



PALESTINIAN CENTRE
FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

Generation Wiped Out Gaza's Children in the Crosshairs of Genocide



December - 2024

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Introduction

After 07 October 2023, Gaza's children became direct victims of a genocide perpetrated by Israel with unprecedented brutality. This bloodshed has wiped away the essence of their childhood and stripped them of their most basic rights to life. Israeli attacks have spared no corner of the besieged Gaza Strip, turning every inch into a landscape of death and destruction, making Gaza a living witness to an ongoing crime that defies all bounds of humanity. Thousands of children have been killed in cold blood under relentless barrages of bombs and deadly missiles that have shattered their fragile bodies and silenced their innocent dreams. Hospitals, once places of healing, have come under fire, filled with the dead bodies of children. Even their desperate attempts to escape death proved futile as shells pursued them in the streets, taking their lives on what the Israeli Occupying Forces (IOF) falsely claimed were "safe routes". Those who managed to reach humanitarian zones, hoping for safety, found themselves under renewed bombardment targeting shelters and tents, extinguishing their last glimmers of hope for survival. These children are not mere numbers; they are innocent souls whose brutal killing is an indictment of all humanity.

Children are pulled dead from the rubble, while others remain buried beneath the ruins, with no hope of being rescued. Their tiny, shattered body parts are collected in bags, making identification impossible, and their delicate bodies are scorched by raging fires. Children are killed in horrifying scenes—while sleeping in the supposed safety of their beds, running and playing, or in their futile attempts to secure some humanitarian aid. In even more heinous crimes, they are deliberately targeted by sniper fire, with bullets piercing their heads or chests, claiming their lives with intentional cruelty. Others perish in silence from diseases and epidemics that ravage their bodies in the absence of basic medical care, or they succumb to starvation that gnaws at their frail bodies, hastening their deaths. These atrocities add to a long history of suffering that weighs heavily on Gaza's children.

Some children who survived death did not escape disfigurement, losing limbs or suffering severe bodily injuries, bearing the physical and psychological scars of war for a lifetime. Dozens of children have been detained and thrown into Israeli prisons, where they endure hellish and inhumane conditions, subjected to humiliation and psychological and physical torture in a relentless attempt to break an entire generation. Thousands of children have lost one or both parents or have been separated from them amid a merciless war. The psychological harm they endure is no less devastating than their physical injuries, as they are haunted by the sounds of bombs and images of death that invade their dreams and daily lives. These children have been forcibly displaced dozens of times, leaving behind their homes and everything that once provided them with a sense of security, only to live in shelters that lack the most basic necessities. These shelters fail to protect them from the biting cold of winter or the scorching heat of summer, while diseases and epidemics spread in the absence of proper hygiene tools, a destroyed healthcare system, and the ban of medicines and medical supplies.

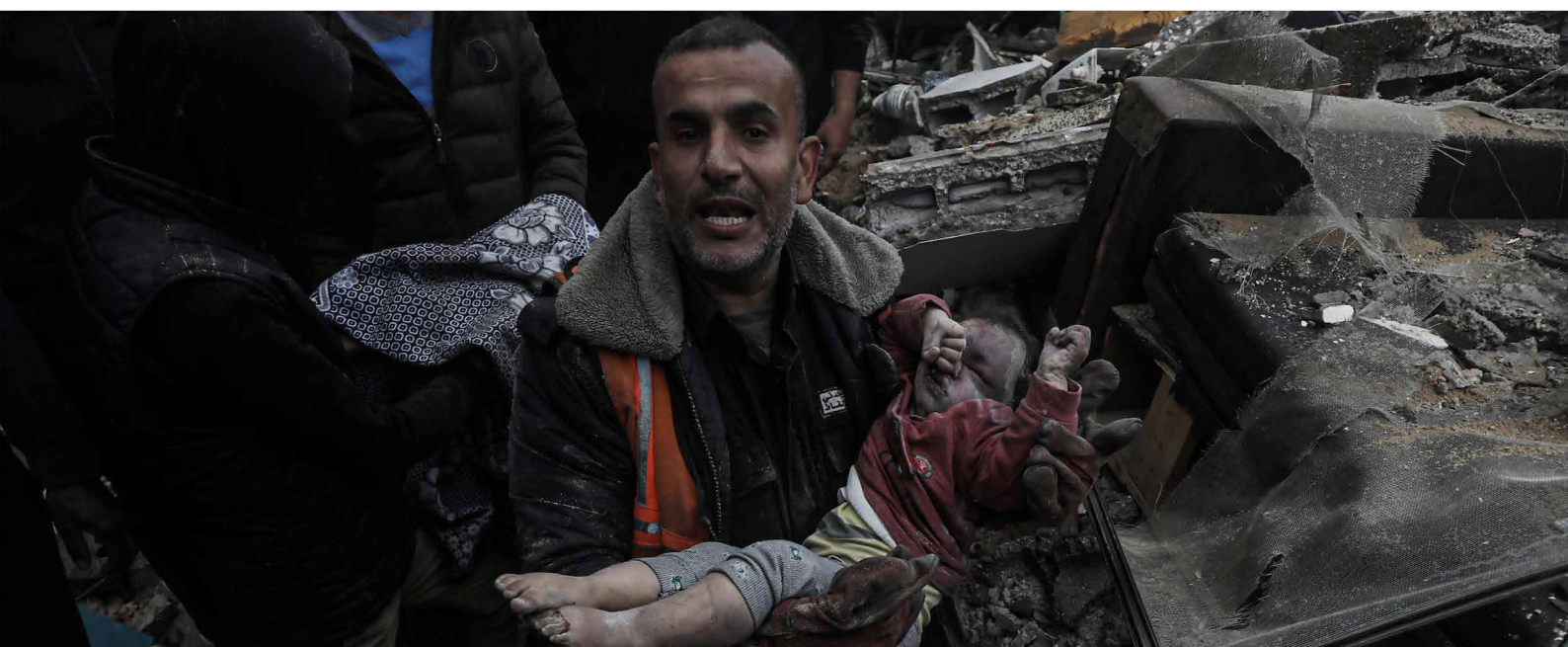
Gaza's children not only face bombings and slow death but also carry burdens far beyond their ages, weighed down by unbearable circumstances. They are forced to work to help their families survive and spend hours in exhausting lines and queues waiting for the simplest essentials, such as drinking water or food that barely staves off hunger. At times, they spend their days collecting firewood from the rubble of destroyed homes. Many children have been forced to abandon school as classrooms are either destroyed or repurposed as shelters in the best-case scenario. These dire conditions affect not only their present but leave long-lasting scars on their future.

In the midst of this genocide, Israel has weaponized starvation, obstructing and preventing the entry of foodstuff and humanitarian aid. Under the weight of hunger, children's frail bodies are ravaged physically and psychologically, their suffering etched on their pale faces and emaciated frames, while their endless cries echo in a desperate attempt to cling to life. Philippe Lazzarini, UNRWA's Commissioner-General, described the violations against Gaza's children as "This war is a war on children. It is a war on their childhood and their future". He emphasized that this war is not confined to the present but threatens the very future of these children and their fundamental right to life.¹ He described the children killed in Gaza not as "terrorists" or "human animals", but as children "full of life, with dreams and aspirations."²

The targeting of children in the Gaza Strip constitutes a central element of a systematic genocide. Since the onset of Israel's genocidal campaign on 07 October 2023, Israeli leaders have explicitly expressed their intent to annihilate Gaza, including children. Israeli President Isaac Herzog declared that "It's an entire nation out there that is responsible", while Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu ordered soldiers to kill indiscriminately, including children. These statements, among others, reveal a deliberate intent to target children as part of a broader plan to erase and eradicate Palestinian identity and destroy future generations.

This report sheds light on the genocide against children in the Gaza Strip within the framework of openly stated intentions and a systematic plan to eradicate the population of the Strip. The crime aligns with acts defined in Article II of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, which include killing members of the group; causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; and deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part.

The report examines these crimes through the lens of Israeli practices and policies since 07 October 2023, materialized by the unprecedented killing of children, causing them severe bodily harm through grave injuries and arbitrary detention. It also highlights the infliction of profound psychological harm. Furthermore, it delves into systematic policies aimed at their destruction, including the weaponizing starvation, the denial of appropriate medical treatment and adequate healthcare, and forced displacement accompanied by deprivation of food, medical care, and shelter. Additionally, it addresses the restriction of children's right to educat



¹ United Nations-Türkiye(14 March 2024).Gaza: Number of children killed higher than from four years of world conflict.
<https://turkiye.un.org/en/263401-gaza-number-children-killed-higher-four-years-world-conflict>

² UNRWA Commissioner-General Philippe Lazzarini: After the tragedy, the specter of another forced displacement looms:
<https://www.unrwa.org/newsroom/official-statements/remarks-philippe-lazzarini-commissioner-general-unrwa-doha-mediation>



1. Killing members of the group

The killing of members of a protected group constitutes an act of genocide if committed with specific intent and intentional action.³ Since the start of the Israeli genocidal campaign, Israeli leaders have continued to commit this act against Gaza Strip population with a clear intention of exterminating them. Public statements from Israel's top echelons have openly called for the annihilation of the Palestinian people without distinction. Among these, Israeli President Isaac Herzog declared, "It is an entire nation out there that is responsible. This rhetoric about civilians not aware, not involved—it's not true."⁴

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu described the people of Gaza as "animals and monsters" stating, "My passion is unlimited for justice and for truth, and to place blame on Israel that is fighting these animals and monsters, is just sheer folly."⁵ Meanwhile, Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant issued orders to remove all restrictions, saying, "I have released all the restraints. Attack everything from the air and on the ground—with tanks, bulldozers, with all means. Gaza will never go back to what it was. Eliminate everything."⁶

Since 07 October 2023, Gaza's children have become direct victims of the first act of genocide: "killing", executed by Israeli occupation forces (IOF) with deliberate brutality and a clear intent to target them as part of this genocide. Statements from Israeli leaders have glaringly confirmed this. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu evoked the biblical story of the Israelites' destruction of the Amalekites, saying, "The soldiers of Israel are committed to completely eradicating this evil from the world for our existence and for the good of humanity. You must remember what Amalek have done to you. We do remember and we fight."⁷ Netanyahu reiterated the reference to Amalek in another message to Israeli soldiers and officers on 03 November 2023, stating, "Now go, attack the Amalekites and totally destroy all that belongs to them. Do not spare them; put to death men and women, children, and infants, cattle, and sheep, camels, and donkeys"⁸. Similarly, Knesset member Merav Ben Ari from the Yesh Atid party declared, "the children of Gaza have brought this upon themselves"⁹. These and similar statements clearly expose a premeditated intent to target children as part of a systematic policy aimed at erasing Palestinian generations and uprooting their existence. The killing of Gaza's children is not merely random targeting or collateral damage from military operations; it is the embodiment of a deliberate genocidal strategy designed to crush Palestinian identity and annihilate any prospect for future generations to survive.

More than 17,000 children have been killed in the Gaza Strip during over a year of Israel's military attacks, and that is one child killed every 10 minutes.¹⁰ This figure does not include deaths resulting from diseases, hunger, epidemics, and other causes. No conflict in recent memory has seen at least 1% of children in any region killed within approximately a month solely due to violence. This percentage is equivalent to the deaths of 743,700 children in the United States when adjusted for population size—an unfathomable reality.¹¹ Save the Children stated that the number of children reported killed in Gaza in just three weeks has surpassed the annual number of children killed across the world's conflict zones since 2019.¹²

3 Gaeta, Paola, ed. The UN Genocide Convention: A Commentary. Oxford University Press, 2009. The Definition and the Elements of the Crime of Genocide. para.96

4 The President of Israel on X, on 14 October 2023: <https://x.com/SprinterFamily/status/1713064886027063584>

5 NPR's Interview with Benjamin Netanyahu on 17 November 2023: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z0W_rQReI6c&t=123s

6 Minister Yoav Gallant to the Israeli soldier on Halikud YouTube channel on 10 October 2023: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=u-42ALeKrZ4>

7 Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in a press conference on IsraelPM: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IIPkoDk6isc>.

8 South Africa's lawsuit statement against Israel at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) concerning Israel's alleged violations of its obligations under the Genocide Convention in the Gaza Strip, P. 60.

9 During a speech by MK Meirav Ben-Ari at a Knesset session on 16 October 2023. <https://www.facebook.com/KnessetTv/videos/3497251110531404>

10 Agency for Palestine Refugees (2 April 2024). <https://x.com/UNRWA/status/1781731649874448394>

11 World Socialist Web Site(4 October 2024). An open letter to the White House by 99 healthcare workers documenting the crimes of genocide in Gaza. <https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2024/10/05/gqob-o05.html>

12 Save the Children's official account on X: <https://x.com/annmarie/status/1718974015765827208>

In the Gaza Strip, children have been reduced to numbers and fading memories, lost in the midst of brutal Israeli violence. These children, who once filled the streets with laughter and embodied hope for the future, are now hostages to death at every moment, surrounded by it on all sides, with no safe havens to protect them. Homes are bombed over their heads, burying them beneath the rubble without a chance to bid farewell to their beloved. Their dead bodies are pulled from the ruins in heart-wrenching scenes. Some are directly targeted by sniper fire to their heads and chests, while others are torn to scattered pieces, and still others are consumed by flames, their bodies reduced to ashes, leaving behind charred bones as haunting evidence of indescribable brutality.

44 doctors, nurses, and paramedics have witnessed numerous cases of children, many of whom had not yet reached adolescence, being shot in the head or chest in Gaza on a regular or daily basis. Among them is Dr. Feroze Sidhwa, who stated: "I worked as a trauma surgeon in Gaza from March 25 to April 8... I have seen violence and worked in conflict zones, but among the many things that stood out while working at a hospital in Gaza, one thing caught my attention: nearly every day I was there, I saw a new young child who had been shot in the head or chest, and almost all of them died. Thirteen in total. At the time, I assumed this was the work of a particularly sadistic soldier stationed nearby. But after I returned home, I met an emergency physician who had worked at a different hospital in Gaza two months earlier. I told him, 'I couldn't believe the number of children I saw shot in the head.' To my surprise, He responded, 'Yeah, me, too. Every single day.'¹³ These and other testimonies provide unequivocal evidence that the targeting of children was deliberate, entirely dispelling any claims attempting to classify them as "collateral damage".

PCHR has received hundreds of painful testimonies, many involving children as victims. Among these is Ibrahim Muhammad Musa's testimony on the incident that took place at the home of his sister, Tahrir Muhammad Abu Madi, who is married to Anwar Abu Madi, involving the execution and burning of those inside the house. **"On Friday, 23 February 2024, my brother-in-law was sleeping in our house in front of his on the northern side. At 07:30, we were shocked to learn that the Israeli tanks and bulldozers invaded the Japanese neighborhood. My father, Anwar, and I managed to escape from the house until the Israeli army withdrew from the area around 16:30. After their withdrawal, we returned to the neighborhood. Anwar and I went to his house to assess the situation and check up on those inside. As we approached the house, we found the northern wall collapsed and engulfed in flames, yet we entered the house in an attempt to rescue those inside, but we were thwarted by the intense heat and heavy smoke. We decided to return to Al-Amal School, where we were displaced, hoping to return later. On the morning of Sunday, at 09:00 on 25 February 2024, we returned to Anwar Abu Madi's house after the fire had subsided. We were able to enter the house, which had been completely burned, with the walls and ceiling collapsing due to the heat. While inspecting the rooms, we found a pile of bones in the southeastern corner of the room adjacent to the bathroom and found three additional piles of bones inside the bedroom. Overwhelmed by shock, we left the house and returned to the school. On 29 February 2024, Anwar, my sister Tahrir, her son Adham, and I returned to the house, took some charred bones to the Palestine Red Crescent Society (PCRS)'s medical point in Al-Mawasi where they confirmed they were human bones and recommended taking them to Abu Youssef Al-Najjar Hospital or the European Hospital for further clarification and information. We went to the European Hospital, where the bones were examined by a doctor in the morgue. The doctor confirmed they were human bones and advised burying them, noting that DNA testing was unavailable in Gaza. We buried the bones in land adjacent to Al-Attar Station. The individuals who were inside the house before the incident were: Khaled Mahmoud Abu Madi, his wife Fida, their daughters Haneen and Yasmeen, and my sister's children, Malak and Youssef Anwar Abu Madi."**¹⁴

¹³ The New York Times (9 October 2024). 65 Doctors, Nurses and Paramedics: What We Saw in Gaza. <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2024/10/09/opinion/gaza-doctor-interviews.html>

¹⁴ PCHR's staff received the testimony on 05 May 2024 in Deir al-Balah.

Hisham Muhammad Ali Abu Sa'ada, stated to PCHR's lawyer that: **"At dawn on 25 June 2024, I heard a very loud explosion. I did not expect it to be inside the school (Abdel Fattah Hamoud School), but the classroom windows shattered over my children. I rushed outside the building and saw the secretary's office engulfed in flames, with fire and smoke billowing out. I couldn't get close or enter the room because of the intense heat. Ten minutes later, civil defense vehicles arrived and managed to extinguish the fire inside the room. When I entered the room, the scene was devastating beyond words. The bodies of my sister's five children were charred, torn into pieces, and completely burned. All that was left of their small bodies were scattered pieces of flesh inside the room, as if the bodies had evaporated. The bombing killed eight people, including five children: Anas Saleh Amer Al-Jaro (12); Raghad Saleh Amer Al-Jaro (10); Yahya Saleh Amer Al-Jaro (8); Razan Saleh Amer Al-Jaro (5); Sham Saleh Amer Al-Jaro (1)."**¹⁵

Nafeth Ahmed Zaki Abu Hamada (11) was killed just one day after giving his testimony to PCHR's researcher where he stated his struggles with displacement, hunger, and his longing for the family he lost in an Israeli airstrike in northern Gaza. He lost his life in the new airstrike while attempting, along with his grandmother, to get flour in southern Khan Yunis. The next morning, PCHR's researcher received the heartbreaking news of Nafeth's killing from his father, who was displaced in the same school as Nafeth's family, leaving a deep wound and sorrow: **"I live with my family near the Bedouin Village Towers in northern Gaza. On the morning of 07 October 2023, I was preparing to go to school, Al-Zaytoun Boys' Elementary School in Beit Hanoun, as I started hearing explosions everywhere. My mother, Amani Nafeth Khader Abu Hamada (34), did not let me and my siblings—Mohammed (16), Omar (13), and Ziad (12)—leave the house. As the shelling intensified and missiles began falling near our home, my family decided to leave by midday on 07 October 2023 where we headed to my maternal grandfather's house, Nafeth Khader Ahmed Hamdan (59), located near Beit Hanoun Hospital in northern Gaza. We stayed there for only two days, and as the shelling intensified, we left my grandfather's house under bombardment at 07:00 on 9 October 2023. We headed towards Hafsa Girls' School in the Al-Faluja area, west of Jabalia Camp. There, we managed to shelter in a classroom with great difficulty, as the school was overcrowded, and had no blankets or mattresses. Since that day, our suffering began. Instead of attending school, I would go with my brothers to fetch drinking water and try to collect some firewood to light a fire for cooking. I had to walk long distances to do so. As the cold worsened and we lacked sufficient blankets, my mother decided to return to our house with my father, who suffers from psychological disorders, to collect essential supplies. On the morning of 06 November 2023, my mother, father, and brothers Omar and Ziad left for our abandoned home. Hours passed without their return, and we were eventually informed of the devastating news: Israeli forces targeted and killed them as they reached the house. My mother was my entire world and losing her was a profound shock. I found myself living at the school with my grandfather, grandmother, and my siblings Mohammed (16) and Saja (8), trying to cope with the new reality. On 18 November 2023, our school was bombed, and we could not leave the school that day because of the intense shelling around the school and the smoke bombs falling inside. The next day, my grandparents decided to leave the school and move to southern Gaza. At 09:00, we reached the checkpoint. There were many displaced people standing before the checkpoint, and an Israeli tank stood there with several soldiers on it. Some soldiers fired shots to intimidate them, while others began calling them out, allowing them to enter the checkpoint one by one. We waited until it was our turn and crossed the checkpoint, where soldiers stood on a sand berm, pointing their weapons at those crossing. One soldier used a loudspeaker to call on displaced people, ordering some to leave behind what they were carrying and approach him. On Friday morning, 15 November 2024, just a day after giving his testimony, Nafeth accompanied his grandmother Fatima Ismail Muhammad Hamdan (58 years old) to the Abu Halawa Junction in southern Khan Yunis. They were trying to obtain a sack of flour from a trader in an area where aid trucks were passing. While they were there, Israeli aircraft targeted the area, killing them both. After a year of relentless suffering, filled with displacement, loss, and pain, Nafeth has departed, leaving behind a heart-wrenching story that reflects the reality faced by children in Gaza. His tale remains a living testimony to the tragedies endured by Gaza's children, who live under the weight of an occupation that spares no one, destroying everything around them. His story serves as a grim reminder of the ongoing genocide targeting even the youngest lives."**¹⁶

¹⁵ PCHR's staff received the testimony on 27 June 2024.

¹⁶ PCHR's staff received the report on 14 November 2024 in Al-Mawasi Khan Yunis.

Mrs. Eman Tayseer Awad Ghboon (33) stated to PCHR's staff: **"I have three sons: Jamil (12); Majd (8); and Amir (4), in addition to my daughter Rahma, who was stillborn due to my injuries. I was living in my husband's family home, which was later completely destroyed by Israeli shelling. With the start of the war on 07 October 2023, we were forced to leave our home following threats from the occupation forces. We initially sought refuge in the Indonesian Hospital and later in the Jabalia Camp. As the shelling and siege continued, we moved from place to place in search of safety, including Kamal Adwan Hospital, where we suffered from a lack of food, water, and overcrowding among the displaced. During this time, my son Majd, who suffers from glycogen storage disease, experienced a severe decline in his health due to the unavailability of medicine and proper nutrition. As famine began to take hold in the Gaza Strip, Majd's condition worsened day by day. The hospital, completely besieged by the army, had no access to food, medicine, or supplies. In January 2024, I decided to move south to protect my family from hunger and illness. On a morning in January, I took my children and headed down Al-Rashid Street toward the checkpoint. When we reached close to the checkpoint near Al-Nabulsi Square at around noon, we joined thousands of other displaced people struggling to survive. Tanks surrounded us, and suddenly, a shell directly hit us. I lost consciousness, and when I awoke three days later, I found myself in bed at Al-Shifa Hospital in Gaza City. I was unable to move my body, and the doctors informed me that after the tanks targeted us, the people nearby helped evacuate me and my son Jamil to the hospital. Over 50 people were killed in the attack, including those attempting to cross the road and others waiting for aid to feed their children and families. I was then told that my sons Majd and Amir had been killed in the shelling, their bodies torn to pieces. I had sustained severe injuries all over my body, and a few days later, I began to feel labor pains. My mother tried to find a specialist doctor at the hospital, but there were no doctors or treatments available. On 28 February 2024, I delivered my baby girl, Rahma, on a hospital bed with the assistance of untrained nurses. She was stillborn due to severe bleeding and the injuries I had sustained during the shelling. Losing my unborn baby and my sons Majd and Amir has left me feeling devoid of life. My pain is indescribable; I live soulless "**"¹⁷

In the few hospitals struggling to survive amidst the siege and targeted attacks, tragic scenes are repeated. Newborn babies lose their lives as IOF target hospitals, leading to power outages that shut down oxygen plants. As a result, incubators turn into silent graves for the most vulnerable lives. PCHR has documented many such heartbreaking cases, including the testimony of Mrs. S.A.: "On 20 July 2024, when I was seven months pregnant, I experienced the most harrowing moments of my life. In the morning, our neighbor received a warning from IOF that their home would be bombed, and we were ordered to evacuate the area. Chaos erupted, and my husband and I fled from the 5th floor in panic. When I reached the ground floor, I suddenly lost my balance and gave birth to my baby girl prematurely, with the umbilical cord wrapped around her neck. I collapsed on the ground, surrounded by blood, amidst terror and intense fear. Fortunately, my neighbor, who was a nurse, stayed by my side to aid, while my husband cut the umbilical cord to save my baby from suffocation and began performing artificial respiration on her. He rushed her to Al-Sahaba Medical Complex, where she received first aid before being referred to Kamal Adwan Hospital in Jabalia due to the frail resources at the complex. My baby was submitted to ICU to stabilize her condition and later moved to an incubator for monitoring due to her premature birth in the seventh month. After spending a week in the incubator, on 28 July 2024, IOF besieged Kamal Adwan Hospital, causing a power outage that led to oxygen deprivation. My baby, along with six other premature infants, lost their lives due to the siege. This devastating loss shattered me completely, leaving me anguished over what happened to our innocent children."¹⁸

¹⁷ PCHR's staff received the report on 13 November 2024 in Deir al-Balah.

¹⁸ PCHR's staff received the testimony on 04 October 2024 at the home of the eyewitness in the Tuffah neighborhood.

Mrs. Taghreed Al-Amawi, who recounted the death of her son, Muhammad Dawoud: **“On 27 October 2023, at Kamal Adwan Hospital, I gave birth to my son, Muhammad, in the eighth month of pregnancy. He suffered from bronchopulmonary dysplasia, requiring him to be placed in an incubator and connected to a ventilator. I stayed in the hospital for one night and then left, while my baby remained under care. I visited him daily, oscillating between hope and fear. As time passed, the situation worsened, and the hospital began running out of antibiotics despite their best efforts. I felt helpless but refused to give up. I reached out to colleagues, pleading for help, and managed to secure some antibiotics. My baby’s condition gradually improved. However, on 13 November, the crisis deepened when Kamal Adwan Hospital ran out of fuel due to the Israeli siege, causing a power outage that severely impacted my son’s health. In a desperate attempt to save him, I used an oxygen cylinder from my clinic to extend his life for four more hours. But on 20 November 2023, my baby passed away. When I visited him that day, I realized I had lost him without getting the chance to hold him one last time. He was not the only victim; two other babies also died due to the lack of oxygen. I said goodbye to him with a heart heavy with pain. He was temporarily buried in the hospital yard due to the dire situation and indiscriminate shelling. On 29 November, my husband was able to move him to a cemetery. I have not been able to visit his grave yet, and the unbearable pain of his absence continues to weigh on my heart.”**

The humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip is rapidly deteriorating, as Israeli policies have led to widespread hunger, the spread of diseases, and a severe shortage of medical treatment, claiming thousands of lives. Premature and low birth weight infants are particularly vulnerable to these tragic conditions. One of the most glaring aspects of suffering is the lack of proper disinfectants to sterilize ventilator tubes, increasing the risk of infection and contributing to higher mortality rates. The shortage of heart rate monitors further exacerbates the crisis, as critical health issues often go undetected in time, leading to preventable deaths. Meanwhile, mothers are unable to breastfeed their babies due to Israel’s starvation policies. Coupled with the shortage of clean drinking water, mothers are forced to mix baby formula with contaminated water, resulting in the deaths of many infants. The suffering is compounded by the outbreak of infectious diseases in makeshift tents, causing the loss of even more children. These deaths could have been prevented with access to proper nutrition, basic disinfectants, and adequate medical supplies.²⁰

As winter approaches with its harsh conditions, fears are growing that the situation in Gaza will deteriorate further, deepening the suffering of the population beyond the capacity of the already crumbling healthcare system to respond. Young children remain the most vulnerable group, as their weaker immune systems make them significantly more susceptible to life-threatening conditions compared to adults.²¹ At the same time, the statistics on deaths caused by malnutrition reveal a hidden humanitarian catastrophe that has not been adequately monitored or widely reported. According to estimates from the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) report on Gaza, in total, it is likely that 62,413 people have died of starvation and its complications in Gaza from October 7, 2023, to September 30, 2024. Most of these will have been young children.” This would mean that deaths from starvation have now outpaced deaths from direct violence.²²

19 PCHR’s staff received the testimony on 16 September 2024 in Beit Lahia, North Gaza.

20 World Socialist Web Site(4 October 2024). An open letter to the White House by 99 healthcare workers documenting the crimes of genocide in Gaza.

21 +972Magazine (1 November 2024). A war on hospitals is a war on civilians: Israel’s fatal blow to health in Gaza

https://www.972mag.com/health-system-gaza-hospitals-fatal-blow/?utm_source=972+Magazine+Newsletter&utm_campaign=4326cee9fe-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_9_12_2022_11_20_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_f1fe821d25-4326cee9fe-318932580

22 World Socialist Web Site(4 October 2024). An open letter to the White House by 99 healthcare workers documenting the crimes of genocide in Gaza.

<https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2024/10/05/ggob-o05.html>

All the aforementioned highlights the inhumane and deadly conditions in Gaza, where the statistics on child deaths defy comprehension, reflecting the tragedy of a generation whose lives are being stolen amid a shameful global silence. In describing this disastrous situation, Adele Khodr, UNICEF's Regional Director for the Middle East and North Africa, stated that the situation in Gaza represents "the situation in the Gaza Strip is a growing stain on our collective conscience", emphasizing that the rate of child deaths and injuries has reached shocking levels²³. Jeremy Stoner, Regional Director of Save the Children, added, "Children should never be considered acceptable "collateral", but here they're not unfortunate bystanders caught up in conflict - they are directly under attack. The principle of protecting civilians in conflict, especially children, is a cornerstone of international law and our shared humanity. In Gaza, this appears to have been abandoned, replaced by an onslaught that has reduced thousands of children's lives to statistics in a horrific toll of human suffering. Yet behind the numbers, every single child killed isn't just a life extinguished, but a parent's, a sibling's, entire universe. And that kind of loss can never be quantified. "²⁴



²³ UNICEF: Child casualties in Gaza "a growing stain on our collective conscience" on 24 October 2023:
<https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/child-casualties-gaza-growing-stain-our-collective-conscience>

²⁴ Save the Children(2 November 2024). Gaza: Massacre reportedly kills 50 children, underscoring urgent need for global intervention - Save the Children.
<https://www.savethechildren.net/news/gaza-massacre-reportedly-kills-50-children-underscoring-urgent-need-global-intervention-save>



2. **Causing Serious
Bodily or Mental
Harm to Members
of the Group**

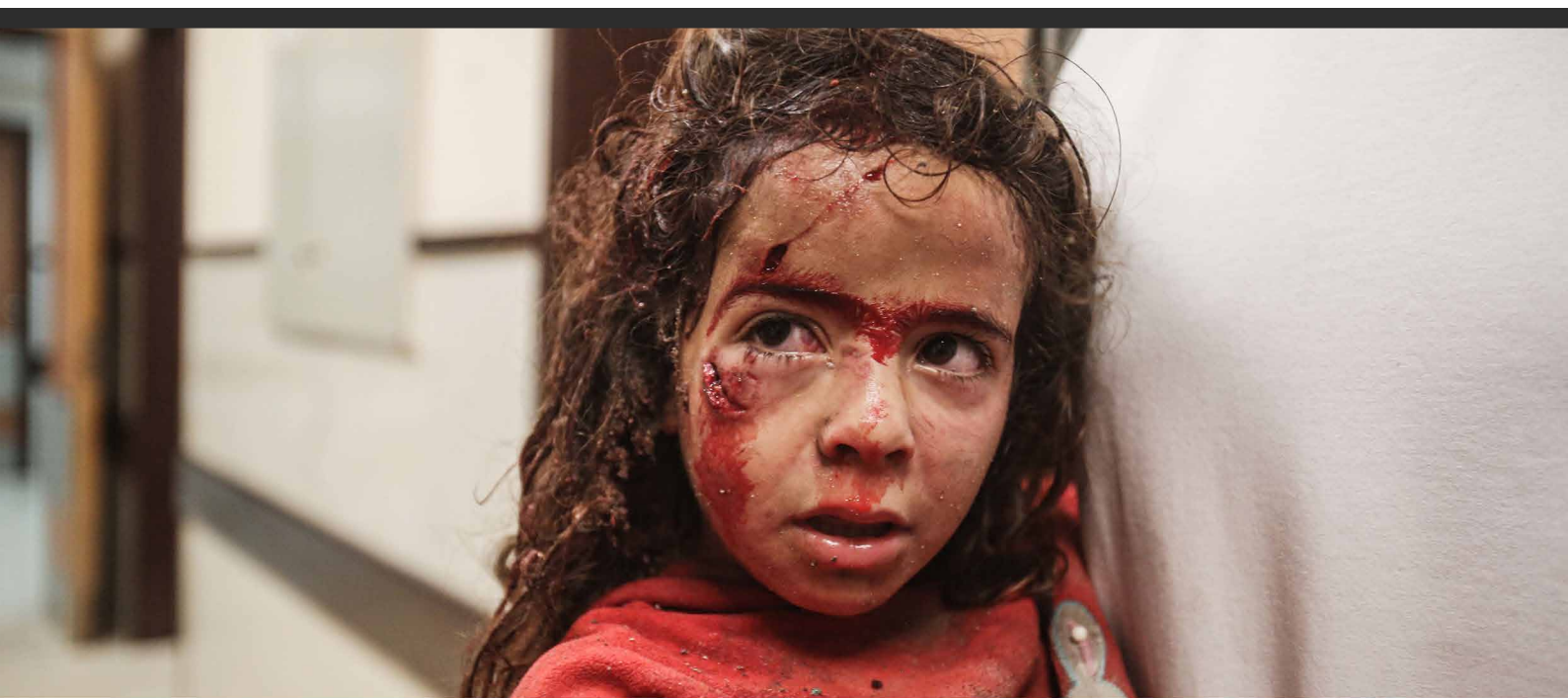
In the context of the second act constituting the crime of genocide, responsibility arises when the perpetrator deliberately inflicts severe bodily or mental harm on members of the group, with the harm stemming from clear intent. According to international judicial precedents, serious bodily harm includes significant damage to health, such as disfigurement or severe injuries to organs.²⁵

As for mental harm, causing serious mental harm does not require a physical attack. The International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) has noted that “serious mental harm” transcends minor symptoms rather ‘a grave and long-term disadvantage to a person’s ability to lead a normal and constructive life’ is necessary. It is, however, not necessary that the harm be permanent or irreversible.²⁶

The criteria for considering the second act of genocide are met in the context of the violations and crimes perpetrated by Israeli forces against children in the Gaza Strip without distinction since 7 October 2023. This section focuses on reviewing the severe bodily harm inflicted on Gaza’s children, which, in turn, leads to severe mental harm, leaving lasting effects on their mental health. Additionally, the section will separately address the serious mental harm experienced by Gaza’s children as a result of these repeated and brutal violations.

2.1 Causing Serious Bodily Harm to Children in the Gaza Strip:

The severe injuries and repeated arrests of Gaza’s children are part of systematic practices carried out against them without distinction, leaving devastating impacts on their bodies and spirits. The serious bodily injuries inflicted to these children, including disfigurement and permanent disabilities, are compounded by profound psychological suffering, intensifying the trauma of their experiences. Arbitrary arrests and the accompanying physical and psychological abuses further exacerbate the harm, leaving scars not easily healed. These practices have lasting effects on the children’s physical and psychological development, depriving them of their most basic human rights.



²⁵ Ibid, the UN Genocide Convention: A Commentar, para.98.

²⁶ Ibid, para.99

2.1.1 Severe Bodily Injuries to Children in the Gaza Strip:

Children in Gaza suffer serious injuries resulting in physical deformities and permanent disabilities due to indiscriminate shelling, massive explosions, and the use of lethal weapons by IOF. These grave injuries range from physical disfigurement to enduring disabilities. One of the most prevalent injuries is the loss of limbs, often caused by explosions and shrapnel, leaving children amputated and physically incapacitated. Many children also suffer facial disfigurements caused by injuries or burns. Additionally, spinal injuries have resulted in paralysis or mobility impairments, while traumatic brain injuries have severely affected their cognitive and behavioral abilities. A significant number of children have sustained eye injuries, leading to blindness or impaired vision, which hinders their ability to learn and engage in everyday activities.²⁷ Out of 5,000 people who have suffered from disabilities, impairments, or amputations, children account for approximately 15% of this total.²⁸

These injuries and disfigurements do not only inflict physical harm but also deeply affect the psychological and social well-being of the children, exacerbating their long-term suffering and hindering their ability to lead a normal life. The amputation of limbs among children represents one of the most significant impacts recorded in modern warfare. Children cannot endure what they have experienced during the Israeli military assault without it leaving a profound and lifelong impact. This is especially true for those who have lost one or both arms or legs, as such injuries result in permanent consequences that affect every aspect of their lives.²⁹

IOF uses weapons packed with small fragments that cause severe and critical injuries, particularly for children. When these bombs and shells explode, the fragments travel at insane speeds, penetrating the skin, tissues, and even bones, leading to comminuted bones and serious internal injuries. These fragments leave tiny barely discernible wounds, yet they cause significant internal damage, such as organ ruptures and internal bleeding, making diagnosis and treatment challenging. These weapons also increase the likelihood of limb amputations or permanent loss of internal organ function, as the fragments often remain embedded in the body, requiring precise surgical procedures for removal. Foreign surgeons, such as Dr. Mark Perlmutter and Dr. Feroz Siddhwa, have confirmed that children are highly susceptible to these injuries due to the small size of their bodies. The fragments cause subtle yet often fatal injuries, contributing to the high rates of mortality and severe injuries among children.³⁰

Dr. Raed Jihad Abu Shamala, an orthopedist at Shuhada Al-Aqsa Hospital, stated to PCHR's staff that: **"Since previous aggressions on Gaza, Israel has been using lethal weapons that cause superficial wounds externally but inflict tremendous internal damage. However, we are witnessing weapons and materials used in this war that are even more destructive. The injuries are more severe, causing extreme bodily harm that is often difficult to manage due to their severity, in addition to the shortage of medications and medical staff. Dozens of children arrive at the hospital having already lost one or more limbs before even reaching medical care. Drawing from my professional experience during the 2014 aggression, two out of every hundred injured children required an amputation or had already suffered one. In this war, I estimate that the ratio is two out of every ten."**³¹

²⁷ According to PCHR's documentation of dozens of cases of injured children.

²⁸ Information received by PCHR's researchers from the Ministry of Health (MOH).

²⁹ World Socialist Web Site (4 October 2024). An open letter to the White House by 99 healthcare workers documenting the crimes of genocide in Gaza. <https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2024/10/05/gqob-o05.html>

³⁰ Guardian News (11 July 2024). Israeli weapons packed with shrapnel causing devastating injuries to children in Gaza, doctors say <https://www.theguardian.com/world/article/2024/jul/11/israeli-weapons-shrapnel-children-gaza-injured>

³¹ Telephone interview by PCHR's staff on 23 November 2024.

Youssuf Ismail Mahmoud Al-Duqqi (30) stated to PCHR's team that: **"On 03 September 2024, my older brother Mohammed, who is married with two daughters: Hanan (3); and Misk, (almost 2 years old), and works as a government employee in Gaza, was visiting us. About half an hour after he returned home, we suddenly heard two deafening explosions. The sound was so intense it felt like an earthquake shaking the ground beneath us. We rushed to the windows to see what was happening and saw thick smoke rising from the direction of my brother Mohammed's apartment, which was just 200 meters away from our home. I couldn't stop thinking about their fate, so I dashed into the street with all my strength. When I arrived, I was saddened by a horrifying scene: injured people lay everywhere, and screams echoed from every corner. I climbed to the apartment and found it reduced to rubble, with everything covered in destruction. I called out for my brother, his wife, and their daughters, but no one answered. Then, I found my brother's wife, Shaima (25), lying face down, her body covered in blood. She had passed away. I covered her body. Suddenly, I heard the cries of Misk, my younger niece, who is just two years old. She was bleeding from her forehead and abdomen, and her left leg had been amputated from below the knee. I carried her to an ambulance. I couldn't stop searching through the debris until I found my brother Mohammed, trapped under the rubble, trying to free himself. He was covered in blood and severely injured. I carried him to the ambulance as well. At the hospital, the shock deepened. It turned out that Hanan, my 3-year-old niece, had fallen from the apartment due to the force of the explosion. Both her legs were amputated, her intestines were protruding from her abdomen, and she had severe burns on her face. I no longer have the words to describe what I saw. Their lives were destroyed in an instant, and their future forever altered. They can no longer lead a normal life and are now living with an indescribable psychological trauma"** .³²

Mrs. Manal Ayoub Abu Al-Ata, 5-year-old Sinan's aunt, shared her testimony with PCHR's team: **"Sinan, a 5-year-old boy, lived a simple life with his small family of five. On 12 June 2024, he was with his father Ahmad, his mother Ruba, his grandmother Khitam, his sister Kenzi (9), and his brother Muhammad (3) at a relative's house on Omar Al-Mukhtar Street. They were staying on the fourth floor when the disaster struck. Suddenly, without warning, at 06:00, three missiles struck the building they were in, destroying everything. In an instant, his father, mother, grandmother, and siblings were torn apart, their bodies scattered across the street. Sinan was flung from the fourth floor, hitting a metal sheet below and losing consciousness. He was surrounded by smoke, debris, and rubble.**



He wasn't immediately taken to the hospital; he lay there for over two hours until a passerby heard his cries. This man rushed Sinan to the Al-Ma'madani Hospital, where doctors began intensive efforts to save him. Sinan's injuries were severe—he permanently lost his left eye and can no longer see with it. Additionally, he sustained a critical injury to his leg, losing part of his pelvic bone and suffering severe damage to his left foot, leaving him unable to walk. But his physical wounds are not the only pain he endures. Sinan is in a state of emotional devastation. He is extremely irritable, cries incessantly, and screams from the pain. Often, he lashes out at me because he cannot cope with what has happened to him. I see the child who should have lived in peace now trapped in a body that can no longer move freely and a mind that cannot comprehend the horrors he has endured. Every night, Sinan waits for the moment when he can see the moon. I ask him, 'Why do you look at the moon, Sinan?' He answers in a faint voice, Baba and Mama will go down from there. I'm waiting for them.' His words break my heart. He cannot accept that his parents are gone. What hurts me the most happens at night. Most nights, he wakes up suddenly, screaming loudly: 'I'm scared, I'm scared, Grandma,' and starts crying. What fault is it of this child? What has this child done to deserve this? He hasn't even had the chance to taste life, only to find himself trapped in this hell of permanent physical and psychological pain."³³

Meanwhile, thousands of injured children are struggling to receive essential medical care amidst the systematic Israeli attacks on the healthcare system and the destruction of hospitals. This is further compounded by the suffocating siege, which severely restricts the entry of vital medicines and medical equipment. As a result, the remaining hospitals—operating only partially—suffer from an acute shortage of staff and essential supplies such as syringes, antibiotics, and anesthetics. This severe shortage greatly impacts the quality of care provided, especially for the urgent surgical procedures that children require. Under these dire circumstances, many children endure constant pain as doctors are unable to provide the necessary treatments to save their lives. These tragic conditions reduce the chances of survival for injured children and increase the likelihood of long-term physical disabilities or permanent damage. International health organizations have warned that Gaza's healthcare crisis threatens to create a generation physically and mentally scarred. The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that 25% of those injured in Gaza require ongoing rehabilitation, underscoring the long-term consequences of this humanitarian disaster.³⁴

³² PCHR's staff received the testimony at Shuhada Al-Aqsa Hospital in Deir Al-Balah on 30 September 2024.

³³ PCHR's staff received the testimony at Gaza Girls' School on 14 November 2024.

³⁴ Save the Children (10 October 2024). GAZA: AT LEAST 3,100 CHILDREN AGED UNDER FIVE KILLED WITH OTHERS AT RISK AS FAMINE LOOMS <https://www.savethechildren.net/news/gaza-least-3100-children-aged-under-five-killed-others-risk-famine-looms>



2.1.2 Arbitrary Arrests of Children in the Gaza Strip:

Children in Gaza are subjected to arbitrary arrests marked by brutal and inhumane torture methods. The abuse begins at the moment of arrest, with the use of police dogs to intimidate them, followed by binding their hands and blindfolding them for long hours outdoors in extreme weather conditions. They are then transferred to detention centers that lack even the minimum standards of human dignity. In these centers, children are subjected to various forms of physical and psychological torture, including being violently beaten on the head, face, back, and limbs with sticks and rifle butts, leaving severe physical injuries such as bruises and deep wounds. Additionally, cigarettes are extinguished on their bodies, and they are forced to stand in painful positions for long periods of time. Sleep deprivation and denial of rest are systematically imposed, intentionally breaking them both physically and mentally.³⁵

The suffering of detained children in Gaza extends beyond direct torture. They are held in overcrowded “barracks” alongside adults, in blatant violation of international standards that mandate the separation of children from adult detainees. These children endure systematic deprivation of food and water, often receiving nothing more than a piece of bread and a cucumber each day. Additionally, they are denied contact with their families and access to legal aid, leaving their loved ones in constant anxiety and uncertainty about their whereabouts. Under these degrading conditions, prison facilities become breeding grounds for diseases such as scabies due to overcrowding and poor hygiene, compounded by a severe lack of basic supplies like soap and toilet paper. Despite the worsening circumstances, detained children are denied adequate medical care, exacerbating their suffering.³⁶ The impact of detention on Gaza’s children inflicts severe psychological harm, fostering feelings of fear and insecurity. The experience results in deep trauma stemming from the loss of freedom, separation from their families, and psychological threats during detention. These children frequently suffer from mental health disorders such as anxiety, depression, and symptoms of complex post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), including recurring nightmares, difficulty concentrating, aggressive behaviors, and tremors. Even after their release, many struggle to reintegrate into their normal lives. They experience isolation, difficulty interacting with peers, and an inability to adapt to their surroundings. These harrowing experiences often alter their personalities and belief systems permanently, leaving long-lasting psychological scars that affect their behavior, social relationships, and ability to build a stable and secure future.³⁷

³⁵ Information from ex-detainees received by PCHR

³⁶ Ibid

³⁷ Information from ex-detainees received by PCHR.

Save the children. DEFENCELESS: The impact of the Israeli military detention system on Palestinian children. p20-22.
https://www.savethechildren.org.uk/content/dam/gb/reports/defenceless_impact_of_detention_on_palestinian_children.pdf

Fadi Rajab Hamouda (16), reported to PCHR's team: **"On 24 December 2023, due to the shelling, we moved to my grandfather's house, 200 meters east of our home. After two days without food or water, my father went out raising a white flag. Two Israeli soldiers pointed their weapons at us and ordered everyone in the house to kneel and raise our hands. Then, the soldier ordered the women to leave, walking ahead and taking the children. When my mother tried to take me with her, the soldier told her to leave me behind. She told him I was young and only 15 years old. At that point, the soldier called for another soldier, who came with a device to verify my identity. He asked for my name and ID number, and I told him I didn't have an ID. The soldier approached my father and took his ID, checked it on the device, and then told my mother firmly, "Leave him, we're taking him." My mother tried again to take me, crying and saying I was young, but the soldier violently shoved her to the ground and ordered her, "Leave this place." My mother left, crying uncontrollably. Afterward, they rounded up all the men in the area, seating us in groups of seven with our IDs in front of us, then released the women and children. Later, the soldier called me, tied my hands tightly behind my back with plastic cuffs, blindfolded me with a cloth, and took me along with the detainees to a house on the fourth floor, where we were put into a room. The cuffs caused intense pain in my wrists, and when I called out to a soldier to loosen them, he kicked me with his boot, hit me on the back of my head with his rifle butt, and kicked me repeatedly on my body, ordering me to kneel and lower my head. Later, one soldier grabbed me violently by the back of my neck, dragging me down and hitting me every time I tried to lean against the stairwell walls. He eventually positioned me behind a truck, flanked by two soldiers on either side. They lifted me and threw me into the truck. We were taken to a military site, where I was thrown to the ground, injuring my shoulder. Another soldier came and ordered me to stand up. When I said I couldn't, he yanked me up by my shoulder and forced me to walk about 30 meters while hitting and shoving me. Then, I was made to kneel on the ground with my head lowered for about an hour. I was then taken to a room where a soldier asked my name and age, took the 20 shekels I had, and transferred me to another room with a tiled floor, where I spent two days without food or water. On the third day, I was transported by bus to an unknown location. There, I was ordered to remove all my clothes except my underwear, wear a gray uniform, and had my hands and feet tied. I was made to sit on a gravel floor for an hour and a half. After interrogation, I was taken to a doctor and given a plastic tag with my detention number. I was then transferred to a tinsplate-roofed detention center, where I was given a mattress less than a centimeter thick and a blanket. When I asked for food, they brought it 15 minutes later—two pieces of bread and an apple. The guard then prevented me from sleeping, warning that soldiers would beat me if I slept because the roll call was approaching. I spent 23 days in detention and was interrogated once after eight days about my whereabouts on 7 October, my affiliation with Hamas, and tunnels. On the tenth day, soldiers ordered us to sleep on our stomachs with our hands on our heads, threatening that anyone who moved would be raped. They then released large dogs onto us. One of the dogs stepped on my back, sniffing and barking, while soldiers cursed and insulted us with degrading remarks like, "You women bastards." Meals were minimal: breakfast was two pieces of bread, cheese, and a cucumber; lunch was four sandwiches and a tomato; dinner was labneh, two pieces of bread, and an apple. Showers were allowed only on Mondays and Thursdays, and prayers were performed with dry ablution. Throughout the detention, I was shackled at the front, blindfolded, and forced to kneel all day. On 18 January 2024, soldiers selected me and others for transfer. I felt like a body being moved from one place to another. We were taken to Kerem Shalom crossing, where our shackles were removed, and we were ordered to walk. I felt completely lost. The hours we spent at Kerem Shalom felt like an eternity, with the air filled with fear as if I were nearing my end with every passing moment. Eventually, we were transferred to a shelter in Rafah, and then to Al-Ta'ef School in Tel Al-Sultan in Rafah, where we were placed in tents, seven to a tent. Some returned to their families, but I remained in a tent battered by wind and drenched by rain, relying on canned food and bread from others. Every passing minute leaves a deep mark on me. Will I remain in this inescapable spiral? Will I return to my family, whom I know nothing about? Every day carries fear of the unknown, and even if this war ends, it will leave behind unhealing wounds. After leaving prison, I felt as though I had emerged from one darkness into another. The scars left by this experience run deeper than words can describe. I live in a state of confusion and loss, haunted by memories of imprisonment at every moment, as though I cannot escape them. The harsh conditions of living in a tent only amplify my suffering, the bitter cold and rain that floods the place turn every moment into a nightmare. Each day feels like a new battle, and I wonder if I can endure anymore".**³⁸

³⁸ PCHR's staff received the report in Deir Al-Balah on 01 October 2024.

The father of child, Mohammed Ahmad Faraj Rusros (55), said about his son, Yahya Rusros: **“With the start of the ground invasion in Rafah, our area became dangerous, so I relocated to the Israa 2 area north of Khan Younis on 28 May 2024. On approximately 11 June 2024, while I was busy organizing our affairs, I lost my son, Yahya (12), who is deaf, mute, and has autism spectrum disorder. Yahya got lost amid the crowds of tents. I searched for him everywhere for two days, reported it to the police, and asked for help from people, but to no avail. On Friday, 14 June 2024, around 4 p.m., my niece Layla called me to tell me that Yahya’s picture was circulating on social media as an unidentified child, and he was reportedly at the Martyrs of Al-Aqsa Hospital in Deir Al-Balah. I immediately headed to the hospital but did not find Yahya there. I met journalist Hatem Al-Rawagh, who informed me that he had found Yahya tied at the hands and blindfolded with a cloth at the Netzarim checkpoint north of the central governorate around midnight. Yahya was exhausted and scared from the long distance he had walked. When we asked him his name, he drew a tank, soldiers, a dog, and a location. The journalist told me that Yahya had been handed over to the Orphan Village in Mawasi, southwest of Khan Younis. I went there, and when Yahya saw me, he rushed to me and threw himself into my arms. He was exhausted, tense, and frightened. I noticed a bruise under his right eye. When we returned to our tent, I noticed a change in his behavior. A day or two later, Yahya began bringing a rope and giving it to his siblings, gesturing for them to tie him up and throw him on the ground. He also started asking them to pretend to hit him with a stick, mimicking the use of a weapon (as if hitting him with the butt of a gun). Yahya also began making wooden weapons, using ropes and a water hose. He became aggressive, hitting me, his mother, and his siblings in an unusual way .”**³⁹

Khaled Mohammed Junaid (14), reported: **“At midnight on 01 January 2024, IOF stormed our home while we were gathered as a family. They entered with aggressive police dogs that tried to bite us. The soldiers forced me to strip down to my underwear, blindfolded me, tied my hands, and took me outside. They left me on the street with others, blindfolded and handcuffed, without clothes, under the freezing cold until 04:00. At dawn, they transported us to Negev Prison (Ketziot) in a military vehicle, arriving at around 15:00. On the first day, they gave us pajamas but kept us blindfolded and shackled at both hands and feet. The next day, they called my name, and I thought I would be released because I am a child, but instead, I was interrogated about resistance activities. They beat me with a stick, and one soldier extinguished his cigarette on my leg. Afterward, they left us for four days without food, water, or access to a bathroom, wearing only our underwear and forced to use diapers while lying on a gravel-covered floor. During these days, we were forced to drink water with a chlorine taste, and they unleashed dogs on us—one of them even licked my body. After four days of torment in the desert, with its scorching days and freezing nights, they moved us to barracks that resembled cattle sheds. They gave us pajamas and fed us a small loaf of bread and a single cucumber daily. They woke us at 04:00 and forced us to kneel until midnight, blindfolded and shackled, with rare access to bathrooms. On 24 January 2024, they released me and some other detainees. At Kerem Shalom crossing, they forced us to run toward the UN checkpoint while unleashing dogs behind us. I ran in terror, feeling like a monster was chasing me. Since my release, I have noticed significant changes in my body and psyche. I fear any sudden sound or even recalling what I went through there. I am constantly haunted by fear and anxiety. I can no longer sleep as I used to; I often wake up terrified by nightmares of the beatings, humiliation, and torture I endured. Even my body is not the same—I have strange red spots on my skin and persistent pain in my muscles and joints from being shackled for long hours on hard surfaces. I no longer interact with people calmly. I am quick to anger, as if something inside me pushes me to act violently. I still cannot locate my family. I continue searching for them to reassure them and myself. I have searched extensively in Rafah for relatives but have not found anyone .”**⁴⁰

³⁹ PCHR’s staff received the report in Al-Mawasi, southwestern Khan Yunis on 18 September 2024.

⁴⁰ PCHR received the testimony on 01 February 2024.



The Released Al-Yassin Children

During the IOF's incursion into Al-Zaytoun neighborhood in Gaza City, five children from one family were detained. The brothers, Rami Saadi Sobhi Yassin (15), Mohammed Saadi Sobhi Yassin (13), and Ahmed Saadi Sobhi Yassin (12), along with their cousins, the brothers Moataz Ahmed Sobhi Saadi Yassin (10), who is visually impaired and suffers from growth problems (short stature), and Mohammed Ahmed Sobhi Saadi Yassin (15), were arrested on the evening of Wednesday, 20 December 2023, while they were sheltering in a storage room in Wadi Al-Arais, Al-Zaytoun neighborhood, owned by the Rayan family. Their detention lasted for three days until their release on 24 December 2023, during which they were subjected to torture and ill-treatment.

Rami Saadi Yassin (15), stated that: **"IOF tied my hands behind my back, blindfolded me, and loaded me, my brothers, and my cousins into a truck. They took us to the Al-Nabulsi area along the coastal road for interrogation. I felt deep fear of the unknown, especially when I saw the soldiers and their weapons. They made me get out and walk a long distance, but I didn't know where we were because I was blindfolded and handcuffed. After reaching a certain point with a checkpoint, the army called out my name, my brothers', and my cousins' names one by one for interrogation. They first took us to a residential building in the area for questioning. They asked me about people in my neighborhood and whether any of them were affiliated with Hamas. When I told them I didn't know, they would beat me with their hands and metal batons. When I cried or screamed, they intensified their beatings, striking me on my chest and head dozens of times with the butts of their rifles. I saw them extinguishing cigarettes on the back and neck of my disabled cousin Moataz. When they finished interrogating me, they ordered me, my brothers, and my cousins to strip and put on diapers while hurling degrading and immoral insults at us, such as, 'We'll rape your mothers and sisters; you filthy, terrorist children. Your saboteurs,' and pointing at my disabled cousin, saying, 'Especially this elite child, Moataz, from Hamas.' When I asked for water to drink, one of the soldiers would pour the water on the ground and say, 'Lick it up like dogs.' My brothers repeatedly asked to use the bathroom, and the soldiers replied, 'Pee on yourselves.' Out of fear and being denied the bathroom for hours, they eventually wet themselves. We all cried and begged to return to our families, but the soldiers threw liquor bottles at our heads, saying, 'Get drunk and work with us.' They then left me, my brothers, and my cousins naked under freezing rain for five hours before placing us in a pit. We shivered from the cold and fear, blindfolded and handcuffed. I could hear my brothers and cousins crying, especially my disabled cousin Moataz. I felt utterly helpless. The soldiers deliberately terrorized us further by driving their tanks in circles around the pit, causing sand and dirt to fall on our heads. After four hours, they ordered us out of the pit. I helped my brothers and cousins climb out, but once we were out, the Israeli army ordered us to remove the diapers, leaving us completely naked without even underwear. Barefoot and humiliated, they then forced us to walk southward on foot. I felt immense humiliation, degradation, shame, and embarrassment. I lost all sense of security, especially with my father absent and my mother remaining in Gaza, unable to flee to the south. "**⁴¹

⁴¹ PCHR received the testimony at the school-turned-shelter Al-Maghazi Boys' Preparatory School (A) on 18 May 2024.



2.2 Causing Severe Mental Harm to Children in the Gaza Strip

Children in the Gaza Strip have endured harsh closure of nearly 17 years, facing dire conditions that have left devastating psychological impacts deeply affecting their lives and shattering their hopes for the future. A 2022 report by Save the Children highlighted unprecedented suffering, revealing that four out of five children in Gaza experience depression, fear, and sadness. More than half of the children reported having suicidal thoughts, and three out of five engaged in self-harm. The research found the mental wellbeing of children, young people and caregivers has dramatically deteriorated since a similar study in 2018, with the number of children reporting emotional distress increasing to 80% from 55% (84% compared to 50% in 2018), nervous (80% compared to 55%), sad or depressed (77% compared to 62%) and grieving (78% compared to 55%). These shocking findings reflect children's tragic reality in Gaza before the ongoing military campaign as Save the Children emphasized that all these behaviors have a huge immediate and long-term impact on the development, learning and social interaction of children and hopes for a better future.⁴²

These harrowing statistics, despite their severity, pale in comparison to the aftermath of 07 October 2023, as the ongoing military attacks and their devastating psychological effects on Gaza have reached unprecedented levels. Nearly every child in Gaza has been subjected to traumatic events and immense psychological distress amid the collapse of Gaza's mental healthcare system. On 06 November 2023, IOF bombed the only psychiatric hospital in the Strip, further compounding the suffering of mental health patients. Additionally, the six community mental health clinics that served thousands across Gaza ceased operations due to relentless airstrikes. This has inflicted severe harm on the mental health of the population, including children.⁴³

Even after the Israeli military offensive ends, the toll on children and their communities will persist for generations.⁴⁴ The children of Gaza, who have endured the horrors of the Israeli assault, will face long-term needs in mental health care and social support, especially in the absence of an immediate and effective response to their needs. Studies indicate that children subjected to prolonged and continuous trauma, such as violence, physical abuse, and neglect, are likely to experience a toxic stress response, which can disrupt the development of the brain architecture and other organ systems and increase the risk of stress-related disease and cognitive impairment. Such outcomes exacerbate the profound psychological harm inflicted on them and compound the challenges they will face in the future.⁴⁵

⁴² Save the Children (15 Jun 2022). After 15 years of blockade, four out of five children in Gaza say they are living with depression, grief and fear. <https://www.savethechildren.net/news/after-15-years-blockade-four-out-five-children-gaza-say-they-are-living-depression-grief-and>

⁴³ Daisy Schofield. Tribune (26.01.2024). 'I Always Wake Up So Scared': Gaza's Children Under Siege. <https://tribunemag.co.uk/2024/01/i-always-wake-up-so-scared-terror-and-trauma-in-gaza>

⁴⁴ UNICEF (31 October 2023). Gaza has become a graveyard for thousands of children. <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/gaza-has-become-graveyard-thousands-children>

⁴⁵ Global Interagency Security Forum (01 February 2024). ACAPS Thematic report – Palestine: Impact of the conflict on children in the Gaza strip.p.3. <https://gisf.ngo/resource/acaps-thematic-report-palestine-impact-of-the-conflict-on-children-in-the-gaza-strip-01-february-2024/>

In an interview conducted by PCHR's researcher with Dr. Behzad Al-Akhras, a psychiatrist from the Gaza Mental Health Program, stated: **"Children in the Gaza Strip suffer from severe and long-term psychological damage due to the war. These damages include direct effects, such as the loss of parents, injuries from bombings, and the destruction of homes, leading to post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and other psychological disorders. Indirect effects manifest in family disintegration, especially with ongoing displacement, as most families in Gaza live within extended family structures, which exacerbates the psychological distress of children. The bombings that kill parents and leave children to suffer alone significantly and enduringly worsen these children's experiences. Psychological harm is not limited to older children but also affects those under the age of four. When a young child senses fear of losing one of their parents or siblings, they instinctively feel unsafe. Common symptoms include bedwetting and social withdrawal, as children prefer to isolate themselves from others. Some children exhibit aggression and violence, while others show deep sadness and persistent crying, in addition to a decline in focus and memory, affecting their cognitive functions. The impact of these psychological traumas is evident in children who have directly or indirectly experienced painful events. One of the greatest challenges in treating these cases is PTSD, which is difficult to address due to the recurrence of trauma during wartime. Children may experience new traumas during treatment, making recovery more challenging. Among the difficult cases being treated is a girl who lost her father and now wishes either for his return or for her own death to join him. Another child witnessed the killing of his father and suffers from distressing nightmares and difficulty concentrating. These cases reflect the deep psychological struggles faced by children in Gaza."**⁴⁶

Among the most significant causes of severe mental harm to children because of the harsh conditions they endure during this Israeli military aggression are:

2.2.1 Violence and Military Attacks

There is no safe place in Gaza today, as children are trapped in an unrelenting hell. The indiscriminate Israeli bombardment spares no location—whether it's a home, a tent, a residential neighborhood, a school, or even a hospital—every corner of the Strip turns into a war zone. Children are no longer safe even in the simplest moments of their daily lives; shells target them while they play in the streets or schoolyards, where joy is turned into tragedy in an instant. Even at night, when children think they are safe while asleep, they cannot escape the sudden bombings that tear them from their dreams, costing them their lives or leaving them with severe injuries. Scenes of scattered destruction, human remains and body parts and collapsing buildings have become part of children's daily lives in Gaza. These harrowing experiences show deep psychological wounds, such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), where nightmares haunt them, fears weigh heavily on their minds, and they disconnect from their painful reality, trapped in a continuous cycle of terror and loss of safety.



⁴⁶ PCHR's staff received the testimony at Gaza Mental Health Program in Deir Al-Balah on 09 November 2023.

In this context, Wasim Nael Mohammed (13) stated to PCHR's team: **"With the beginning of the Israeli aggression on Gaza on 07 October 2023, the shelling intensified around our area, forcing us to flee our home. On the morning of 10 October 2023, my sister Waad (18), my father Nael Khaled Mohammed (42), and I left our house and sought refuge in a shelter at Abu Hussein School in Jabalia refugee camp. Despite hearing the heavy bombing, I didn't know where it came from. On the afternoon of 14 December 2023, while I was playing with my bike in the schoolyard, Israeli warplanes struck a car inside the school. The shrapnel scattered, causing casualties and injuries. I was hit by a piece of shrapnel in my head and started bleeding. I rushed to my father, who was a short distance away, only to find him lying near a classroom, bleeding heavily from shrapnel wounds in his back. Minutes later, an artillery shell struck a gas canister next to my father, causing it to explode. I was injured again, this time in my right leg, which broke, and I sustained severe burns to my face and right hand, exposing the bones, as well as to my chest and abdomen. Amid the ongoing shelling, a young man named Anas Al-Daour and others carried me, my injured father, and other wounded individuals on a manual cart. I was bleeding profusely. As we were being transported to the hospital, the cart was bombed by warplanes when we reached the Yemen Al-Saeed area. I found myself flying through the air and hitting the ground. Despite his injuries, Anas Al-Daour continued to help me, taking me to the Beit Al-Khair Clinic. At the clinic, I underwent an amputation of my leg without anesthesia. I screamed from the intense pain until I passed out. When I woke up, I was in an ambulance and later learned that my leg had been gradually amputated due to an infection, eventually reaching my thigh. I stayed at Al-Ahli Hospital in Gaza for 56 days. During this time, the hospital's situation deteriorated as we heard the sounds of shelling, explosions, and clashes inside the hospital. Israeli soldiers stormed the hospital, and when I asked one of them for water, he spat on me, and another ordered a soldier to shoot me. I was shot near the heart and lost consciousness. When I regained consciousness, I couldn't recognize anyone or speak due to the trauma and the heaviness of my tongue. My family later identified me through a report on Al-Ghad Channel, and my stepmother came to take me from the hospital. My sister told me that my father was killed on the same day I was injured. I moved to live with my stepmother, but our living conditions were extremely harsh. Five months later, a relative took us to the turnstile swing gates at the Israeli checkpoint, where we met my uncle, who took us to live with my mother. After that, I was left alone, unable to move, living under extremely difficult psychological and physical conditions. I still suffer from severe trauma and recurring nightmares about the moment I emerged from the shroud, which makes me wake up terrified. I fear the sounds of planes and bombing and feel extreme distress as if I'm suffocating. My life remains stuck in that cruel moment when I saw death and experienced its horrors."**⁴⁷

Malek Khaled Al-Shanbari(33) and the father of 4-year-old Aylool, stated to PCHR's staff: **"On 23 January 2024, at approximately 07:30, while my wife Wafa and I were asleep in our tent, we were awakened by the cries of our baby Zein, who was just 20 days old. My mother-in-law entered the tent to visit her grandson and was just stepping inside when the first strike occurred. Suddenly, the Israeli army bombed the area, scattering the remains of my mother-in-law. My little daughter Aylool, who is only four years old, witnessed these horrifying moments. She couldn't understand what had happened and started screaming, repeatedly shouting, 'Wake up my Grandma! Wake up Grandma!' I tried to get them out of the tent, carrying Aylool and moving them to a relatively safer place. About three minutes later, the bombing resumed, and the area was destroyed by no fewer than six missiles. The attack killed sixteen persons, including those who were attempting to provide first aid. My daughter Aylool had grown very attached to her grandmother in the months leading to this attack, as we had been displaced to southern Gaza together. Despite the harshness of that period, it was filled with tender memories between Aylool and her grandmother. But that scene—seeing her grandmother's remains—changed everything in her life. Since that moment, she has changed suddenly and drastically. She is now terrified of any sound, constantly covering her ears as if trying to shield them from something invisible. She has developed new symptoms: involuntary urination, a sharp reduction in appetite, and restless, broken sleep filled with terrifying nightmares. She no longer wants to play with children her age and often tells me, 'I'm afraid I'll die in my sleep.' This isn't surprising, given that we've experienced multiple bombings before this— they were four, to be exact—the most recent just a week earlier. After the latest attack, Aylool kept screaming for half an hour after the bombing stopped. She pressed her hands against her ears throughout the night, and her body was burning with fever. Now, I feel helpless in the face of Aylool's fear. I see her terrified every day, and I cannot stop her fear or protect her from the indiscriminate shelling. There is no safe place in Gaza, and I cannot stop her nightmares or restore her sense of security. She is young, but the fear in her heart is far beyond her age. "**⁴⁸

⁴⁷ PCHR received the testimony in the eyewitness' makeshift tents in Al-Mawasi Khan Yunis on 04 December 2024.

⁴⁸ PCHR received the testimony via phone on 20 November 2024.



2.2.2 Loss of Family and Beloved:

One of the most significant impacts of war on children in Gaza is the loss of parents and loved ones due to Israeli military attacks. More than a year after the military offensive, hundreds of children find themselves in complete isolation, without one or both parents or even immediate relatives, exposing them to severe risks. This loss leaves a profound psychological impact, as children lose the source of security that once provided them with a sense of stability. They endure feelings of sadness and emotional emptiness that may persist throughout their lives. This bereavement hinders their ability to adapt and recover, making them vulnerable to grave dangers such as exploitation, neglect, starvation, discrimination, child labor, abuse, and illegal adoption. Moreover, children who have lost their parents are at higher risk of developing severe psychological disorders, including post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, and anxiety. The longer they remain separated from their families, the greater the psychological and social risks that threaten their future.⁴⁹

Estimates indicate that between 15,000 and 19,000 children in Gaza have been orphaned due to the war.⁵⁰ Additionally, it is estimated that at least 17,000 children in the Strip have become unaccompanied⁵¹ or separated from their families⁵², representing approximately 1% of the total displaced population of 1.7 million. However, based on experience from other active conflict contexts, the actual figures could be more than three times higher.⁵³

⁴⁹ Ibid, Impact of the conflict on children in the Gaza strip, p. (4)

⁵⁰ The International Rescue Committee (June 2024). Unaccompanied and Separated Children in Gaza. p.1.

⁵¹ UNHCR: Protection Sector, Echoes from Syria-July, Issue (2), P. (1): An unaccompanied child is any child who has been separated from both parents and other relatives and who is not being cared for by an adult who, by law or custom, is responsible for doing so <https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/echoes-syria-issue-2-july-2014-enar>

⁵² A separated child is any child that has been separated from both parents or from other legal or customary primary caregiver/s but not necessarily from other relatives.

⁵³ Ibid, p. (2)



PCHR documented dozens of cases of loss and forced separation including the testimony of Manal Abdullah Judeh (7) the sole survivor of her family:

“I used to live in a beautiful home in Deir Al-Balah. I had a lovely pink room that my parents filled with toys. My mother was eagerly awaiting my first day at school, and she had prepared beautiful clothes and accessories for me, filled with joy about starting school. I was the only daughter in the family, with three brothers. On 22 October 2023, it was supposed to be a happy day because it was my mother’s birthday. We always gathered on that day, laughing and eating together. But suddenly, something terrifying happened. I heard a loud explosion, and in an instant, our beautiful home, which held all of us together, was gone. In that moment, I lost my mother, father, brothers, my home, my room, and my toys—everything. I now live with my grandmother. I was left alone under the rubble, with stones pressing on my body and sand choking my mouth. I screamed loudly until rescuers heard me. They started digging to pull me out. At that moment, I didn’t know that I was the only one from my family who had survived. I lost my father, Abdullah Judeh, my loving mother “Nana,” Intisar Al-Nazli, and my beloved brothers: Yazan, Ibrahim, and Abboud. Now, whenever I hear the sound of planes, I feel fear and panic, and I run into my grandmother’s arms—the only place where I feel a little safe. But even in her arms, I can’t sleep at night. My only wish is for the war to stop. I want to live safely, to learn and become a doctor to treat children injured by the war, just like I need someone to care for me now. I want to live my childhood, to go to a real school, not a cold tent at night. In the camp, we have a small tent where we learn. I’ve memorized some letters and short verses from the Qur’an. Even though I’m still young, I felt proud that I could learn something, and I dream of learning more so I can become strong.”

Manal’s grandmother, Wafa Mustafa Al-Nazli, added: “I am Manal’s caregiver. She remained under the rubble for five hours until rescuers heard her cries and managed to save her. While digging her out, she sustained a head injury that required seven stitches. When she was taken to the hospital, we discovered third-degree burns on her waist from the bombing, and her body was covered in blood. She screamed in pain, unaware that her entire family was gone. Manal suffers from constant anxiety and cries whenever she hears the sound of planes or bombing. She also stutters at times and cannot go to the bathroom without me accompanying her. She lives in harsh conditions, without access to healthy food or fruit; her diet mainly consists of legumes and canned goods. She no longer lives a normal daily life—she plays a little in the camp, then sits to rest and color in her notebook. All her drawings revolve around the names of her mother and brothers, and she often cries out of longing for them.”⁵⁴

⁵⁴ PCHR received the testimony in Al-Baraka refugee camp in Al-Mawasi Khan Yunis on 13 November 2024.

The boy Nidal Hamdouna (15) shared: "I am from Tel Al-Zaatar, northeast of Jabalia refugee camp. 07 On October 2023, while I was on my way to school, the sounds of explosions and missiles began, so I returned home where my mother was waiting for me. We listened to the news, which announced the suspension of school. Two weeks later, due to the intensifying random shelling, we moved to the home of relatives in Sheikh Radwan. On 01 December 2023, while I was heading to the bakery, I was struck on my head and lost consciousness. I woke up in Kamal Adwan Hospital, only to pass out again and later regain consciousness in Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital. The doctor told me I had suffered a concussion and had been in a coma for 48 hours. After my condition improved, I was discharged, but I felt as though I was lost in a world I didn't recognize, far from the safety of having my family around me. When I asked a passerby where I was, I found out I was in Deir Al-Balah. I called my father, who was shocked to hear my voice, as he had thought I had been killed, as reported in the news. After I assured him I was in Deir Al-Balah, I contacted my grandfather, who had been displaced to a shelter there, and asked him to come and take me. I stayed with my grandfather for two months, working to sell traditional sweets to cover my basic needs. During that time, my heart was filled with fear and emptiness. I was extremely worried about my family, who remained in northern Gaza, and communication with them was challenging due to the lack of communication. Eventually, my uncle was displaced to southern Gaza, and I moved to live with him. When he started working in water distribution, I asked him to work with him despite the insufficient pay due to high prices, as I needed the income. I still live with his family now, but I haven't seen my own family in northern Gaza to this day. I constantly worry about them, wondering how they are and if they're okay, especially given the famine, deprivation, and relentless shelling in northern Gaza. How are they living without me? I am the eldest son, and I used to help my father with the household responsibilities. Every call with my father and family causes me inner pain when he reminds me that I was his right hand. I need them, but circumstances have forced me to face this reality alone. I feel lost, as though I'm living in a never-ending nightmare."⁵⁵

"Malak Al-Sabra", a child found alone after an Israeli strike targeted Al-Sabra neighborhood on 07 October 2023 with the fate of her family, to this day, remaining unknown.



In a heartbreaking testimony, Amal Isma'il Abu Khatlah (33) said to PCHR's staff, "On 10 November 2023, the Israeli army stormed Gaza, laying siege to Al-Shifa Hospital and demanding its evacuation of doctors, staff, patients, and displaced individuals. On 20 November 2023, thirty newborns were transferred from the neonatal unit at Al-Shifa Hospital to the Emirati Red Crescent Hospital in Rafah, and later to Egypt—except for one unidentified infant, the sole survivor of a massacre in the Al-Sabra neighborhood, which was destroyed by Israeli shelling. The infant, approximately a month old, was found on a tree, hurled there by the force of the explosion. It was an unforgettable and tragic moment when a medic brought her to Al-Shifa Hospital. The baby spent two months in the neonatal unit at the Emirati Red Crescent Hospital, during which her health showed significant improvement. I closely followed her condition, and our efforts went beyond physical care to include much-needed emotional support and psychological containment. The hospital administration suggested placing the baby in a SOS Children's Village, but I submitted a sponsorship request to the Deputy Minister of Health, who approved it after confirming her need for care. This decision was a glimmer of hope for the infant whose family's fate remains unknown. The Ministry of Social Development collaborated with officials and sent a team to verify that my home in Rafah was safe for raising the child. After confirming the suitability of the environment, I received special permission for her custody. I went to Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital to issue a birth certificate for the infant, naming her Malak Ahmed Mohammed Al-Sabra, and completed the legal procedures in the Sharia Court. I shared Malak's story on my Facebook page, hoping to reach any of her relatives. From that moment on, I have done everything in my power to make up for the loss of her mother, whom she will never know. It is heart-wrenching to see a child this young who doesn't know her family or even who she is. The sense of loss haunts me daily, making me question the magnitude of suffering endured by Gaza's children as a result of these heinous crimes committed by the Israeli occupation. These children, deprived of their fundamental rights to nurturing and healthcare within a complete family, have paid a steep price in a world devoid of mercy."⁵⁶

⁵⁵ PCHR received the testimony in Al-Durra stadium, Al-Bussa area in Western Deir Al-Balah on 07 November 2024.

⁵⁶ PCHR received the testimony in Al-Huda refugee camp in Deir Al-Balah on 21 October 2024.

Reem Ajjour (23) and a mother of two, Masa (5) and Wael (4), shared her heartbreaking story with PCHR's team about losing her daughter Masa and still not knowing her fate: **"Since the beginning of the war, we were forced to flee repeatedly due to the relentless and heavy bombardment, until we ended up in the house of a relative behind Al-Shifa Hospital. We stayed there until the start of the siege on 18 March 2024. On that day, suddenly and without warning, we began hearing the sounds of heavy gunfire and terrifying explosions, unlike anything we had ever heard before. These sounds continued for hours, and we later learned that the Israeli army had stormed the Al-Shifa Medical Complex for the second time. Since we lived behind the hospital, we were trapped in our home, which was crowded with residents and displaced people. My family remained confined in the house for seven consecutive days. On the morning of 24 March, at around 6:00 AM, Israeli soldiers suddenly stormed the house. They began throwing smoke bombs, and the walls of the house collapsed around us. The family was trapped in a small room, and during the chaos, I sustained a severe injury to my abdomen—I was two months pregnant at the time. My daughter Masa was injured in her shoulder, my husband Talal in his legs, and my son Wael in his hand. When I saw Masa bleeding, I screamed in panic, begging for to save her. I pleaded with the soldiers, saying, 'Save my daughter and the baby in my belly.' One of the soldiers demanded, 'Hand over the girl and come here.' Despite my pain, I was forced to leave my injured husband and carry Wael, while they took Masa from me. They asked for my name and my son's age, and then said, 'Take your son and go to the south.' I refused and begged them for my husband and daughter, but they replied, 'We will kill your husband and take your daughter.' They ordered me at gunpoint to head south. I found my son in front of me, so I took him by the hand. When I tried to turn back to get my daughter, the soldiers pointed their weapons at me, forcing me to continue on my way south. I thought they would send my daughter and husband after me, but they didn't. Communication with them has been lost ever since. I don't know their fate. But since that day, I have no idea whether Masa is alive or not. My heart is drowning in a deep ocean of questions without answers. How is she now? Is she suffering? Does she miss me as much as I miss her? Who is protecting her now? I cannot find peace, nor can I forget that devastating moment when they took her from me before my eyes, and I was powerless to do anything. I imagine her small face, her tears, and her cries that still echo in my ears. I wish I could have done something to save her. I know nothing except that I lost her, and I live in unbearable pain, unsure if I will ever get her back or if that is even possible. Now, I live with faint hope, a small promise that I might one day hear something about her, that I might know she is safe, even if she is far away, even if she is in captivity. But deep inside, I cannot stop thinking about one question that haunts me: Will the day come when I can hold her in my arms again? Or is this loss my eternal fate? "**"⁵⁷



⁵⁷ PCHR received the testimony in Al-Ekhwa refugee camp in Al-Zawaida.

Mrs. Somaya Saad Al-Kahlout (40), shared the story of her nephew's separation: **"On 12 November 2023, we were shocked by the news of the killing of my father and several members of my family due to heavy shelling on the Jabalia area. Our home was completely destroyed, and 25 members of my family were killed, including my parents and their children, as well as several neighbors. Four of my brothers and five of their children survived—some because they were outside the house, while others were pulled out from under the rubble with injuries. Two days after the incident, following the retrieval of the martyrs and survivors, my brothers and their injured children decided to head south on foot after the Israeli army began besieging the northern area. They reached Deir Al-Balah after great hardship, where my sister and I were staying. After resting briefly, they went to Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital for treatment, but due to their severe medical conditions, they were referred to the European Hospital and stayed there for three months without significant improvement. Emergency treatment was later coordinated for them abroad. My brother Moataz and his young son Saad traveled to Turkey, while my brother Musab and his son Bara went to Qatar. The family left behind my nephew, Anas Musab Al-Kahlout, a two-and-a-half-year-old boy who was pulled out from under the rubble after the horrific incident, carrying the pain of losing his mother in his small heart. When he arrived, he was in a state of severe shock—he had stopped speaking, only screamed, and ate without doing anything else. I tried to help him overcome the immense trauma he had endured, but it was extremely difficult at first. He resisted any attempts to interact with us and rejected all efforts to approach him. However, my middle daughter, Maryam (16), did not give up. She tried to comfort him in every possible way, offering him limitless love and care. Over time, and after a year of patience and effort, Anas slowly began returning to life. He started speaking words again, gradually adapting to us, and even began calling me "Mama," as he did not know his mother after losing her. Anas also began adjusting to his father, but the distance between them weighed heavily on his little heart. Initially, he refused to speak to his father on the phone, but over time, we managed to convince him that he had a father and siblings. We worked hard to rebuild those lost connections. Despite our continuous efforts, the family remained fragmented, with each member in a different country. Anas found himself far from his father and brother, who were receiving treatment abroad, and from his mother, who had been martyred. This fragmentation deeply pained him and intensified his isolation, as the family lacked unity after such tremendous loss and devastation."** ⁵⁸



⁵⁸ PCHR received the testimony in Al-Masha'la refugee camp in Deir Al-Balah on 07 November 2024.



2.2.3 Forced Displacement:

The Israeli military attacks and recurrent evocation orders have resulted in the internal displacement of around 1.9 million people—about 9 in 10 of Gaza’s population, half of whom are children⁵⁹. Palestinian families have been forced to evacuate several times in search of safety amid hellish conditions that have created an extremely challenging environment for displaced children. Many of these children live in tents and unsafe shelters that could be targeted at any moment. Moreover, these shelters are overcrowded and small, depriving children of their most basic rights to have privacy. They also lack essential sanitary facilities, exposing children to significant health risks due to poor hygiene and inadequate medical care. Children face an acute shortage of essentials such as food and clean water. Also, having no stable routine or safe space further hinders their ability to adapt especially with protracted and ongoing displacement.⁶⁰

Gaza children's challenges in displacement extend to having a profound sense of homesickness, cultural disconnection, insecurity and feeling uprooted. The constant anxiety about the future grows due to the lack of a safe or familiar environment, especially as they often leave their homes with few belongings that increase their feeling of helplessness and loss. This anxiety deepens when they find themselves in new settings where they encounter discrimination and marginalization.⁶¹

There is no doubt that displacement negatively affects children’s mental health, as they are more likely to experience psychological disorders such as depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). These psychological effects begin during the initial phase of displacement, where children are exposed to prior traumatic events such as violence, poverty, and the loss of family, those exposed to multiple and prolonged traumas typically report more severe anxiety. These traumatic experiences intensify during the journey of displacement, especially for unaccompanied children, who endure homelessness, hunger, and separation from caregivers. Moreover, children enduring inhuman conditions in camps continue to be exposed to unique stressors, including feelings of sadness, homesickness, discrimination, marginalization, and cultural differences. Additionally, continuous exposure to stressful events due to displacement and harsh conditions negatively impacts children's well-being and their ability to cope with these challenges. More frequent and severe trauma leads to worse psychological outcomes for war-affected children, particularly during displacements that expose children to more negative experiences. Moreover, repeated exposure to traumas, especially with little or no support, exacerbates the risk of serious psychological problems.⁶²

59 UNICEF. Children in Gaza need life-saving support. <https://www.unicef.org/emergencies/children-gaza-need-lifesaving-support>

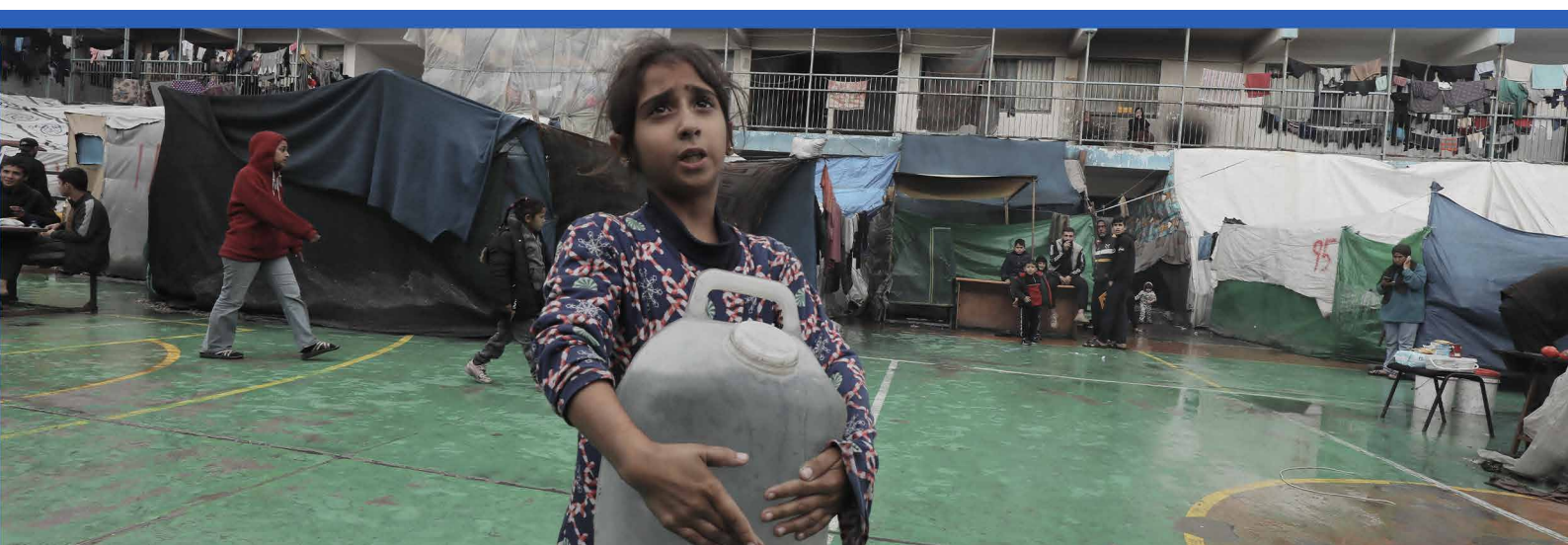
60 Zoe E. Taylor and Josiah Kaplan. UNICEF. (September 2023). p.7-9. <https://www.unicef.org/innocenti/media/3741/file/UNICEF-Mental-Health-Displacement-2023.pdf>

61 Ibid.

62 Ibid.

Bassam Mahmoud al-Qanou' (14) said to PCHR's staff: **"On 17 November 2023, my father decided to evacuate to southern Gaza Strip after the relentless bombing intensified, especially at night, hearing only the harrowing sound of explosions and engulfed by fear. At 06:00, we began our displacement journey on foot, carrying what was left from our memories and lives on our shoulders. When we reached the military checkpoint, it was more like a nightmare. There were crowds of displaced people with their faces reflecting the intense pain and fear they had experienced. It was the first time I saw an Israeli tank and armed soldiers. With every movement they made, I felt double the fear. After crossing the checkpoint, we took an animal cart and headed to Rafah, where we faced unbearable living conditions. There was no food like that was before the war as the IOF had blocked the entry of goods and aid into the Strip, leading to skyrocketing prices. With no source of income, I started working for a greengrocer, earning a daily wage of 10 shekels. Sometime, the greengrocer would give me some vegetables for my family. It was not that easy for me as I suffer from frequent seizures due to sudden burst of electrical activity in my brain and need to take daily medications. I had no choice but to work and provide my family with food to survive. I wandered between the displaced people's tents, feeling lost and exhausted all the time. I continued selling vegetables for two months, then started selling cleaning products. I would carry soap and dishwashing liquid and sell them between the tents. As the days passed, with the intensifying bombardment and the start of the IOF's ground invasion into Rafah, we found ourselves leaving everything behind once again. We headed to Khan Yunis, where my father set up a tent in a plot of land, where we live now. I am still selling soap and wandering between tents to help my family and meet their daily needs, including food, water, and medicine. I feel sad and insecure. Often, I find myself wondering, "When will this suffering ever end? When can I return to my normal life? Will we ever go back to our home and to my school?"**" ⁶³

Ahmed 'Abd al-'Al (15) said to PCHR's staff: **"Since the onset of the war, I have been living in an IDP shelter after our house was bombed. My life turned upside down after we evacuated. Before the war, I used to play with my friends and go to school away from any suffering or worries. But with the beginning of the war, my life became filled with constant pain. My daily routine is unbearable. I wake up in the morning to search for something to eat, usually lentils or pasta, barely enough to sustain us. Afterward, I stand in a long line to get water and then search for firewood for cooking. After all this suffering, I have to return to an uncomfortable and unclean place. The sanitary facilities in the school where we seek refuge have become another source of misery. I have to wait in long lines to use the bathroom, which is dirty and without water. As for sleep, in addition to the constant fear of bombing, I have no comfortable mattress or warm blankets, causing severe pain in my bones. All I ask for is for this war and suffering to end?"** ⁶⁴



⁶³ Testimony obtained by PCHR's staff on 09 November 2024 in al-Mawasi area in Khan Yunis.

⁶⁴ Testimony obtained by PCHR's staff on 19 October 2024 in Gaza School for Girls.



3. Deliberately Inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction

The third genocidal act involves deliberately inflicting conditions of life on a specific group calculated to gradually bring about its physical destruction, without necessarily causing the immediate killing of its members. These conditions include the deliberate deprivation of resources indispensable for survival, such as food or medical services, expulsion from homes, withholding clothing and shelter, subjecting a group to a subsistence diet, excessive and forced labor or physical exertion. These practices and policies aim to bring physical damage to the group; thus, the death of individual members as a result is not a necessary element of the crime.⁶⁵

Israel has deliberately committed this genocidal act by subjecting the population of the Gaza Strip, including children, to horrific conditions intended to bring about their physical destruction in whole. Many Israeli officials have expressed their clear intent in this context, including Israeli Defense Minister, Yoav Gallant, who stated: "Gaza will not return to what it was before. We will eliminate everything. The situation will change back 180 degrees."⁶⁶ Additionally, May Golan, Israel's Minister for Women's Empowerment, emphasized the need to "completely destroy Gaza's infrastructure and cut off its electricity supply immediately. The war is not against Hamas, but against the State of Gaza."⁶⁷ These and other statements clearly affirm the Israeli officials' intent to destroy the entire population of the Gaza Strip, including innocent children, with no regard for humanitarian principles or fundamental rights, and absence of any distinction or protection provided to them under international laws. These statements also reveal the genocidal intent that targets everyone without exception, expressing brutality against children unprecedented in modern history.

Since October 7th, Israel has imposed life conditions on the population of the Gaza Strip, forcing them to face a slow death and gradual destruction. This has been achieved through several systematic policies, including the use of starvation as a weapon of war, depriving Gaza's children of proper treatment and adequate medical care, and flooding the Gaza Strip with epidemics and contagious diseases. It also included the forced displacement of residents, deprivation of food, healthcare, and shelter, as well as denying children their fundamental right to education.



⁶⁵ Ibid., The UN Genocide Convention: A Commentary, paras. 100-101.

⁶⁶ A video of the Israeli Defense Minister Gallant during a field tour among Israeli soldiers on 11 October 2023: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LkCo1UXbv0c>

⁶⁷ Israeli Channel 13, 07 October 2023, quoting the minister during a Knesset session: <https://13tv.co.il/item/news/politics/k6d6k-903737400/>



3.1 Use of Starvation as Weapon of War

Since the beginning of its military aggression, Israel has imposed a starvation policy on the Gaza Strip population, which constitutes a crime of genocide if committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group.⁶⁸ Michael Fakhri, the Special Rapporteur on the right to food, has concluded that "Israel has used starvation with the intent to destroy, in whole or in part, the Palestinian people by... (b) causing serious physical or mental harm to the Palestinian people, (c) deliberately subjecting the Palestinian people to living conditions intended to bring about their physical destruction, in whole or in part."⁶⁹ Israeli leaders have openly and repeatedly declared their intent to starve the Gaza Strip population. Among those statements was that of Yoav Gallant, the Israeli Defense Minister, who ordered a "complete siege" of the Gaza Strip, depriving the population of human life essentials. Gallant said: "I have ordered a complete siege on Gaza. There will be no electricity, no food, no water, no fuel, everything is closed. We are fighting human animals, and we are acting accordingly."⁷⁰ The Israeli Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir also publicly stated on 17 October 2023, that blocking humanitarian aid to civilians is a weapon used by Israel, saying: "As long as Hamas does not release the hostages in its hands - the only thing that needs to enter Gaza are hundreds of tons of explosives from the Air Force, not an ounce of humanitarian aid."⁷¹ Since the onset of the military aggression, the Gaza Strip infrastructure has sustained severe destruction, resulting in a severe water crisis. In some areas of the Gaza Strip, particularly in the north, the daily water threshold per person has been reduced to only three liters, and on some days, there has been none. This minimum is well below the emergency threshold recommended by the World Health Organization (WHO), which is 15 liters per day.⁷²

Furthermore, the Israeli water company has halted water supply, forcing Gaza residents to turn to unsafe water supplies including brackish water, polluted water from wells, or rainwater, with children being called upon to fetch water to meet basic needs. Additionally, all wastewater treatment facilities have closed, and sewage systems are damaged due to the Israeli aggression, exposing the population to unsafe sanitary conditions that are likely to result in a serious public health crisis, as diarrheal diseases, a leading cause of child death, spread.⁷³ The UNICEF Spokesperson, James Elder, has warned of the consequences since November 2023, saying: "Let's be clear: the control of fuel and the access to water is to control whether thousands – perhaps tens of thousands – of children live or die."⁷⁴

<https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/ihl-treaties/api-1977/article-54/commentary/1987>

⁶⁹ Report of the Special Rapporteur on the right to food, Michael Fakhri Hunger and the right to food with a focus on Palestinian people's food sovereignty. p. 13.

⁷⁰ Official statement on the Knesset's YouTube channel on 09 October 2023: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nLXj9C3Fgs>

⁷¹ Israel's National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir on the X platform, 17 October 2023: <https://x.com/itamarbengvir/status/1714340519487176791>

⁷² UNICEF (21 November 2023). Gaza's children running out of time: Water shortages spark disease alarm. <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/gazas-children-running-out-time-water-shortages-spark-disease-alarm>

⁷³ ESCWA, United Nations. (December 2023). War on Gaza: Weaponizing access to water, energy and food. p. 5-6

⁷⁴ Previous ref., Gaza's children running out of time: Water shortages spark disease alarm.

As for the agricultural production in Gaza, it has been severely damaged due to the ongoing Israeli bombardment while Palestinians are unable to access their lands or harvest their crops owing to the bombardments and tank incursions onto agricultural lands. Additionally, the forced displacement imposed by the IOF has deprived many families of the ability to work on their lands. Moreover, the lack of fuel and water has hindered families' ability to irrigate crops, resulting in a deterioration of soil health and density in some areas. Furthermore, extensive agricultural lands in northern Gaza have sustained severe damage due to the Israeli military aggression. Damage to agricultural infrastructure, including irrigation systems and storage units, could take years to recover.⁷⁵

Livestock has also been devastated by bombardments impeding grazing and by a lack of feed. As a result, dairy and egg production have been severely disrupted. Also, many sheep and cattle were being prematurely slaughtered due to these harsh conditions. Meanwhile, the fishing sector has come to a standstill owing to airstrikes on the Gaza Seaport, and because of fears of being targeted while at sea⁷⁶. Additionally, the IOF have destroyed vital industrial facilities, including factories that played a crucial role in the production of basic foodstuffs. IOF have also targeted bakeries and relentlessly bombed commercial shops, which were the primary source of daily necessities for the population, significantly worsening Gaza's food supply crisis.

Furthermore, Israel continues to impose strict and slow measures on the aid trucks entering into the Gaza Strip, subjecting each truck to exhaustive inspections and conditional approval under the pretext of "security." This results in prolonged delays and frequent refusals of humanitarian aid access into the strip. While the partial entry of some aid trucks is occasionally permitted, the quantities remain woefully inadequate to meet the minimum needs of Gaza's population, further worsening the humanitarian crisis. At the same time, aid trucks are being targeted by gunfire, while damage caused by airstrikes, communication blackouts, displacement, and the collapse of coordination systems with the Israeli side are making the delivery of aid increasingly challenging.⁷⁷

Since the Rafah crossing closed in May 2024, aid flows, already at low levels, have plummeted by 78%⁷⁸. This coincided with the Israeli Knesset's passing in October 2024 two bills to restrict the UNRWA's mandate and operations. By these bills, Israeli officials are denied from contacting the agency or its representatives while its operations are barred within what is termed Israel's "sovereign territories." This legislation comes in the wake of several diplomatic campaigns aimed at dismantling UNRWA. In this context, Catherine Russell, the Executive Director of UNICEF, warned about the cessation of UNRWA's vital role in providing assistance to Palestinian children and families, saying: "The lives and future of Palestinian children are at stake."⁷⁹

Many families in the Gaza Strip, particularly in northern Gaza Valley governorates, are suffering from a severe food shortage, forcing them to reduce the number of their meals. They have to eat only one meal per day instead of two, often consisting only of canned food or rice, while many families go for long days without enough food. There are no vegetables, fruits, oils, meat, or even milk. When available, the prices are very expensive, and families cannot afford them due to the dire economic situation in the Strip.

⁷⁵ Ibid., War on Gaza: Weaponizing access to water, energy and food. p. 7-8

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ UN News(28 August 2024)UN food agency suspends staff movements in Gaza following attack.

<https://news.un.org/en/story/2024/08/1153701#:~:text=A%20%E2%80%9Cclearly%20marked%20UN%20humanitarian,at%20UN%20Headquarters%20on%20Wednesday>

⁷⁸ International Rescue Committee(July 3, 2024).What is happening to children and pregnant mothers in Gaza?

<https://www.rescue.org/article/what-happening-children-and-pregnant-mothers-gaza>

⁷⁹ UN News, Israeli laws blocking UNRWA – devastating humanitarian impact for Palestinians?

<https://news.un.org/en/story/2024/10/1156326>

Children under five years old, as well as pregnant or breastfeeding women, are the most vulnerable to malnutrition, as their bodies require larger amounts of nutrients during these critical periods. Even if a child survives acute malnutrition, they will often face long-term health impacts, including stunting and delays in both mental and physical development. Acute malnutrition also leads to wasting, where muscles rapidly deteriorate leading to a life-threatening situation. It is very common for a child to experience both stunting and wasting at the same time. In these cases, the child's risk of death is more than 11 times higher than that of a healthy child especially because their weakened bodies are not able to fight off common diseases. Children under five are particularly at risk as they are in a critical period of growth.⁸⁰

In this context, Dr. Ahmed Abdel Khaleq Al-Farra, head of the pediatric department at Nasser Medical Complex, said to PCHR's researcher: **" Balanced food has been unavailable since the beginning of the Israeli war on the Gaza Strip in October 2023, due to the ongoing Israeli siege and deliberate prevention of food entry into the Gaza Strip, which has led to the starvation of the Gaza population and the destruction of their general health, as part of a systematic attempt to slowly commit genocide against them. Malnutrition cases in the Gaza Strip have drastically increased during the last months of 2024, due to the lack of diverse food sources such as meats, vegetables, and fruits, which are essential for maintaining a balanced diet. With the exorbitant rise in vegetable prices, most of the Gaza population relies on canned food that is distributed or purchased, in addition to foods that have no nutritional value. These conditions have led to vitamins and proteins deficiencies among the population, contributing to a rise in malnutrition cases, especially among women and children. As for mental health, the lack of a balanced diet has adversely affected the nervous system, as children develop problems in cognition and understanding. These symptoms may develop into conditions such as autism, hyperactivity, and behavioral disorders. Regarding physical health, the rate of preterm births has significantly increased compared to previous years, and the rate of low birth weight (less than 2.5 kilograms) has risen to 1.5 or 1.8 kilograms, indicating a deterioration in the health of mothers and newborns. Additionally, there is a noticeable increase in cases of pneumonia, with cases rising from two per month to about seven per day. Most of these cases suffer from severe infections that may progress to pleural effusion, requiring prolonged treatment or surgical intervention, and have led to fatalities due to treatment nonresponse. On the other hand, malnutrition significantly affects children's growth. Children who suffer from prolonged malnutrition experience devastating health effects, such as accelerated heart rates, which may eventually lead to heart muscle failure, posing a long-term health threat. Additionally, malnutrition leads to chronic diarrhea and weakened immune system, making children susceptible to a wide range of skin diseases and gastrointestinal infections. In many cases, these symptoms lead to the death of children due to weakened immune system and malnutrition. "**⁸¹

Israel's systematic starvation policy against Palestinians in the Gaza Strip has collected the lives of 27 children⁸², noting that many of these cases are not recorded in Gaza hospitals, which only record fatalities that occur within their facilities or those transferred to them at the last moment. From mid-January to September 2024, over 318,000 children in the Gaza Strip were screened for malnutrition, including more than 70,000 in the northern Gaza governorate. Of all screened children, 22,000 have been diagnosed with acute malnutrition, with dozens facing life-threatening medical complications.⁸³

⁸⁰International Rescue Committee(October 9, 2024). Forgotten generation: After one year of conflict, the IRC warns of the life-long impacts for Gaza's children. <https://www.rescue.org/press-release/forgotten-generation-after-one-year-conflict-irc-warns-life-long-impacts-gazas>

⁸¹PCHR's interview with Dr. Ahmed al-Farra on 18 November 2024 un al-Tahrir building at Naser Medical Complex.

⁸²Human Rights Watch (April 9, 2024). Gaza: Israel's Imposed Starvation Deadly for Children. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/04/09/gaza-israels-imposed-starvation-deadly-children>

⁸³OCHA. Gaza humanitarian response update | 16-29 September 2024 <https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/occupied-palestinian-territory/gaza-humanitarian-response-update-16-29-september-2024>

PCHR has documented dozens of harrowing testimonies. One of them was for Zainab Abu Baid, a mother of a one year and three months old child, Saleem Mohammed Abu Baid. Zainab said to PCHR: **“When I gave birth to my child, he was in good health, but everything changed since 7th October. When the Israeli war began on the Gaza Strip, we were forced to evacuate several times due to the ongoing and indiscriminate bombing across the Gaza Strip. The last place we sought refuge in was Gaza School for Girls, where we set up a small tent in the school yard, as the school’s classrooms were filled with displaced people. We made our tents using worn-out fabrics that did not protect us from the cold weather or meet the basic requirements for a decent life. There was no toilet in our tent, and we didn’t have enough blankets. We lost everything after our house was bombed, and now we are struggling to survive. My child was diagnosed with acute malnutrition, as I was unable to breastfeed him due to the malnutrition I suffered because of the Israeli siege. There were no fruits, meat, or vegetables. My husband struggled to grind wheat and corn grains to feed us, and we had to eat one meal per day, which was insufficient. Every night, my husband, children, and I went to sleep hungry, which affected our health. As I was breastfeeding, my milk supply decreased, and the color of my milk turned brown due to malnutrition. My baby Saleem was always hungry and sucked his finger from hunger. However, formula milk was very scarce, and when it was available, it was too expensive for us to buy. In February 2024, when Saleem was 6 months old, his weight was only 4 kilograms. He became very thin, pale, and yellowish. He was diagnosed with acute malnutrition, and doctors recommended providing him with formula milk and necessary supplements. Unfortunately, we couldn’t find either formula milk or supplements, and we remained in this difficult situation while my child continued to lose weight day by day. Today, Saleem is one year and three months old, and his weight is less than 6 kg. I am deeply concerned about him, as his body is very weak and thin. I feel helpless, unable to feed my child who is crying from hunger. Nothing is crueler than the suffering Israel is inflicting on our innocent children. What is their fault? ”**⁸⁴

Ghada Fathi Kamel Abu al-’Atta (27), a mother of three children, said to PCHR’s staff: **“My 5-year-old child, Mohammed, has been diagnosed with Thalassemia along with serious heart problems, including heart arrhythmia. Since the onset of the war, Mohammed’s health has deteriorated due to the lack of the proper nutrition he requires. His suffering began a year ago, and his condition worsened because of the lack of food devoid of essential vitamins and supplements due to the ongoing Israeli siege and war. The meals we eat daily mainly consist of lentils, pasta, and beans. There are no fish, meat, fruits, or vegetables, which are critical for my child’s health. Every two weeks, Mohammed’s condition worsens, and his blood level drops to a dangerously low level of 5, affecting his health and forcing him to remain bedridden in a state of complete weakness. In these critical moments, we have no choice but to give him three injections to increase his blood count, but these injections cannot replace his ongoing need for proper nutrition, as well as treatment to regulate his heartbeat. The doctors have confirmed that Mohammed urgently needs to be transferred abroad for the implantation of a cardiac pacemaker. However, the IOF are preventing the travel of patients, including children, during the war. We are completely helpless, unable to do anything except wait for the war to end. We are constantly worried and afraid for Mohammed’s lives. With every passing moment, I wish for my son to recover, return to the life he deserves and run and play with the children. I also wish for him to live his childhood without pain, without suffering, without restrictions. ”**⁸⁵

⁸⁴Testimony obtained by PCHR’s staff on 12 November 2024 in Gaza School for Girls in Gaza City

⁸⁵PCHR’s staff obtained the testimony on 17 November 2024 in Gaza School for Girls in Gaza City.

Hana Abu al-Kass (14) also said to PCHR's staff: **"My family and I are sheltering in an IDP shelter, where we live in unbearable conditions. We only eat canned food or food provided by relief organizations, such as lentils, pasta, and rice. I crave fruits, vegetables, and meat, which are unavailable in Gaza's markets because the IOF prevents their entry into the Strip. We have endured the harshest days during the war. Some days, we only had one meal, which was rice, as there was no other food. There was no flour, vegetables, or even canned food. Afterwards, the price of rice became very expensive, forcing us to eat animal feed instead of the flour. I was feeling extremely hungry and exhausted. Additionally, we had to drink unclean and salty water. I hope the war ends so I can eat what I crave until I feel full."**⁸⁶



3.2 Depriving Palestinians of access to proper and adequate medical care and assistance

The Israeli military aggression has caused an unprecedented humanitarian catastrophe that extensively destroyed infrastructure and devastated civilian facilities, making survival almost mission impossible. The Gaza healthcare system has not been spared from this destruction, as it has become within IOF's targeted and systematic attacks. Hospitals, primary healthcare centers, and medical personnel were bombed, hindering the provision of medical care and inflicting casualties among health personnel and patients. Meanwhile, others were left to face their fate alone, without any help.

⁸⁶PCHR's staff obtained the testimony on 11 November 2024 in Gaza School for Girls in Gaza City.

IOF continued their systematic destruction of Gaza's hospitals and healthcare centers, leaving 23 out of 38 government and non-government hospitals out of service, with only 17 hospitals remaining partially operational. Additionally, 80 out of 90 healthcare centers went out of service, and over 130 ambulances were damaged. IOF's attacks resulted in the killing of 1,054 medical personnel and the arrest of 330 others, including three doctors who died while in detention.⁸⁷ IOF also dug seven mass graves within Gaza's hospitals.⁸⁸

On the other hand, the ongoing Israeli bombardment and airstrikes have destroyed Gaza's essential infrastructure, including water and sewage networks. This destruction, combined with malnutrition and blocking the entry of detergents and medicines into the Strip, has exacerbated the dire conditions in the camps, which already suffer from devastating living conditions and overcrowding. As a result, diseases and epidemics have rapidly and widely spread, furthering the suffering of the population and posing a real threat to their health.

Israel has deliberately ignored all UN warnings and intended to create this catastrophic situation as part of its genocidal campaign committed against the Palestinian civilians in the Gaza Strip. This intent has been clearly expressed Israel's prominent figures, Major General Giora Eiland, the former head of the Israeli National Security Council, in an article he published in mid-November 2023. He stated: "The international community warns of a humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza and of severe epidemics. We must not shy away from it. Severe epidemics in the south of the Strip will hasten victory."⁸⁹

The Gaza Strip is suffering from an alarming rise of diseases, particularly among children. The epidemics include skin diseases such as scabies, rashes, and chickenpox, as well as upper respiratory infections, hepatitis A, and meningitis. Alarming rises were recorded for several infectious diseases. Non bloody diarrhea in children under five years old surged by 33 times, and for those aged five years and older it increased by 98 times compared to the figures in 2022. There has been a significant increase in bloody diarrhea by 22 times, pediculosis by 8 times, and impetigo by four times compared to the same month of 2022.⁹⁰

Doctors in the Gaza Strip are facing immense challenges in providing necessary treatment due to the lack of medicines and medical staff in overcrowded hospitals, which significantly obstructs the effective provision of healthcare. At the same time, many sick children suffer from a severe lack of clean water, which is essential for treating certain diseases. These harsh conditions have also led to many children contracting hepatitis due to malnutrition, poor levels of hygiene, and the ongoing shortage of potable water. These factors combine to pose a serious threat to children's lives.

Moreover, health officials have expressed concerns about the risk of spreading polio virus in Gaza, which threatens the lives and futures of children. The outbreak of this virus is due to the shortage of vaccines and essential healthcare services caused by the Israeli siege and ongoing genocide. In July 2024, the Gaza Strip was designated as "a polio epidemic zone." In August, the first case of polio in 25 years was recorded for a 10-month-old child who had not received the vaccine and was paralyzed. The reappearance of polio in Gaza is linked to the severe damage to the Gaza's health and sanitation systems caused by ongoing bombardment, which has interrupted routine vaccination efforts.⁹¹

⁸⁷ Health Sector Emergency Situation Report- Day 433 of the Aggression, Wednesday, 11 December 2024, P. 2.

⁸⁸ The Gaza Government Media Office (09 November 2024) Statement No. (673) issued by the office. <https://t.me/s/mediagovps?before=3284>

⁸⁹ A photocopy of an article published by General Giora Eiland. <https://twitter.com/QudsNen/status/1726239911013982326/photo/1>

⁹⁰ University of Cambridge and Centre for Lebanese Studies (September 2024). Palestinian Education Under Attack in Gaza: Restoration, Recovery, Rights and Responsibilities in and through Education.p.22. https://www.educ.cam.ac.uk/centres/real/publications/Palestinian_education_under_attack_in_Gaza.pdf

⁹¹ Defense for Children Palestine (September 5, 2024). "Covered in blisters": Chickenpox and other skin diseases spread among Palestinian children in Gaza amid Israeli genocide. https://www.dci-palestine.org/_covered_in_blisters_chickenpox_and_other_skin_diseases_spread_among_palestinian_children_in_gaza_amid_israeli_genocide

Ameera⁹² (35) said to PCHR's staff: **"My house, where my small family and I lived, was reduced to rubble in an Israeli airstrike that has also killed my husband. I became the sole breadwinner for my five children. Every day brings unbearable challenges. I have no source of income except making biscuits and selling them on the streets with my children to secure a small amount of food. Despite this, we mostly depend on the sporadic aid provided through community kitchens. We only eat one meal a day, and my children starve until they fall asleep crying from hunger and pleading for food I cannot provide. As a mother, my heart aches every time I hear their cries, unable to provide them with the food they need. Their meals now consist of rice, lentils, and canned food if they're available. My son Ahmed (8) suffers from jaundice making skin pale and yellow. He spends most of his time lying in bed, barely able to open his eyes or respond to me. Doctors have recommended giving him sweets and fruits to improve his health, but I can't buy sugar, a kilo costs 120 shekels (\$30), and there are no fruits in the market, and if available, they are expensive. I feel utterly helpless watching my son in this state. I hope I can do something to help him or take his pain away."**⁹³

Furthermore, IOF not only intentionally destroyed Gaza's hospitals and healthcare centers, but also adopted a systematic policy to prevent the travel of patients and injured persons from receiving treatment abroad. This policy extends even to sick children requiring continuous medical care, such as cancer patients, those with kidney failure, and children with disabilities. Additionally, the number of injured has significantly risen, reaching thousands of cases among children in need of medical care unavailable in Gaza. However, IOF prevents their travel for treatment abroad. With the influx of hundreds of emergency and complex cases into hospitals, doctors in emergency departments are forced to prioritize cases coming to the hospitals and provide care only to those most likely to survive due to the immense pressure on the health-care system and the severe shortage of resources. Meanwhile, many children are left to face a slow death under these harsh conditions⁹⁴. In this context, UNICEF emphasized that children in Gaza are not only dying from bombs, bullets and shells, but also because those who survive are prevented from leaving Gaza to receive lifesaving care. From the closure of the Rafah Crossing on 07 May until the end of October 2024, only 127 critically ill children suffering from head injuries, limb amputations, burns, and diseases such as cancer and acute malnutrition have been allowed to leave the Strip.⁹⁵

Areej Naser Dukhan (28) said about her daughter, Aya Mahmoud Waleed Abu Waznah: **"During my pregnancy with Aya, I suffered from acute malnutrition due to the harsh conditions we endured under the ongoing siege imposed the IOF in northern Gaza. Food was scarce, and the water we had was not clean to drink, which severely affected both my health and the health of my unborn child. Aya was born under dire circumstances in an unequipped clinic without adequate medical care. I couldn't breastfeed her properly because I hadn't eaten anything, as we were under siege and unable to go out. Also, there was no formula milk or proper food to support her growth. By her second month, Aya began showing symptoms such as seizures and eye and lip twitching, alongside noticeable developmental delays. After seeing doctors, she was diagnosed with brain atrophy, seizure (abnormal electrical brain activity), developmental delays, and epilepsy. The doctors confirmed that these symptoms were caused by malnutrition and the inhalation of toxic gases, including phosphorus and smoke bombs dropped by the IOF. Today, Aya suffers from daily seizures and a continuous deterioration in her health due to the lack of medical resources, advanced equipment, and specialized pediatric neurologists in northern Gaza. Doctors have stated that she urgently needs to travel abroad for treatment before she loses her chance of recovery in her first year of life. Despite her critical need for treatment, the closure of the crossings by the IOF prevents her from leaving and accessing any hospital outside the Gaza Strip. These restrictions have compounded our suffering and made it an ongoing challenge to save Aya's life. We are doing everything we can to ensure she will receive the treatment she desperately needs."**⁹⁶

⁹² Her full name is kept by PCHR.

⁹³ PCHR's staff obtained the testimony on 14 November 2024 in Gaza School for Girls in Gaza City.

⁹⁴ PCHR's interview with Dr. Ra'ed Abu Shammalah.

⁹⁵ United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) (29 October 2024). Humanitarian Situation Update #233 | Gaza Strip. <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/humanitarian-situation-update-233-gaza-strip>

⁹⁶ PCHR's staff obtained the testimony on 09 November 2024 in Gaza School for Girls in Gaza City.

Amani Helles shared the following about her son with disability, Kenan Abu al-'Atta: **“Kenan is four and a half years old, but his childhood was difficult and painful from the beginning. He was born with brain atrophy, Hypotonia (muscle weakness), Osteomalacia (soft bones), and chest wall deformities due to a medical error during delivery. A cesarean section should have been performed, but the doctors chose for a natural birth, leading to hypoxia (lack of oxygen) and the deterioration of his condition. Since 07 October, our journey of suffering with Kenan began, as his health condition requires daily and continuous care, including regular medication and physical therapy sessions to help him walk and speak. However, with the outbreak of war, it became impossible to provide him with the necessary medications, and therapy sessions were stopped due to the Israeli siege and the bombing of health centers. Additionally, the repeated evacuations have worsened Kenan's condition. To this day, Kenan cannot speak or walk normally. His steps are unsteady, and his eyes are filled with sorrow as he watches his peers play. Regarding his nutrition, Kenan cannot drink water normally as his stomach is very sensitive. He only drinks milk, which is the main source of his nutrition. We are struggling to provide milk due to its severe scarcity and high prices caused by the war. Kenan's mental health has also deteriorated due to constant displacement. We are currently staying in a classroom at the Gaza School for Girls under harsh conditions, facing power outages and a lack of lighting. He is terrified of the dark, and his fear increases with the sound of bombing. Every airstrike wakes him up in terror, and he cries for a long time. He looks at us in search of safety, but the war leaves us all without answers.”**⁹⁷

Erada Mohammed Sukar (30) stated: **“We have four children, including a 10-year-old daughter, Jana, who has been suffering for years from benign cancerous tumors in her feet. Jana was diagnosed with cancer in 2018, when she was three years old. At that time, she began experiencing severe pain, and lumps appeared on her feet. We consulted doctors, who recommended an MRI scan for Jana. The scan revealed that she had benign tumors in her bone marrow, and the doctors decided to perform surgery to remove them. Although the first surgery was successful, the tumors began to recur and turn up at another spot in her feet. Since her diagnosis, Jana has undergone five surgeries; the last of which was 40 days before the outbreak of the war. These tumors are usually discovered when Jana begins to experience severe pain in her feet, prompting us to consult doctors to take the necessary measures. Currently, my daughter is once again suffering from intense pain. Despite consulting doctors, they have been unable to take action due to the lack of an MRI machine in northern Gaza, where all medical devices were destroyed after the IOF devastated the Al-Shifa Medical Complex. The doctors have confirmed that Jana urgently needs to be referred for treatment abroad, due to the lack of medical resources in the Gaza Strip. Jana dreams of returning to her normal life and playing freely with her friends, but unfortunately, her illness and ongoing pain prevent her from doing so. We are deeply concerned that her suffering will continue. We hope that the war ends as soon as possible, so Jana can receive the treatment she needs and regain her lost childhood, and a life filled with joy.”**⁹⁸

⁹⁷ Testimony obtained by PCHR's staff on 12 November 2024.

⁹⁸ Testimony obtained by PCHR's staff on 17 November 2024 in Gaza School for Girls in Gaza City.

Moreover, Dina Hana said to PCHR's staff: **"My 14-year-old son Majd was diagnosed with a serious disease (abnormal electrical brain activity) when he was 10 years old after undergoing an electroencephalogram (EEG). At that time, the doctors informed us that there is no treatment that can completely cure him, and he will require lifelong treatment and continuous monitoring to maintain his health stability. Majd used to take two pills daily, which helped calm his nerves and prevent seizures. However, Majd's medication has been unavailable anywhere, and our indescribable daily suffering began. Majd now experiences focal seizures every day, biting his tongue and clenching his hands, and we cannot calm him. His condition worsens with each passing day. He has also experienced a significant decline in his cognitive abilities, and his ability to understand and concentrate has noticeably decreased since his medication became unavailable. His condition worsens further when he remembers the incident that occurred on 13 January 2024, when Israeli artillery shells indiscriminately fell near the school where we sought refuge. A shell fell near Majd, throwing him violently and causing a fracture in his finger and an injury to his elbow. Since that day, Majd has been suffering from gross dreams and nightmares, causing him difficulty sleeping. He dreams that he sustained a serious injury to his body or has a recurring dream that he died and went to heaven. Sometimes, he dreams of his father being injured, causing him to wake up in a state of extreme fear and panic that lasts throughout the day. We do our best to calm him, but his suffering never ends. We live in constant worry about his health, hoping that he will receive his treatment as soon as possible."** ⁹⁹



⁹⁹ Testimony obtained by PCHR's staff on 19 November 2024 in Gaza School for Girls in Gaza City.



3.3 Forced displacement amid deprivation of food, medical care, and shelter

The forced displacement is not considered an act of genocide, as affirmed by the Appeals Chamber of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY). However, the forcible transfer of members of a group can be considered as genocide if it is accompanied with the withholding of food, medical care, and shelter, as seen in cases of organized expulsion, and is thus calculated to physically exterminate group members.¹⁰⁰

Israel has committed this act of genocide against the Gaza Strip population, including children who have not received any distinction in terms of protection or living conditions. Since the onset of the war on the Gaza Strip, the residents have been living in tragic conditions due to the extensive military operations, which have forced at least 1.9 million people—about 9 in 10 of Gaza’s population—to be displaced internally. Half of them are children.¹⁰¹

Moreover, hundreds of thousands of families were forced to leave their houses and evacuate several times, desperately seeking safety that simply does not exist. In a journey fraught with fear and confusion, displaced children dragged heavy belongings and walked long distances, running behind their parents to escape the relentless bombardment. Their eyes filled with terror, as they searched for safe shelter in an unknown destination. The children’s hearts were gripped by fear, knowing that each step might lead them to another place threatened by bombing and death, as no refuge in Gaza can be deemed safe. Even streets leading to areas that Israel described as “safe” became military targets and under IOF attacks.

¹⁰⁰Ibid., The UN Genocide Convention: A Commentary, Paragraph 101.

¹⁰¹UNICEF. Children in Gaza need life-saving support. <https://www.unicef.org/emergencies/children-gaza-need-lifesaving-support>

IOF ordered Gaza residents to evacuate to the al-Mawasi area, claiming it to be a “humanitarian zone” without providing any life essentials. Displaced people in al-Mawasi are struggling to find safety, sufficient food, clean water, and essential healthcare services, rendering life there nearly impossible. With the crowds of displaced people flocking into the area after losing their shelters across the Gaza Strip, al-Mawasi has become unbearably overcrowded as Families are enduring harsh conditions in extremely cramped areas.

In other cases, many families sought refuge in schools, hospitals, and IDP shelters that are all overwhelmed by massive numbers of people in cramped spaces with no access to necessities such as water and electricity. Shelters in the Gaza Strip suffer from a severe shortage of basic health facilities, leading to long queues and daily struggle, especially for children. Over time, this dire situation has become even worse after the outbreak of diseases due to the overcrowding and poor hygiene.

Additionally, many families find themselves with no shelter and are forced to sleep on roadsides and streets in the open air while others seek refuge in abandoned or under-construction buildings. Some families have no choice but to set up tents on the outskirts of residential areas or in public squares. These makeshift shelters lack even the minimum levels of privacy and security. Such harsh conditions heavily weigh on children, exposing them to continuous physical and psychological risks. The situation is further exacerbated by the lack of healthcare facilities and essential services in these temporary shelters, making life a daily tragedy.

In the scorching heat of summer, the situation becomes even worse, especially for children. Diseases significantly spread, with many children suffering from severe dehydration, acute headaches, and fatigue. As a result, many children lose consciousness and, in some cases, they may die¹⁰². In winter, the suffering of children increases significantly inside tents and IDP shelters amid no protection and comfort. The tents are not warm, causing serious health risks among children such as colds, flu, and respiratory illnesses like pneumonia, due to shortage of blankets and clothing.

As the Gaza Strip population endures these tragic conditions, children are forced to bear heavy burdens alongside their families. They search for firewood on the destroyed streets or amid rubble to use for cooking and warming their bodies in the absence of life essentials. With IOF’s destruction of water networks, access to clean drinking water has become nearly impossible. As a result, children are compelled to walk long distances on destroyed streets under relentless bombardment and imminent death, shouldering responsibilities bigger than their small bodies in search of unsafe water sources.

In this context, children, who are in dire need of protection and care, endure the biggest share of endless daily suffering. They suffer from extreme hunger and dehydration due to the lack of food and clean drinking water, exacerbating their physical health and weakening their ability to endure. Their health is more likely to deteriorate due to the harsh environmental conditions and the rapid spread of diseases and epidemics, in the absence of necessary medical care and the shortage of appropriate medicines, as highlighted in the previous sections of the report. Thus, all conditions of forced displacement are met, making it part of the crime of genocide, as it is combined by the deprivation of resources essential for the members of the group such as food, medical care and shelter, which directly contributes to their physical destruction and slow death.

¹⁰²Ibid., The UN Genocide Convention: A Commentary, Paragraph 101.

Mohammed Ahmed Abu Hamada (16) said to PCHR's staff: "On 07 October 2023, while I was preparing to go to school, the sounds of rockets and explosions echoed across the Gaza Strip. My mother and I decided to stay home. As the bombing intensified, we went to my grandfather's house in Beit Hanoun, but the situation worsened. We then sought refuge at Hafsa School in the al-Falouja area, west of Jabalia refugee camp, where finding a place to stay was extremely difficult due to the overcrowding of displaced people. On 06 November 2023, my mother decided to go back to our house to bring some belongings. That moment changed my life forever. My father and brothers, Omar and Ziyad, went with her to our house. When they arrived, the IOF mercilessly targeted them without warning, killing all of them and destroying everything. That was the hardest feeling I've ever had. My mother was the most important person in my life; she was my support system. I can't live without her. After losing my family members, I feel my life is meaningless having no reason to live for. I still can't believe it. Despite my young age, I became the sole provider for my grandparents, who had no source of income. I tried to find work, but to no avail. I began moving from one community kitchen to another to get food and search for potable water. I spend long hours, sometimes more than two hours, just getting water, as the water delivery trucks don't stop at a specific location every day. My suffering continued until 18 November 2023, when the school we had sought refuge in was targeted. On the morning of 19 November 2023, after the bombing intensified, we decided to evacuate to the south and headed to the Netzarim checkpoint. After passing the checkpoint, we reached Rafah, where we stayed in a tent that lacked any essentials. It did not protect us from the scorching heat or bitter cold. On 28 May 2024, when IOF invaded Rafah, we decided to leave and go to Khan Yunis, where we sought refuge in al-Hennawi School that sustained severe material damage. We cleaned the rubble in one of the school's classrooms and stayed there. The living conditions in the school were extremely harsh. I have endured endless suffering, especially after losing my family. I still feel helpless under unbearable conditions, and I can't forget what happened to my beloved ones. Every day, I struggle to get food and water, amidst a severe shortage of necessities. I am very exhausted and cannot bear the deplorable conditions. The pain caused by the war still accompanies me with every step. I feel like I am dying slowly."¹⁰³



¹⁰³Testimony obtained by PCHR's staff on 12 November 2024 in al-Hennawi School in Mawasi area in Khan Yunis.



3.4 Deprivation of Education

Israel's genocide against the Gaza Strip persists for over a year now, systematically and extensively targeting civilians and infrastructure, including educational facilities such as schools, libraries, and educational centers. Such attacks have deprived hundreds of thousands of students of their right to education, as educational institutions have been destroyed and many students and teachers have been killed, in an attempt to destroy the future of an entire generation of children.

Israel's systematic attacks have resulted in the killing and arrest of students and teachers, in addition to the destruction of kindergartens, schools, and all educational and cultural infrastructure. As of 09 November 2024, 12,700 students and 750 teachers and educational staff have been killed¹⁰⁴. Furthermore, the attacks were not limited to educational personnel but also targeted educational infrastructure, as all types of schools suffered severe destruction. Of these, 92.9% sustained some level of damage, and 84.6% needed to be fully reconstructed or required major rehabilitation to be functional again.¹⁰⁵

Since the first day of the Israeli military aggression on the Gaza Strip, all schools in Gaza have been closed for 625,000 students¹⁰⁶. Among the students who were unable to learn last year are 39,000 students who missed their final year of school and couldn't take their Tawjihi exams. This marks the first time in decades that a graduating class in the Strip has faced such a situation. Also, at least 45,000 six-year-old children in the Gaza Strip are deprived of their first year at school¹⁰⁷.

¹⁰⁴The Gaza Government Media Office (09 November 2024) Statement No. (673) issued by the office. <https://t.me/s/mediagovps?before=3284>

¹⁰⁵Ibid., Palestinian Education Under Attack in Gaza: Restoration, Recovery, Rights and Responsibilities in and through Education, P. 17.

¹⁰⁶Save the Children (16 April 2024). Education under attack in Gaza, with nearly 90% of school buildings damaged or destroyed <https://www.savethechildren.net/blog/education-under-attack-gaza-nearly-90-school-buildings-damaged-or-destroyed>

¹⁰⁷UNICEF (September 9, 2024): 45,000 first graders unable to start the new school year in the Gaza Strip: UNICEF <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/45000-first-graders-unable-start-new-school-year-gaza-strip-unicef>

In light of the Israeli widescale military operations, forced displacement, and the destruction of homes, families were forced to seek refuge in schools, using them as shelters. UN independent experts have raised the possibility that the outcome of the destruction of Gaza's educational infrastructure, including school buildings, libraries, schools, universities, teachers, and students in Gaza prevents immediate learning opportunities and destroys knowledge for the future, and jeopardize Palestinian identity. There is no such thing as a 'safe space' with school buildings often at best, providing only temporary refuge. As many have observed, no one and nowhere is safe in Gaza.¹⁰⁸ Moreover, the most optimistic prediction – assuming an immediate ceasefire and rapid international effort to rebuild the education system – is that students will lose two years of learning. If the fighting continues until 2026, the losses could stretch to five years. This does not account for the additional effects of trauma, hunger and forcible displacement, all of which are deepening Gaza's education crisis.¹⁰⁹

Despite the Palestinian Ministry of Education, in cooperation with UNRWA, launching a centralized digital education platform, these initiatives face immense challenges due to the ongoing brutal aggression. Children in Gaza live in unsafe and inhumane conditions, frequently forced to evacuate from one place to another in desperate attempts to find safety amid relentless bombings and the devastating loss of their families and friends. They also suffer from hunger day and night in shelters and tents, lacking the most essentials of life and dignity, compounded by the constant blackouts of electricity and internet services. These dire circumstances, coupled with the absence of a ceasefire, render it impossible to create a safe learning environment, leaving the future of Gaza's rising generations trapped in an unprecedented humanitarian catastrophe.

In addition to the loss of educational services, Gaza's one million children are suffering from severe social and mental health repercussions due to the Israeli attacks. These repercussions go beyond the loss of education to include substantial psychological distress related to violence and the loss of beloved ones. Several studies have shown that the negative impact of trauma on students' learning, behavior, and mental health, potentially hindering their ability to return to education and achieve expected competencies.¹¹⁰ The longer the resumption of educational activities is delayed, the more negative and profound the impact will be on student's education trajectories.¹¹¹ For older children, the disruption to their education has created uncertainty and anxiety. Without schooling, young people are at an increased risk of working under harsh conditions, early marriage, and other forms of abuse. Most importantly they are at risk of dropping out of school permanently, depriving them of future opportunities and the hope of building a stable life. For younger children, the absence of schooling threatens their cognitive, social, and emotional development, negatively impacting their mental health. Parents are reporting significant mental health and psychosocial impacts among children, including feelings of increased frustration and isolation.¹¹²

In this context, UN experts also noted that the ongoing attacks on educational infrastructure in Gaza have a devastating long-term impact on children's rights to education and expression, depriving another generation of Palestinians of their future.¹¹³ Additionally, UNICEF Middle East and North Africa Regional Director, Adele Khodr, said: "Children in the Gaza Strip have lost their homes, family members, friends, safety, and routine. They have also lost the sanctuary and stimulation provided by school, putting their bright futures at risk of being dimmed by this terrible conflict."¹¹⁴

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., Palestinian Education Under Attack in Gaza: Restoration, Recovery, Rights and Responsibilities in and through Education, P. 19.

¹⁰⁹ UNRWA. Ongoing war in Gaza will set children and young people's education back by up to five years, report suggests. <https://www.unrwa.org/newsroom/notes/ongoing-war-gaza-will-set-children-and-young-people%E2%80%99s-education-back-five-years>

¹¹⁰ Ibid., Palestinian Education Under Attack in Gaza: Restoration, Recovery, Rights and Responsibilities in and through Education, P. 21.

¹¹¹ Ibid., P. 14

¹¹² Ibid., 45,000 first graders unable to start the new school year in the Gaza Strip.

¹¹³ United Nations (21 June 2024). Written statement* submitted by The Palestinian Return Centre Ltd, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status. <https://prc.org.uk/upload/library/files/A-HRC-56-NGO-132.pdf>

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 45,000 first graders unable to start the new school year in the Gaza Strip.

In his testimony to PCHR, 11-year-old child, Islam Zaki Marish said: **“I live in an apartment in a family building with my parents and my siblings: Mostafa (20), Salem (19), Sabha (16), ‘Ayyad (15), Seraj (13), and Mohammed (10). I was in fifth grade at Abu Taleb School in the al-Zaytoun neighborhood, and my academic performance was very good. On the morning of October 7th, my siblings and I were getting ready to go to school when, suddenly, around 06:25, we heard the sounds of rockets. We rushed to the windows to see what was happening, while fear and anxiety overwhelmed us. Meanwhile, our parents told us to stay at home and not go to school. Moments later, we learned that the Israeli war on the Gaza Strip had begun. At approximately 12:00, the IOF’s warplanes launched violent airstrikes across the Strip. At 02:00, on 13 October 2023, my father received a phone call from the IOF ordering him to evacuate our house and giving him until 12:00 to do so. We struggled to remain in northern Gaza Valley, but the indiscriminate bombing left us with no safe place to go. Everything around us violently shook due to the relentless explosions. At that point, we had no other choice but to evacuate and head to the southern Gaza Valley, which was our last hope for safety, as the IOF had claimed. After our evacuation to the south, we found ourselves in a small tent, surrounded by bombardment and rubble, with death haunting us at every moment and diseases spreading throughout the area. I felt as if I were trapped in an endless nightmare. My older brothers worked in the market to provide food for us, and later we learned that an educational tent would be set up. My younger siblings and I joined, and we began studying Arabic and English. I continued studying in the educational tents for more than three months, using notebooks and pens I received from them. But after a while, my father came and told me to help him sell the goods he would bring. As a result, I stopped attending classes in the tent. Instead, I began working with my father to provide food for our family, as food prices had become extremely high. However, during this period, there were no goods in the market to sell. Every day, I wake up at 06:00 and stand in long lines to get clean drinking water, then go to fetch salty water from a nearby house. After that, we stand in another long line to get food from the field kitchen, where everyone is suffering. My younger siblings Seraj, Mohammed, and ‘Ayyad, along with me, exert indescribable effort and struggle to survive. I tried to return and resume my studies at the educational tent, but unfortunately, they refused to accept me, as the UNICEF Education Programme is only for students from first to fourth grade, while I was in 6th grade. I feel that my hope is fading away, and the war is depriving me of my right to an education and destroying my future. All I wish for is for this war to end, so we can return to our home, to our neighborhood that holds all our memories, to resume our studies, and build a future free from fear, bombardment, and daily suffering. I am very sad and tired, as I miss everything I had before the war. I miss my friends in the northern Gaza Strip, my uncle, and my cousins who were part of my childhood. I also miss my aunts and their children, with whom we used to play and find joy.”**¹¹⁵

Azhar Abu Jame’ (17), a high school student, said to PCHR’s staff: **“On Saturday, 07 October, we woke up to the sounds of rockets and explosions. Our house is located near the borders with Israel, so we immediately decided to evacuate our house and seek refuge in my grandmother’s house in Bani Suhila area. That night was terrifying as missiles ignited flames dangerously close to her house. The next morning, we returned home to gather some belongings before moving to the IDP shelters, where we endured harsh conditions due to a severe lack of water and food amidst the relentless bombing. When a temporary humanitarian truce was declared on 25 November, we returned to our house and found it partially destroyed. We stayed there during the 6-day truce, clinging to hope that the war would end. Unfortunately, on 01 December, the bombardment resumed with even greater intensity, forcing us back to the IDP shelters, once again facing the same harsh conditions. My name is Azhar, a high school student who once dreamed of graduating from school with distinction to become a doctor. I carried some textbooks with me, but they ended up being used as firewood for cooking. As we endure the tragic conditions at shelters, where survival is a daily battle, achieving my dreams seems impossible. The scarcity of food and water, coupled with the constant fear of missiles falling at any moment, has turned every moment into a bitter and terrifying ordeal. I have lost hope of completing my education, as my dreams have been entirely shattered by this war. We no longer have a home or a safe place to turn to. I have lost everything I once aspired to achieve. Even the simplest rights, such as safety and education, are now out of reach. My sole focus is survival amidst this nightmare I am living in.”**¹¹⁶

¹¹⁵ Testimony obtained by PCHR’s staff on 09 November 2024 on al-Biaa’ Street in Deir al-Balah.

¹¹⁶ Testimony obtained by PCHR’s staff on 23 December 2024 at Nasser Medical Complex in Khan Yunis.

Nisreen Mohammed Nour al-Deen Hejazi (15) said to PCHR's staff: **"I live with my mother, four sisters, and three brothers. My father passed away due to kidney failure. On 07 October 2023, I was studying for my math exam when I suddenly heard strange sounds that I initially thought were thunder. Hours later, Israeli bombardment began targeting every house in the Gaza Strip, and danger surrounded us from all directions. Our movement was restricted for fear of being targeted. From the first day of the war, all schools were closed, and we remained in our house. Despite the IOF declaring Rafah a humanitarian zone, on 15 May 2024, the IOF's warplanes dropped leaflets ordering residents to evacuate. In response, we moved to the Qizan Abu Rashwan area, where my mother's family was staying, and set up a tent. We faced immense challenges in obtaining water and food, as the area lacked basic services, compounded by relentless bombing. With no safe place left in the Gaza Strip, we had no choice but to remain where we were. On 25 July 2024, the IOF suddenly invaded our area, forcing us to escape to the Asdaa' area, where we set up a new tent. We endured the same hardships. On 17 August 2024, the IOF launched a ground invasion into the nearby Hamad Residential Compound, accompanied by warplanes dropping leaflets ordering us to evacuate. The IOF's warplanes and tanks targeted the tents of displaced people, forcing us to flee once again, this time to Qizan Abu Rashwan, where we tried to stay in a plot of land away from the bombing. Two weeks later, the IOF targeted a tent near ours. As a result, I sustained serious injuries and was taken to Nasser Medical Complex, where it turned out that I sustained fractures in my skull, shrapnel injuries in my right hand, and burn all over my body. Later, I learned that some students had resumed their studies online, but after my injury, I was no longer able to do so. I am still receiving treatment at the hospital, enduring severe pain. I feel as though my future and dreams are slipping away. Education was my beacon of hope for a better future. Since the beginning of the war, education has been suspended, and now I have lost two entire years of my studies. I was eagerly waiting for the day life would return to normal, when I could hold my books, sit in my classroom, and learn once again."**¹¹⁷



¹¹⁷ Testimony obtained by PCHR's staff on 09 November 2024 at Nasser Medical Complex in Khan Yunis.

Conclusion and Recommendations:

PCHR believes that Israel's conduct against the Palestinian population in the Gaza Strip through its state apparatus and supportive system from individuals and units operating under its directives and control, has made Gaza's children direct victims of Israel's open and clear intent to target and eliminate them as part of a broader policy to erase and annihilate the Palestinian existence. Therefore, this conduct violates Israel's obligations under the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, including Articles I, III, IV, V, and VI, in accordance with an interpretation of these provisions within the scope of Article II.

These violations include the failure to prevent genocide as stipulated in Article I, the commission of acts of genocide as outlined in Article II, which require punishment under Article III, as well as conspiracy, direct incitement to commit a genocide, and complicity in it, in violation of Article III. The violations also encompass the failure to punish these acts and the ongoing breach of Article V, which relates to undertaking the necessary legislations to give effect to the provisions of the Convention and in particular to provide effective penalties for persons guilty of these acts.

This is supported by the International Court of Justice (ICJ)'s ruling on 26 January 2024 in the case brought by South Africa against the State of Israel regarding Israel's violations of its obligations under the Genocide Convention in the Gaza Strip. The court found there was a reasonable basis to believe that Israel is committing acts of genocide against the Palestinian people during its war on Gaza, with the children of Gaza being an integral part of these acts, without any distinction or protection. Accordingly, the ICJ issued a ruling stating that Israel, in accordance with its obligations under the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, with regard to the Palestinians in Gaza, must do the following:

1. Israel shall take all measures within its power to prevent the commission of all acts of genocide enumerated in Article II of the Genocide Convention.
2. Israel shall ensure with immediate effect that its military forces do not commit any acts of genocide.
3. Israel must take all measures within its power to prevent and punish the direct and public incitement to commit genocide.
4. Israel must take immediate and effective measures to enable the provision of urgently needed basic services and humanitarian assistance to address the adverse conditions of life faced by Palestinians in the Gaza Strip.
5. Israel must also take effective measures to prevent the destruction and ensure the preservation of evidence related to allegations of acts within the scope of Article II and Article III of the Genocide Convention.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁸PCHR (27 January 2024). Palestinian Organisations Welcome Landmark ICJ Provisional Measures Order Finding That Israel's Actions in Gaza Are Plausibly Genocidal.
<https://pchrgaza.org/palestinian-organisations-welcome-landmark-icj-provisional-measures-order-finding-that-israels-actions-in-gaza-are-plausibly-genocidal/>

The ICJ has emphasized that the State of Israel remains bound to fully comply with its obligations under the Genocide Convention, including ensuring the safety and security of the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip.¹¹⁹ It is impossible to implement all the provisional measures ordered by the ICJ without a ceasefire, as repeatedly emphasized by various statements from the United Nations and relevant international organizations, which stress the need for a cessation of hostilities to ensure the effective provision of humanitarian aid. Hence, the ICJ's call, using the same language, is a clear call for a ceasefire. On the other hand, given the nature of Israeli military operations, Israel is obligated to comply with the court's orders by taking all necessary measures to prevent the commission of acts classified as genocide under the Convention and ensuring that its military forces do not commit any acts of genocide. This requires a complete cessation of hostilities, as the court's order can only be implemented through a ceasefire.

In addition to the above-mentioned, PCHR firmly affirms that prosecution of perpetrators of international crimes against the Palestinian people before the International Criminal Court (ICC) and holding them accountable is a fundamental and pivotal step towards achieving justice for the victims and the Palestinian people. PCHR also believes that prosecuting these criminals is an effective tool to prevent the recurrence of serious violations and deter their perpetrators. PCHR stresses the need to put an end to the policy of impunity which fuels the continuation of crimes and systematic violations against the Palestinians. This requires activating international legal mechanisms with utmost seriousness and determination, and without delay, to ensure justice and accountability.

In light of the above, PCHR:

- Calls on the international community to assume its legal and moral responsibilities by respecting the ICJ ruling in the South Africa v. Israel case, pressuring Israel to implement a ceasefire and end the genocide committed against the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip, and taking immediate action in view of the provisional measures ordered by the court.
- Calls on states to impose a comprehensive arms embargo on Israel, including the suspension of all agreements related to arms trade, whether for import, export, or transfer. This also includes preventing the transfer of dual-use items that may be used in committing the crime of genocide against the Palestinian people under occupation. The failure of any state to take these measures renders it complicit in this crime, necessitating its accountability and punishment in accordance with Article III of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. Any state that refrains from taking these actions is an accomplice in this crime, which requires it to be held accountable and punished in accordance with Article III of the Genocide Convention.

¹¹⁹ UNITED NATIONS. (16 February 2024). Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide in the Gaza Strip (South Africa v. Israel)- Decision of the Court on South Africa's request for additional provisional measures – ICJ Press Release. <https://www.un.org/unispal/document/south-africa-v-israel-decision-of-the-court-on-south-africas-request-for-addition-16feb2024/>

- Calls on states, particularly European countries, to abide by their legal responsibilities under the Rome Statute by executing the arrest warrants against Benjamin Netanyahu and Yoav Galant, based on the decision of the Pre-Trial Chamber I of the International Criminal Court on 21 November 2024 to issue arrest warrants against them. This obligation comes in the context of the pivotal role of these states due to their geographical location, military and economic relations with Israel, and the potential visits of Israeli officials to their territories. It also includes the necessity of closing their borders to any travels by Netanyahu and Gallant, ensuring their arrest and transfer to the ICC in The Hague, thereby achieving justice.
- Demands the Office of the ICC Prosecutor continue investigations into those responsible for crimes stipulated in the Rome Statute in the oPt, including filing additional charges against Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, former Defense Minister Yoav Gallant, and other Israeli leaders involved in committing international crimes against Palestinian civilians.
- Calls upon the international community to respect the advisory opinion issued by the ICJ regarding the legal consequences of Israel's policies and practices in Palestine. According to the opinion, all states are under an obligation not to recognize the decades-long occupation. Additionally, international organizations, including the United Nations, bear the same responsibility not to recognize Israel's presence in the oPt. In this context, the United Nations, particularly the General Assembly, which requested the Advisory Opinion, and the Security Council, must take serious and concrete steps to address Israel's ongoing presence in the oPt and work to achieve this as soon as possible to ensure respect for international law and the protection of the rights of the Palestinian people.¹²⁰
- Calls on the international community to respect the calls of United Nations experts and take decisive action to address the unlawful occupation of Palestinian territory. This includes: 1. Immediately review all diplomatic, political, and economic interactions with Israel to ensure they do not support or provide aid or assistance to its unlawful presence in the occupied Palestinian territory. 2. Abstain from recognizing or take steps to reverse any recognition of any changes in the physical character or demographic composition, institutional structure or status of the occupied Palestinian territory. 3. Cancel or suspend economic relationships, trade agreements and academic relations with Israel that may contribute to its unlawful presence and apartheid regime in the occupied Palestinian territory. 4. Investigate and prosecute those subjects to their jurisdiction, who are involved in crimes in the occupied Palestinian territory, including dual citizens serving in Israel's military or those involved in settler violence, to ensure accountability and justice.¹²¹

¹²⁰ UN News (18 September 2024). The General Assembly adopts a resolution demanding that Israel "brings to an end without delay its unlawful presence" in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2024/09/1154496>

¹²¹ OHCHR (18 September 2024). UN experts warn international order on a knife's edge, urge States to comply with ICJ Advisory Opinion <https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements/2024/09/un-experts-warn-international-order-knives-edge-urge-states-comply-icj-advisory>