

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

December 20, 2024

The Honorable Antony Blinken
Secretary of State
Department of State
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Mr. Secretary,

Details regarding the numbers, nationalities, gender, and ages of the 1,450 people killed or taken hostage during the Hamas-led massacre on October 7, 2023, have been reported by the Government of Israel, among others. Far fewer details are known about the estimated 45,000 Palestinians who have died in Gaza, the majority of them civilians. But we do know the dead include hundreds, possibly thousands, of aid workers, health workers, and journalists. Reports suggest thousands of bodies of Palestinians may be buried beneath the rubble of destroyed buildings.

Data collection regarding Palestinian casualties, as relied upon by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and the Palestinian Authority Ministry of Health (PA MoH), is conducted by the Hamas De Facto Authority Ministry of Health. Historically, OCHA has verified this data, particularly after conflicts, and the figures have generally been deemed accurate. However, in this conflict, OCHA has reported difficulties verifying the data due to the operating environment. At least 230 UN staff have been killed since the conflict began. Additionally, the Government of Israel continues to prevent international journalists from entering Gaza except under escort by Israeli soldiers, limiting accurate reporting on the humanitarian devastation taking place. More than 140 journalists already in Gaza, the majority of them Palestinians, have been killed while covering the conflict, and the Committee to Protect Journalists has reported that at least eight of them were directly targeted by Israeli forces.

We are unable to verify the accuracy of these figures, and the Government of Israel has disputed them without providing its own statistics. Given these limitations and disputes over casualty figures, we are writing to request the Administration's estimates of the following:

- **The total number of Palestinian casualties**, disaggregated by deaths, injuries, men, women and children, civilians and combatants.
- **The total number of casualties of Israeli security force personnel**, disaggregated by deaths and injuries.
- **The total number of hostage deaths**, disaggregated by nationality.
- **The total number of casualties of aid workers**, disaggregated by deaths and injuries, employees of UN agencies and employees of nongovernmental organizations.
- **The total number of casualties of health workers**, disaggregated by deaths and injuries, employees of UN agencies and employees of nongovernmental organizations.
- **The total number of casualties of journalists**, disaggregated by deaths and injuries.

In addition to this information, in the event of a cease fire and hostage release agreement, there will be massive reconstruction needs in Gaza. Given the absence of international journalists in Gaza, however, it is difficult to assess the scale of destruction. To that end, we request the Administration's assessments of the following:

- The percentage of structures in Gaza which have been damaged or destroyed, including an assessment of remaining livable housing units.
- The number of hospitals, schools, and WASH facilities that have been damaged or destroyed, including an assessment of remaining usable facilities.

Thank you for your assistance.

Sincerely,



Peter Welch
United States Senator



Bernard Sanders
United States Senator



Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator



Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator