

Haaretz

As Gaza's Tent Cities Flood in Heavy Rains, Palestinians Are Dying From the Cold

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Satellite images reveal how open areas in Gaza have turned into tent cities for people who have fled their homes. As floods wash away the tents, the displaced are left in the mud without shelter. Seven people, six of them babies, have already died from hypothermia

"I'll die from the cold" is a common phrase in the Palestinian spoken dialect, referring to freezing cold weather. In Gaza, the phrase is taking on literal meaning - people are indeed dying from the cold, and winter is just beginning.

The Hamas-run Health Ministry and Public Information Ministry in Gaza say that seven people have died in recent days in the Strip as a result of the cold. The Health Ministry says six were infants ranging in age from four days to one month.

The information ministry said the number of [deaths from hypothermia in Gaza](#) is expected to rise as rain and cold temperatures continue, given the dire living conditions. "We call upon the international community, the international organizations and the UN to quickly intervene, to save the people of Gaza and supply them with the necessary aid for their survival," the ministry said.

Photo: Part of the humanitarian zone, around Al-Aqsa University, west of Khan Yunis. February 2024, compared to December 2024. Credit: Planet Labs PBC

Video X

Two days ago, the Health Ministry reported the death of Juma' al-Batran, a 20-day-old infant, as a result of the extreme cold in the displaced people camp near the city of Deir al-Balah in central Gaza. His twin brother was reported to have died yesterday while hospitalized in intensive care at Shuhada Al Aqsa Hospital in the city.

On December 28, four children were reported to have died from hypothermia, and the next day, the Health Ministry reported that a medical worker named Ahmed a-Zaharne died in the tent he was living in Mawasi due to the freezing temperatures.

Satellite pictures from recent days illustrate the seriousness of the crisis - They show how open areas have become tent cities, and how the conditions there have become untenable since winter set in. Since the start of the winter, hundreds of thousands of displaced Gazans have had to cope with these conditions while living in tents without enough blankets or warm clothing.

Many more live in ruined buildings that also do not provide much shelter from the rain and cold. In recent days, there have been growing reports about dozens of tents that were uprooted by strong winds, and about many tents that were flooded. Since last month, there have also been images of

encampments flooded with water.

Part of the humanitarian zone, in the Mawasi, February 2024, compared to December 2024. Credit: Planet Labs PBC

Images of flooded encampments have become dominant in recent days, due to the stormy weather and the increasingly heavy rains. Pictures and videos have been widely shared on social media of displaced persons and refugees standing in puddles of rainwater, and of children, women and elderly people hauling away buckets or other makeshift containers full of water in an effort to dry out the tents. Makeshift tents have fallen apart because of the wind.

Video on X

“We are starting 2025 with the most serious humanitarian crisis Palestinians have experienced, in Gaza in particular, perhaps ever. We warned months ago that there were not enough tents or camps, and we’re talking about tent cities,” says Mustafa Ibrahim, who evacuated several times from his home in Gaza City to southern Gaza, and then to Mawasi, Khan Younis and Deir al-Balah.

He says that most Gazans want to return to the areas from which they were evacuated, even if they were completely destroyed and [despite all the killing](#). “The suffering that comes from being uprooted now surpasses everything else,” he says.

A camp housing Palestinians displaced due to the military operation in Jabalia, around Al-Wafa Hospital in Gaza. October 2024, compared to December 2024. Credit: Planet Labs PBC

The Palestinian news agency WAFA published recordings of conversations with displaced Gazans in which they describe [the hardships they are facing](#). Hitham Abu Ghanima said that her young children are walking barefoot in the mud and shivering from the cold. “We don’t even have clothes to give them. The adults might have a shirt or a sweatshirt, but what are we supposed to do with little children?” she asked.

Ahmed Halawa, a father of young children who has been displaced from his home, is trying to find a sheet of plastic to help seal and insulate the makeshift tent he set up.

He says: “Fathers and mothers are wandering around the tent camps searching for another shirt or anything that can keep the children warm. The whole area is flooded with mud and dirt, and we’re helpless in this situation. We just want it to be over, and not to be told that it’s just fate.”

Another man, Abu Ahmed, says that despite the difficulties of living in the tents, people are trying to come up with solutions – such as collecting dry sand or rocks and gravel to cover and absorb the mud and water that are flooding everything.

“We’re trying to improvise anything,” he says. “We know it doesn’t help that much, but there is nothing else we can do in the face of this reality.”

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P.S.

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<https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2024-12-31/ty-article-magazine/.premium/as-gazas-tent-cities-flood-in-heavy-rains-palestinians-are-dying-from-the-cold/00000194-1c35-d6ca-a7fd-7cfd9c580000>