

Mr Richard Horton
Editor, The Lancet
125 London Wall
London, EC2Y 5AS, UK

10th July 2024

Dear Sir,

We are outraged that a prestigious journal such as the Lancet has published a non-peer reviewed letter (*Counting the Dead in Gaza: difficult but essential*) making entirely unsubstantiated claims regarding the death toll in Gaza.

You must have known the letter would be widely misconstrued, leading to multiple reports that the Lancet itself has stated this number as fact. In a matter of days, we have seen the claims of the death toll in Gaza quadruple, based entirely on a letter you saw fit to publish. We note that Dr Peter A. Singer, Former Special Adviser to the Director General of the WHO, has said of this letter that “there is no new data here. Its methods: take one unreliable number and multiply by another unreliable number to get a bigger unreliable number.”¹

The tragic situation in Gaza is undeniable. Hamas precipitated this with its October 7th terror attacks, in which 1,200 people were murdered and more than 200 hostages taken, many of whom are still unaccounted for. It has since used the civilian population of Gaza, the territory it has controlled for almost 17 years, to hide behind while it wages war against Israel. While we would certainly not take the number reported by the Hamas-controlled “Gaza Health Ministry” at face value and would further note that they make no distinction between civilian and combatant deaths, there have clearly been many civilian casualties. How could there not be, when Hamas’s entire modus operandi depends on it? To inflate the numbers in such a fashion, however, is reminiscent of the tactics used by the regime of Saddam Hussein in the 1990’s, which claimed that sanctions on Iraq during that period had led to 500,000 child deaths. A 2017 paper published in BMJ Global Health found that to be a “remarkable fiction” and a “global fraud”.²

The Lancet owes it to all its readers to make it unambiguously clear that the letter it published did not represent the views of the journal, was not peer-reviewed and is little more than conjecture. Anything less will raise serious questions about its professional standards and seriously damage the Lancet’s global reputation as an authoritative publication on which both practitioners and scientists can rely.

Yours sincerely,



Andrew Gilbert
Vice President
The Board of Deputies of British Jews

¹ <https://x.com/PeterASinger/status/1810380113076433165>

² <https://www.lse.ac.uk/News/Latest-news-from-LSE/2017/07-July-2017/Iraqi-government-misreported-child-mortality-LSE-research-finds>