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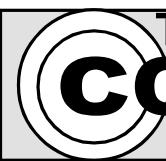
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Editorial

Unrelenting Conflict and Humanitarian Crisis in Gaza

It's almost 22 months by now since Israel commenced its military offensive against Gaza to wipe out Hamas, which it considers as a terrorist organization responsible for the escalation of the conflict. Prolonged conflict has brought untold and tremendous misery to the innocent population of Gaza Strip for no fault of theirs. Israel claims the death of civilians that includes women and children as collateral damage owing to its offensive against Hamas, which it vows to liquidate for all time to come.

Israeli forces began airstrikes and ground military operations after Hamas and other armed groups launched a deadly ground incursion and rocket barrage on southern Israel. Reportedly, both Hamas and Israel have been holding number of hostages and are still trying to bargain with each other. It may be difficult to brand any of the warring parties as 'war criminal'; but fact remains that their act may contribute towards criminalizing the future generations who have lost their near and dear ones for no fault of their own. The extent of fire power used by Israel in Gaza has been massive and beyond proportion precipitating humanitarian crisis of unprecedented proportion.

Gaza has a population of 2.1 million people. Reportedly 470,000 people face mass starvation in different parts of Gaza. 90 percent of the entire population that includes more than 762,500 stands displaced. More than 61,000 people have died and nearly 151,000 have been injured in Gaza alone since October 2023. Though, the figure may vary according to different sources. More than 70% of the entire infrastructure stands devastated and destroyed. Children, pregnant women and the elderly are being treated in hospitals for severe malnutrition with bare minimum infrastructure. Gaza strip has been in international news since long for all the wrong reasons. Once again it is experiencing humanitarian crisis on account of the military offensive being waged by its arch rival Israel. Different international media have been carrying the news of ever-escalating crisis and its worsening situation day-by-day. Crisis is being evident mostly in terms of famine, hunger and healthcare collapse alongside massive devastation of its infrastructure. Families are entrapped as shelling continues thereby grounding the residential structures and other buildings in the region.

Pregnant women, new mothers and newborns are worst affected lot. Reportedly, for 180 women who are suppose to give birth daily; accessing healthcare is an unimaginable challenge. Hence, donations from all over the world are being sought for them by concerned international organizations. Small little children are dying of malnutrition, which is catastrophic. Humanitarian and medical needs are mostly unmet as only 12 per cent of the Strip consists of 'Safe Zones' now. Israel has been increasingly tightening its blockade around Gaza Strip which is leading to increased shortages of fuel, food, medicine, water and all other supplies which are deemed essential, as bare minimum for sustenance of life and livelihood. Electricity availability has dropped by 90% which is essential for hospital and other healthcare related services including sewage plants and drinking water supply. Thus, one can only imagine the scale and extend of devastation in Gaza Strip and the impending crisis amidst the escalation of conflict. According to IPC (Integrated Food Security Phase Classification); an UN-backed system for assessing and communicating food insecurity and famine risk, parts of Gaza are under catastrophic spell of famine. United Nations World Food Programme Palestine is very much on the ground in Gaza and West Bank. The officials and volunteers are contributing their best by distributing food and other helps but are fast depleting and proving highly inadequate, as most families are relying entirely on such food aid to survive. Israel's aid for Gaza has earned a bad name for its notoriety, as allegedly Israel resorted to firing on the innocent people who queue-up for collecting food and other available essentials. Thus, Israel's aid has come as a deterrent for life of innocent civilians.

Crisis that has erupted in Gaza is scheduled to continue for generations to come. It speaks volume about the softness and futility of International Humanitarian Law. The long-term effects of chronic malnutrition and dwindling healthcare will echo far into the future. Disruptions have precipitated shortages of essential supplies necessary to survive. Death of children on account of hunger and malnutrition are heart renting, for which the international community and global leadership will never be forgiven. It's not a disaster in the making; rather it is there on the ground in Gaza and replete on our television screens, which calls for immediate action and aid interventions. Red Cross, Red Crescent or United Nations may not be able to handle the same without support from major powers of the world. Action or inaction, is going to be the test of our shared humanity, a test that international community cannot afford to fail or forget.

—BK