

Children of Gaza

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London | Washington

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At A Glance: Impact of Israel's Violence on Gaza's Children



01

At A Glance: Impact of Israel's Violence on Gaza's Children

Sources: Al Jazeera, Bond, UNICEF, ACAPS, Telegraph

1 child is killed

every 15 minutes in Gaza



17k

Palestinian children have become orphaned, unaccompanied, or separated from their parents

1 million children

are estimated to be internally displaced within Gaza



95%

of Gaza's children showed symptoms of anxiety, depression and trauma before 7 October 2023



All children under 5 years old

in Gaza are at risk of severe malnutrition



Not a single child



in Gaza has access to education presently

More than 12.5k

children have been killed in Gaza since 7 October 2023



1k

children in Gaza have lost one or both legs since 7 October 2023

Hind Rajab, 6 years old



“Come take me. You will come and take me? I’m so scared. Please come.”

Hind and her family fled their home in Gaza city on 29 January 2024. Hind was in a car with her aunt and uncle and their four children. The car stopped beside the Faris petrol station in Tel al-Hawa, where it was confronted by the Israeli military. Hind’s uncle, Bashar Hamada, called his cousin Mohammed in Germany to say they were surrounded by the Israeli military and couldn’t move.

At 2:28pm: Mohammed contacted the Palestinian Red Crescent (PRC) for help.

At 2:44pm: Mohammed informed the PRC that five family members had been killed and only two girls remained alive in the car: Hind and Layan (15 years old).

At 2:47pm: PRC established contact with Layan. “They are firing at us. The tank is beside me.” Seconds later, gunfire was heard on the dispatcher’s line. Layan was dead. Then, Hind picked up the line.

At 2:57pm: PRC sent their first request to the Israeli army to rescue Hind.

At 5.40pm: the Israeli army granted permission for PRC’s rescue mission.

At 6.00pm: medics Yusuf Zeino and Ahmed al-Madhoon arrived at the scene.

PRC establish a three-way call between the dispatcher, Hind and Hind’s mother, Wissam Hamadah. Hind is informed the ambulance is behind the car but will move slowly.

Then, gunfire is heard.

12 days later, on 10 February 2024, Hind and her six relatives were found dead in their car. The car showed multiple bullet holes and impact from a tank. The ambulance was found destroyed, with both medics – Yusuf and Ahmed – also dead.⁴⁸

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Impact of Israel's Violence on Gaza's Children Before 7 October 2023



02

Impact of Israel's Violence on Gaza's Children Before 7 October 2023

Before 7 October 2023:

- Children in Gaza were already experiencing exceptionally poor mental health due to repeated Israeli military attacks and the impacts of Israel's blockade on Gaza, including restrictions on freedom of movement and access to essential services, economic collapse, and separation from family and friends.¹
- 95 percent of Gaza's children showed symptoms of anxiety, depression, and trauma.²
- Many children were frequently experiencing nightmares, and some experienced bed-wetting because of the nightmares.³
- 10% of families reported losing a child due to preventable reasons before the age of five.⁴
- Many children in Gaza were unable to attend school regularly because of military actions and limited access to essential school supplies.⁵

Before Israel's current genocide on Gaza, a 14-year-old child in Gaza would have already had to survive four Israeli bombardments of Gaza.⁶

Nearly 400 children in Gaza were denied access to critical healthcare in the West Bank by Israel in the first six months of 2023, leaving them without access to life-saving surgery or urgent medication.⁷

From 2007 to 2017, 'Defense for Children International – Palestine' documented 1,045 child fatalities due to Israeli military attacks and explosive remnants of war.⁸

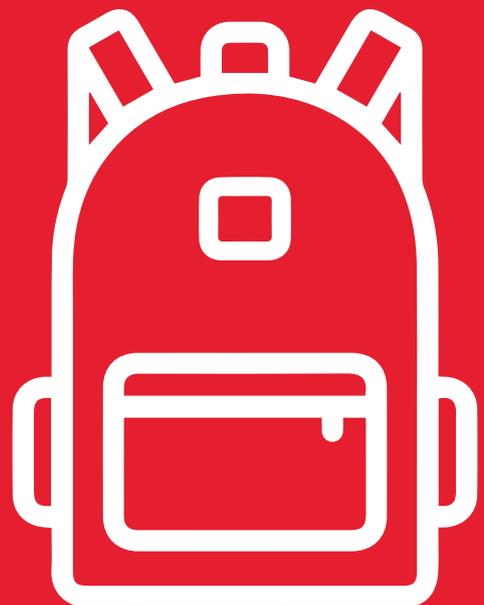
From 2019 to 2021, 32 percent of children with approved travel permits for healthcare from the Gaza Strip did not have a parent approved to accompany them, resulting in them travelling with a different relative or not going at all.⁹

In 2022, three children died when their applications for Gaza exit-permits were either denied or remained under review by Israel, including a 19-month-old child with a congenital heart defect and a 16-year-old child with leukaemia.¹⁰

Boy (unnamed), 11 years old

“Do you know what I have in here [backpack]? My little brother Ahmed.”

The boy arrived at Khan Younis hospital carrying a blue backpack on his chest. He tugged at the sleeve of journalist, Youmna El Sayed, and said: “Do you know what I have in here?” Youmna could see blood dripping from the bag. The boy went to open the bag, when Youmna placed her hand on his. “What’s inside?” she asked. The boy responded: “my little brother Ahmed”. Youmna recounts that the boy was dishevelled, bruised, and looked like he had emerged from the rubble.⁴⁹



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Impact of Israel's Violence on Gaza's Children Since 7 October 2023



03

Impact of Israel's Violence on Gaza's Children Since 7 October 2023

Since 7 October 2023:

- Over 2 percent of Gaza's children have been killed or injured.¹¹
- One child is killed every 15 minutes.¹²
- Israel's genocidal attacks on Gaza have killed over 12,500 children.¹³
- 17,000 Palestinian children have become orphaned, unaccompanied, or separated from their parents.¹⁴
- The creation of a new acronym – WCNSF, which stands for Wounded Child, No Surviving Family – is a reminder of the heavy price children are paying, and will continue to pay, for this genocide.¹⁵
- One million children are estimated to be internally displaced within Gaza.¹⁶
- Due to the displacement of children and lack of access to sanitary conditions, preventable diseases have more potential to cause fatalities, and the rates of infectious diseases are soaring.¹⁷ Cold weather, heavy rainfall, and subsequent flooding increase the risks of respiratory diseases, such as pneumonia and hypothermia, and waterborne diseases, like bacterial infections and diarrhoea, causing death amongst children.¹⁸
- Every day, there are around 3,200 new diarrhoea cases among children under five in Gaza, an increase of about 2,000 percent compared to before 7 October 2023.¹⁹
- Many children are now not only at risk of death or injury from Israeli military attacks, but increasingly of malnutrition, with one in six children malnourished.²⁰ All children under 5 years old in Gaza are at risk of severe malnutrition as levels of famine are increasing.²¹ So far, at least 15 children have died of malnutrition and dehydration in northern Gaza.²² With barely any health facilities functioning and families cut off from medical services, it is likely that the real figure is far higher.²³
- There is no clean water in Gaza, and mineral water has entirely run out, leaving children at risk of dying from severe dehydration.²⁴ Many children are being forced to turn to contaminated water sources, leaving them vulnerable to illness or an outbreak of waterborne diseases.²⁵ These infections also leave children dehydrated and, without clean water, at risk of death.²⁶
- There has been a dramatic deterioration in the mental health of children that is much worse than during previous Israeli bombing campaigns, manifesting in fear, anxiety, disordered eating, bedwetting, hyper-vigilance, and sleep problems as well as behavioural changes such as an alternation in attachment style with parents, regression, and aggression.²⁷
- No children have had access to education.²⁸

Reem Ali Badwan, 3 years old

**“The soul
of my soul.”**

Reem’s grandfather, Khaled Nabhan

Reem and her family were asleep in their home in Southern Gaza when an Israeli airstrike hit the house. Khaled Nabhan woke up screaming for his children and grandchildren, struggling to walk through the wreckage to find them. Reem’s mother had been pinned by the rubble. She heard Reem scream for her and told her she couldn’t move.

The next thing Reem’s mother remembers is waking up in hospital to be told her daughter, Reem and son Tareq had been killed. Khaled Nabhan, their grandfather, was seen in a video holding Reem’s lifeless body and bidding her farewell.⁵⁰



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Historic European Action to Protect Children from Violence



04

Historic European Action to Protect Children from Violence

In comparison to previous wars and conflicts in the West, there has been an absence of action to safeguard the lives of Gaza’s children.

In European conflicts, efforts were made to move children out of harm’s way until violent attacks ended – but this concern does not extend to Palestinian children.

Kindertransport

The Kindertransport was a British scheme to rescue nearly 10,000 Jewish children from Nazi occupied territories.²⁹ The Kindertransport scheme was an opportunity for some Jewish children to leave their homes and families and seek temporary refuge in Britain.³⁰

From December 1938 until May 1940, Kindertransport brought about 10,000 Jewish children to safety in Great Britain.³¹

Child Evacuations to the Countryside



Britain

During WW2, many British children living in cities at risk of bombing were evacuated to the countryside.³² Although evacuation was voluntary, pressure was put on parents to send their children away.³³ In total, about 3.5 million people were evacuated to the countryside during World War II.³⁴



Germany

In September 1940, the German government launched a program of “Sending Children to the Countryside” (Kinderlandverschickung, or KLV).³⁵ The main goal was to get German children out of cities and away from strategic bombing, like the evacuations in Britain.³⁶

In total, 2 million children were evacuated to the German countryside.³⁷



France

From the spring of 1943, thousands of children from the industrial suburbs of Paris were evacuated to the French countryside because of food shortages and heavy allied air raids.³⁸

Around 8,500 of these children were sent to the rural ‘Département of the Creuse’, where they were billeted with families.³⁹

Girl (unnamed), age unknown

**“That’s my mother
– I know her from
her hair.”**

A young girl is seen crying after identifying the body of her mother. Those nearby try to reassure the panicked child: “It’s not her”. She responds: “It is – I recognise her from her hair”. She is joined by a relative who confirms her mother has been killed. She responds: “They killed my mother, my sister, my grandmother, grandpa, my aunt, and her children”.⁵¹



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Future Implications on Gaza's Children



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Future Implications on Gaza's Children

Mental health problems

The long-term impacts on an entire generation suffering from extreme trauma and mental health problems cannot be understated.⁴⁰ Exposure to such extreme violence significantly impacts a child's development, with effects that continue for the rest of their lives.⁴¹ Children without parental care, such as those bearing the acronym WCNSF (wounded child no surviving family), are particularly vulnerable to these mental health impacts.⁴²

Lack of education

The destruction of Gaza's schools and universities, and the killing of teachers and professors, led to the suspension of the academic year. This will have a lasting impact on Gaza's children, whose learning will remain difficult if not impossible for years after the genocide.⁴³

Disabilities

In January 2024, UNICEF estimated that around 1,000 children in Gaza have lost one or both legs – equating to roughly 10 children losing legs every day.⁴⁴ That number has undoubtedly risen as the Israeli onslaught continues.⁴⁵ These children will continue to suffer the effects of amputation for the rest of their lives and require significant physical rehabilitation and physiotherapy for many years.⁴⁶

Developmental challenges

The starvation currently experienced by Gaza's children will also have a long-term impact on their future, causing stunted growth, cognitive issues, and developmental delays long after their starvation ends.⁴⁷

Footnotes

- ¹ “Complete psychological destruction”:
Children in Gaza have suffered “relentless mental harm” during five months of war – Save the Children’ *Save the Children* (12 March 2024) available at <https://www.savethechildren.org.uk/news/media-centre/press-releases/children-in-gaza-suffer-relentless-mental-harm>
- ² ‘How the Israel war, blockade affect mental health of Palestinian children’ *Al Jazeera* (12 October 2023) available at <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/10/12/how-the-israel-war-blockade-affects-mental-health-of-palestinian-children>
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- ⁵⁻⁶ ‘Israel’s ‘war against Gaza’s children’ explained’ *Al Jazeera* (19 October 2023) available at <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/10/19/israels-war-against-gazas-children-explained>
- ⁷ ‘Gaza: 16-year blockade leaves two children a day unable to access medical treatment’ *Save the Children*
- ⁸ ‘How the blockade hurts children’ *Defense for Children International - Palestine* (3 August 2017) available at https://www.dci-palestine.org/how_the_blockade_hurts_children
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- ¹⁵ ‘The war in Gaza is having a catastrophic impact on children, stripping them of their rights’ *Bond*
- ¹⁶⁻¹⁹ ‘Palestine Impact of the conflict on children in the Gaza strip’ *ACAPS* (1 February 2024) available at https://www.acaps.org/fileadmin/Data_Product/Main_media/20240201_ACAPS_thematic_report_Palestine_-_impact_of_conflict_on_children_in_the_Gaza_strip.pdf
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- 35-36 “‘Kinderlandverschickung’” University of Oregon *available at* <https://pages.uoregon.edu/dluebke/NaziGermany443/Kinderlandverschickung.html>
- 37 ‘<https://academic.oup.com/gh/article-abstract/37/2/186/5099134?redirectedFrom=fulltext>
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- 40-42 ‘The war in Gaza is having a catastrophic impact on children, stripping them of their rights’ Bond
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- 51 [Video] *Al Jazeera English* <https://www.youtube.com/shorts/PB7L7n1nXBQ>