the Gaza Strip, she explained. "These numbers should shock and shake us to the core," Russell said.

The body called for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire, with all access crossings into the Gaza Strip opened for the safe, sustained and unimpeded access of humanitarian aid, including water, food, medical supplies, and fuel.

"And if there is no ceasefire, no water, no medicine, and no release of abducted children? Then we hurtle towards even greater horrors afflicting innocent children," said Elder. The spokesman said that according to figures from health faculties in Gaza, some 940 children were missing.

UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) spokesman Jens Laerke added: "It's almost unbearable to think about children buried under rubble, but [with] very little opportunity or possibility for getting them out."

An Israeli blockade of the Strip has also cut Gaza off from fuel, electricity and water supplies, and reduced aid deliveries to a small trickle unable to satisfy the needs of the 2.3 million Palestinians there.

Elder said the threats to children "go beyond bombs", stressing that water and trauma are among other threats faced in the besieged Palestinian enclave. He warned that more than one million children in Gaza face a critical water crisis as Gaza's daily water output is at five percent of its production capacity. "So, child deaths to dehydration, particularly infant deaths to dehydration, are a growing threat," he said.

On trauma, the spokesperson said: "When finally the fighting stops, the cost to children and their communities are going to be borne out for generations to come." Elder stressed that before the current conflict began, more than 800,000 children in Gaza – three-quarters of its entire child population – were identified as in need of mental health and psychological support.

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