

CARICOM's 'Gaza Mission' at the 2024 United Nations General Assembly

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The following article was provided to EIR by David Comissiong, Barbados' Ambassador to the Caribbean Community (CARICOM). CARICOM is an intergovernmental economic and political organization of 15 member nations and five associated nations, centered in the Caribbean. Founded in 1973, CARICOM is headquartered in Georgetown, Guyana.

Aug. 11—On July 20, 2024, *The Lancet* journal of the United Kingdom—one of the world's most respected medical journals—published a very sobering article on the human carnage that is currently taking place in Gaza. The article was entitled "[Counting the dead in Gaza: difficult but essential](#)," and was authored by three medical researchers: Dr. Rasha Khatib of the Advocate Aurora Research Institute, Dr. Martin McKee of the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, and Dr. Salim Yusuf of McMaster University.

The Gaza scenario outlined in the article is so dire and horrific, that the article needs to be disseminated far beyond the very limited medical fraternity that would typically come into contact with an article published in *The Lancet*.

The core of the article is as follows:

By June 19, 2024, 37,396 people had been killed in the Gaza Strip since the attack by Hamas and the Israeli invasion in October 2023, according to the Gaza Health Ministry, as reported by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.... However, the number of reported deaths is likely an underestimate. The non-gov-

ernmental organization Airwars undertakes detailed assessments of incidents in the Gaza Strip and often finds that not all names of identifiable victims are included in the Ministry's list. Furthermore, the UN estimates that, by February 29, 2024, 35% of buildings in the Gaza Strip had been destroyed, so the number of bodies still buried in the rubble is likely substantial, with estimates of more than 10,000.

GUEST OPINION

Armed conflicts have indirect health implications beyond the direct harm from violence. Even if the conflict ends immediately, there will continue to be many indirect deaths in the coming months and years from causes such as reproductive, communicable and non-communicable diseases. The total death toll is expected to be large given the intensity of this conflict; destroyed health-care infrastructure; severe shortages of food, water, and shelter; the population's inability to flee to safe places; and the loss of funding to UNRWA, one of the very few humanitarian organizations still active in the Gaza Strip.

In the recent conflicts, such indirect deaths range from three to 15 times the number of direct deaths. Applying a conservative estimate of four indirect deaths per one direct death to the 37,396 deaths reported, it is not implausible to estimate that up to 186,000 or even more deaths could be attributable to the current conflict in Gaza. Using the 2022 Gaza Strip population estimate of 2,375,259, this would translate to 7.9% of the total population in the Gaza Strip.

Now, part of the significance of this *Lancet* article is that its eye-opening content provides a solid scientific foundation for virtually all of the positions that the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) has taken on the crisis in Gaza ever since the very comprehensive “[Statement On The Ongoing Situation In Gaza](#)” that emanated from the meeting of the CARICOM Heads of Government Conference in Guyana in February 2024.

In its February 2024 statement, CARICOM condemned the “incessant Israeli bombardment of Gaza” that has led to “catastrophic loss of civilian lives, the destruction of critical infrastructure and the deprivation of basic necessities, food, water and medical care.” The CARICOM Heads of Government then went on to urge “an immediate and unconditional ceasefire in Gaza and safe and unimpeded access for the delivery of adequate and sustained humanitarian assistance,” and further declared that “We also strongly advocate for the rule of law to prevail and for the return to their families of all hostages and people held in administrative detention without charge.”

And then, almost exactly three months later, on 3 June 2024, CARICOM issued a follow-up statement which expressed approval and support for the proposal put forward by U.S. President Joseph Biden (with the backing of Egypt and Qatar) for a “full and complete ceasefire leading to a cessation of hostilities, and a major reconstruction plan for Gaza.”

However, in spite of CARICOM’s fulsome embrace of the Biden proposal for a “three-phase approach, starting with a full and complete ceasefire in Phase One, a six-week period of withdrawal of Israeli troops from Gaza and the release of some hostages, the return of Palestinians to their homes and the provisions of humanitarian aid,” nothing of substance has materialized from this proposal.

And so, as the September 2024 United Nations General Assembly beckons, the CARICOM leadership may now need to revisit one of the fundamental

positions that they had adopted in their very compelling and insightful February 2024 “Statement on the Ongoing Situation in Gaza.” This position was expressed as follows:

CARICOM also deplores the fact that Israel has flouted the Resolutions of both the UN General Assembly and the UN Security Council calling for a ceasefire, as well as the provisional measures ordered by the International Court of Justice (ICJ)... The Community therefore calls on the United Nations General Assembly to invoke its powers under UN General Assembly Resolution 377 A (V), “Uniting for Peace,” to hold an emergency session and to issue appropriate recommendations to UN Member States to collectively impose measures designed to motivate Israel to adhere to its obligations under the said UN Resolution and under the ICJ Order.

The *Lancet* article has made it clear that the Palestinian people (and the rest of our world community) are already facing a nightmare scenario in Gaza that will ultimately see the loss of some eight percent of the population of Gaza. The article also makes it clear that if hostilities are not brought to an immediate halt the nightmare will only worsen and produce an even greater decimation of the Palestinian population.

It is against this background, therefore, that our CARICOM leaders must now resolutely determine to make full use of the upcoming September 2024 United Nations General Assembly to do all that they possibly can to motivate the world community to take concrete actions to bring this genocidal scenario in Gaza to an immediate halt.

Simply put, the governments of CARICOM now have an urgent and compelling “Gaza Mission” to perform at the upcoming United Nations General Assembly.