



المركز الفلسطيني لحقوق الإنسان PALESTINIAN CENTRE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

Report

Severed Bodies, Shattered Souls: Women in Gaza Victims of Genocide

March 2025

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Severed Bodies, Shattered Souls: Women in Gaza Victims of Genocide

Introduction:

Women in the Gaza Strip were not merely collateral victims; they were a direct target of a systematic genocidal campaign that deprived them of all means of survival and encircled them with death at every corner. Gaza's women found themselves trapped between treacherous bombardment that claims lives and tears bodies apart in an instant, and hunger, disease, and loss that slowly consumes their lives.

The Israeli aggression threatened women's safety and struck their stability, leaving them trapped between the grief of loss and the harsh reality of survival. Women endured and fought an impossible battle to save their children, pregnant women suffered without hospitals, and survivors remained without shelter. Some were forced to give birth on the ground or suffer miscarriages under the relentless bombardment, displacement, fear, and hunger. Others lost their homes, endured hunger, and helplessly watched their children die in their arms, while wives waited for husbands who would never return. As their bodies and spirits crumbled, these women were left with no choice but to fight for survival.

The Israeli crimes committed against Gaza's women during the genocidal war were unprecedentedly brutal. Many women sustained severe injuries, harrowing burns, and critical fractures, while others lost their limbs, turning their lives upside down. This report highlights the widespread cases of amputations among women due to the Israeli military aggression. These injuries not only caused bodily harm but also led to profound psychological pain, with women's endurance of challenging conditions amid a devastated healthcare system and a strangulating Israeli siege.

In tragic events that reflect the brutality of these crimes, this report reviews firsthand testimonies of women who lost their limbs, recounting moments of pain and struggle with a new reality that deprived them of their normal lives and forced them to face a world that is no longer the same. Their voices amplify daily suffering, starting from physical disability and movement difficulty to the constant need for assistance, amid the already destroyed healthcare system and the absence of even the most basic support and rehabilitation resources. These testimonies also reveal the devastating impact of these injuries on women's lives, as they had lost the ability to work, feel productive, and fulfill their roles as mothers and caregivers. Even the simplest daily tasks became a burden and beyond their capabilities.

Moreover, after women lost their limbs, they became forcibly isolated within their communities, further marginalizing them and depriving them of their futures and aspirations. Their dreams of education, work, and independence were turned into painful memories imposed by the IOF. Amid the absence of infrastructure and necessary rehabilitation supplies, and under a tight siege

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that hinders access to adequate medical treatment and prevents patients from receiving treatment abroad, some women cling to the hope of traveling abroad to get prosthetic limbs in an attempt to regain a part of their former lives.

The report confirms, through the testimonies of women who lost their limbs during the Israeli military aggression, that amputations inflict both physical and psychological harm on women, which falls under the second act of genocide according to Article II of the Genocide Convention, as well as Article 6 of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC). Amputation leads to permanent disability, obstructs victims' ability to move, work, be productive, and socially integrate, and deprives them of their normal lives. Additionally, it has significant psychological repercussions, causing severe trauma and ongoing disorders that profoundly affect amputee women's ability to rebuild and continue their lives in a normal and constructive manner.

1. Amputee Women in Gaza Amid Absence of Healthcare

The IOF launched indiscriminate, brutal, and relentless bombardment on the Gaza Strip, violating everything without distinction. Women found themselves under fire with no protection, as they were trapped beneath the rubble and killed in their homes, on the streets, and even in shelters that were supposed to be their havens. This bombardment was not merely a military operation but a systematic act of genocide, where Israel employed a deadly arsenal with complete disregard for international law or most basic humanitarian principles. Women were denied any chance to escape or survive; they either became dead bodies buried under rubble or survivors forever haunted by pain and loss wherever they went.

Israel deliberately used advanced massively destructive weaponry during its attacks on the Gaza Strip, designed to release shrapnel over wide areas with the aim of causing maximum harm to human bodies. These attacks resulted in severe injuries, as PCHR documented cases of women who immediately lost their limbs in the incident scene due to the intensity of the explosions. Additionally, injuries from metal shrapnel that penetrated bones and tissues were also recorded, later leading to amputations. This has left the victims facing harsh fate amid the absence of adequate medical care. According to the Palestinian Ministry of Health (MOH), the number of women who have had their upper or lower limbs amputated since October 7th has reached 391, out of 4,500 cases¹.

Alongside the ongoing indiscriminate bombardment, the IOF systematically targeted Gaza's healthcare system, leading to its near-total collapse, particularly the massive influx of the injured. The IOF's attacks included bombing, storming, and destroying main hospitals, targeting medical staff with killings and arrests, and imposing a suffocating siege by halting the delivery

¹ An interview with Mr. Zaher Al-Wahidi, Director of the Health Information Unit at the MOH, on 01 March 2025.



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of medical supplies, food, and fuel. As a result, 23 out of 38 hospitals were forced out of service, while only 17 hospitals continued to operate with limited human resources and almost no medical resources. Additionally, 80 out of 90 health centers went out of service, and more than 130 ambulances were destroyed in a deliberate attack on every lifeline that could save lives². Moreover, 1,155 medical personnel were killed, and 360 healthcare workers³ were arrested, making it nearly impossible to provide medical care and increasing the number of individuals with disabilities and amputations, leaving the victims without adequate healthcare.

The severe shortage of human and medical resources in the Gaza Strip, combined with the overwhelming number of injured, forced doctors to make difficult decisions, including performing amputations on cases that could have been treated surgically. Reconstructive surgeries require specialized postoperative care, prolonged hospital stays, and an adequate number of qualified staff, which were unavailable. Consequently, amputation has become a more feasible solution despite its devastating consequences. This crisis led to an increase in disability rates, which could have been avoided with access to comprehensive medical care⁴.

Amid the collapse of the healthcare system, hundreds of injured, who sustained severe limb injuries, underwent amputations performed by non-specialized medical staff due to the severe shortage of orthopedic surgeons and trained surgical teams. Additionally, doctors from other specialties were forced to perform these surgeries. In some cases, amputations and sterilization of the amputated limb were performed without anesthesia due to the lack of medical supplies and the immense pressure on the healthcare system. Many surgeries were performed under improper conditions, leading to serious complications such as short residual limbs or improper bone cuts, which impair prosthetic fitting and comfort. These issues contribute to significant postoperative challenges: many patients find their prostheses ill-fitting and uncomfortable, leading to non-compliance with prosthetic use and reducing their mobility and quality of life⁵. Additionally, the growing need for several surgeries, amid the influx of large numbers of wounded and the collapse of the healthcare system, delays treatment and disrupts the medical care provided to the injured. The continuous displacement also hinders medical follow-up, causing serious complications such as fibrosis, muscle contractures, chronic infections, and increasing the risk of long-term disability.⁶ Without timely, advanced treatment and structured rehabilitation, future interventions become complicated, and the likelihood of full recovery

² Health Sector Emergency Report for the 433rd day of the aggression - Wednesday, 11 December 2024, p. 2.

³ Government Media Office, Press Release No. (734) issued by the Government Media Office in Gaza, on 21 January 2025. <https://t.me/s/mediagovps>

⁴ Almgdard, A. (2025). Orthopedic War-Related Injuries in Gaza: In-Depth Insights from within the Strip. *European Journal of Medical and Health Sciences*, 7(1), p.18.

⁵ An interview with Dr. Raed Jihad Abu Shamala, orthopedic physician at Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital, on 12 March 2025.

⁶ Ibid, Orthopedic War-Related Injuries in Gaza, p.19.



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decreases.⁷ Furthermore, the shortage of medical supplies, continuous displacement, and limited access to advanced care force many injuries to heal without proper intervention, known as “natural history” healing. This complicates future medical efforts and extends recovery times. The combination of physical pain, psychological trauma, and limited rehabilitation resources further complicates the recovery journey for amputees in Gaza, increasing their suffering and limiting their ability to adapt to their new health conditions⁸. For women who have lost their limbs, a new struggle begins the moment they leave the hospital, as they face extremely difficult living conditions. Instead of receiving the support and essential healthcare needed for recovery, they are forced to live in temporary shelters or tents that lack even the most basic necessities of life. These shelters are unsuitable for the specific needs of amputee women, both in terms of daily living conditions and logistical support for their health. They also lack specialized medical care, essential for recovery, as well as psychological support to help them cope with the devastating changes they are enduring. Additionally, the absence of social and economic support worsens their suffering, leaving them without assistance to secure essential resources such as healthy food, clothing, hygiene products, and proper sanitary facilities. Under these harsh conditions, the chances of full recovery and adaptation to their new reality become nearly impossible, while growing psychological pressures make their situation even more tragic.⁹

2. Testimonies of Gaza’s Women: Between Life and Limb Amputation Amid Genocide

PCHR’s staff obtained 17 testimonies from women who lost their limbs due to Israeli attacks on Gaza. These testimonies document both the severe physical and psychological harm inflicted on them. These women describe the terrifying moments they endured during airstrikes and explosions, as well as their new reality after amputation, especially given the collapse of the healthcare system and the lack of psychological support.

Women have been deprived of their normal lives, their roles as mothers, and their ability to work and be productive, suddenly finding themselves facing a harsh reality of disability and dependency. With no medical or rehabilitative support available, they have no choice but to wait for the Israeli siege on Gaza to end, hoping to get prosthetic limbs that may restore a part of their stolen lives.

⁷ Ibid, p.20.

⁸ Ibid, p.21.

⁹ Information obtained by PCHR's staff from testimonies of women who lost their limbs.



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Fadia al-Dahdouh: Not only was my leg amputated, but my heart as well, after I lost my husband and children

On 07 October 2023, we were in our house in al-Zaytoun neighborhood, unaware that our lives would be turned upside down. A few days later, our area became extremely dangerous amid

relentless bombardment, having no choice but to flee. We began our harsh journey of displacement, seeking refuge in my father's house in the Old City, believing we would find our haven, but we did not. We were soon forced to evacuate again, escaping bombings and moving from one place to another, with no expectation of survival.

When the bombardment silenced a bit situation in al-Zaytoun neighborhood, we decided to return to our house, as the constant displacement had overwhelmed us. In August 2024, we returned, hoping to restore our lives. At 23:10, on 12 September, I was praying al-'Isha while my children slept next to me, my husband was in his room, and my son Ahmed was in another room. Suddenly, I heard an explosion that would later change everything. The missile penetrated all five floors, destroying them, before exploding on the 1st and 2nd floors. Nearby houses also sustained severe damage. When the incident occurred, I was unaware of what had happened, but within 15 seconds, I realized that our house had been targeted.

A wooden door fell on my back, and stones and rubble piled on top of it. I felt something hot flowing from my back and leg, so I knew that I was injured. I struggled to open my eyes and searched for my children, Tala, Rama, Abdul Karim, and Fouad, where they were sleeping, but all I found was a pile of rubble covering the place. In that moment, I realized they had been killed, as everything around me had turned to rubble.

While I was about to bid farewell to life, I heard a faint sound, enough to pull me back from the edge of despair: "Mom... Mom." It was Fouad's voice! I gathered my strength and screamed, "I'm here... here!" but he didn't hear me. Then, I heard a trembling voice that shattered my heart: "Say goodbye to me before you die, Mom." I didn't know that the force of the explosion had thrown him into the neighboring house. He wasn't alone. I looked ahead and saw Rama lying in the corner of the living room. When the ceiling collapsed, rubble fell on her. Fortunately, she survived but couldn't move. I heard her voice trembling from beneath the rubble: "I'm alive, but my leg is amputated." Despite the overwhelming pain, I tried to reassure her. I told her, "I've lost my leg too." I wasn't sure if what I said was true, but I felt that I had lost one of my legs.

I was anxiously awaiting the arrival of my son Ahmed and my husband to rescue us. I was confident they were fine, and they would come to rescue us, but neither of them arrived. The neighbors began pulling me out from under the rubble. They transported me to our neighbor's car, where I saw Fouad beside me. The scene felt like a nightmare, as his legs were melting out of severe burns. We were taken in a neighbor's car to al-Ma'madani Hospital. Shortly after, another vehicle carrying my husband and my daughter Rama arrived. My husband had sustained

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a severe head injury, and he was pronounced dead five minutes later. Before passing away, he whispered, "Where are my children? Where are my children?" As for Tala, Ahmed, Maram, and Abdul Karim, they were not among the wounded. They were killed in the first moments of the bombing.

When I was admitted to the operating room, my left leg was there but completely torn apart, and I was bleeding. The doctors tried to stop the severe bleeding, but they could not. At 01:00, I underwent surgery and was given 13 units of blood, as I had lost a lot. The doctors had no choice but to amputate my left leg below the knee, as there was no hope of saving it.

Additionally, I sustained deep injuries, shrapnel wounds, and first-degree burns. My right thigh suffered third-degree burns and required surgery. I lost hearing in my left ear and had a ruptured eardrum in my right ear. I also sustained severe burns on my right toes, which require urgent surgery.

That night, the pain was unbearable, but what was more agonizing was thinking about my children: who had I lost and who had survived? Despite that, I knew the battle was not over. My daughter Rama (16) sustained serious injuries, as her leg was amputated. My son Fouad (12) suffered third-degree burns on his legs, and his right leg was fractured, requiring an external platinum fixation. He also lost his thumb in that same leg.

Until this moment, I still can't believe that I lost my four children and my husband. The worst feeling one can experience is loss and longing. They passed away without me having the chance to see them for the last time, without being able to hug them or say goodbye. Whenever I remember them, tears overwhelm me. My children were smart and top of their classes. Their loss shattered my life. I am not only enduring psychological pain, but also physical pain due to my injuries. The suffering in the operating room wasn't the hardest part; it was what came after: the excruciating pain of amputation, the open wounds, and the daily torment of changing the dressing. The wound dressing changes take at least half an hour, during which I scream out loud from pain, sometimes losing consciousness. I left the hospital with my children and moved to my relatives' house in the Old City, where I still live today.

The psychological pain was harder than the physical one. I tried to console myself for the loss of my children and my husband, but the helplessness I feel is tearing me apart. I am no longer able to care for my injured children. I cannot take care of Fouad, so I sent him to his aunt to do so. It wasn't an easy choice; it broke me inside. I receive heartbreaking calls telling me that Fouad is sick and can't eat. Afterward, I cried a lot, unable to go to him, to feed him with my own hands, to reassure him as any mother would. Just being near him could improve his condition, but I cannot, due to the amputation that has deprived me of even performing the simplest duties as a mother.



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Currently, I attend physical therapy sessions, fighting to receive rehabilitation for a prosthetic limb. I've submitted a request to get a referral for treatment abroad, as I want to stand up again, not for myself, but for my children. I want to be able to care for them, raise them, and protect them. This dream, despite its simplicity, has become my daily battle, and I have no choice but to fight until I achieve it.¹⁰

Fadia al-Dahdouh (35), widow

Wafaa' Nabhan: Aid Worker Becomes in Need of Aid

Since 07 October 2023, our lives have changed and turned into a constant nightmare. We have been deprived of our most basic rights, our life, and our livelihood. The war also stripped us of any sense of security and imposed a reality filled with fear and death. Despite being surrounded by destruction, I did not lose hope. I fully understood that the war had taken much from us, but it did not take away my passion for helping others. I never thought about taking a break from my work; instead, I continued working tirelessly despite the increasing dangers. My job as a project coordinator at the Islamic Association required constant attention and extreme caution, especially with the intense Israeli airstrikes on the shelters where I worked. I endured all of this in full belief that helping people was greater than any concerns. I had to balance my responsibilities to my family with my work in distributing aid for orphans and providing water for the displaced. I had a deep desire to make a difference, even in the hardest times.

During the IOF's third ground invasion into northern Gaza, which was the most brutal ever, we endured hellish conditions. On 05 October 2024, the bombing terrifyingly intensified, and the IOF advanced into Jabalia in a horrific way, threatening and turning everything into hell. I was at home, and despite our earnest attempts to hold onto hope, we had no choice but to flee to my sister's house in al-Ghobari area in Jabalia, which was far from Jabalia camp's borders. We believed that it would be safer, but death chased us at every corner. We were witnesses to the IOF's barbaric attacks that indiscriminately targeted everything and everyone.

During those dark days, the IOF committed horrific massacres against several families, including the 'Aloush family, who lost about 70 members; the Hamouda family, who lost about 70 members; and the Qaddoura family, who lost about 100 members. Most of the victims were children, women, and the elderly. We lived in constant fear, never knowing if we would survive to see the next morning. Despite the harsh conditions, I continued working at Halawah School in Jabalia until 12 January 2025.

¹⁰ A testimony obtained by PCHR's staff on 23 February 2025 in the Prosthetics, Paralysis, and Orthotic Devices Center in Gaza City.



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On 10 January 2025, two days before I was injured, part of Halawah School was targeted by IOF. We took it as a warning. We stopped working for two days and then resumed our work on Saturday, 12 January 2025. At 14:10, I was sitting in front of the computer, with my colleague Walaa Hamouda sitting in the opposite side. Suddenly, I felt an intense heat in my body, which began to get heavier. Dust and smoke filled the place. I didn't realize what had happened until I found myself inside an ambulance.

I asked them to take off my shoes, even though I wasn't wearing any. I felt as if my feet were carrying an unbearable weight. Then, I lost consciousness. I only woke up to the voices of my mother and brother at al-Ma'madani Hospital, reassuring me that I was fine. The truth was devastating, as my right leg was torn apart with only some external tissues holding it together, so it was immediately amputated. As for my left leg, there was hope of saving it, so I underwent surgery, and a platinum plate was implanted in it. The platinum plate remained for two weeks in my leg, but the tissues failed to heal, and the bone shattered. The doctors had no choice but to perform another surgery, during which my left leg was amputated as well. Since then, I have undergone surgeries three times a week, spending nearly two hours in the operating room each time for wound cleaning and dressing. I am placed under full anesthesia as the doctors also treat a deep injury in my back caused by shrapnel.

In this tragic incident, my colleague Walaa Hamouda was killed, along with two others, while about tens more were injured. This tragic incident had a profound and unforgettable impact on me.

After my legs were amputated, my right leg required another amputation surgery due to an infection. However, the doctor advised me to postpone the surgery and have it done outside the Gaza Strip. I am now waiting for permission to travel for treatment. But life is no longer what it used to be. During the day, I struggle to move my frail body on my bed, tossing and turning in desperate attempts to regain some semblance of life. At night, the pain intensifies, especially when I need help from my mother and sister to perform the simplest tasks. Additionally, I sustained shrapnel injuries and had stitches on the left side of my back, which have left marks and constant pain.

After waking up from the surgeries, I began living a new life without legs, a life filled with psychological pain that is difficult to endure. Every passing moment reminds me of the horrific incident, and I can't stop thinking about it. Just recalling what I went through overwhelms my heart, causing me to break down in tears, as if I am enduring other wounds that will never heal. Sometimes, I blame myself: "If I hadn't gone to work, this wouldn't have happened." When I think about what I've lost, sadness overcomes me, as if I am trapped in a cycle of psychological pain that I cannot escape. Despite all the pain and suffering I endure, I believe life will go on. I



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think about recovery, returning to my normal life, going back to work, helping others, and living freely as I once did.¹¹

Wafa Nabhan (34), divorced

Jannat Ma'rouf: In a single moment, I lost my parents, my leg, and my life.

Since 07th October 2023, our lives have been turned upside down. Nothing remained the same. Our dreams faded and our hopes collapsed due to the war. On the morning of 07 October, we were forced to flee our house, located in a border area, due to intense bombing. We sought refuge in my grandfather's house in the Jabalia al-Bala area, believing it to be safer. But soon, we realized there was no safe place across the Gaza Strip. Death was constantly haunting us, and the war devastated everything.

The security situation continued to worsen, forcing us to move from one place to another. On 22 September, three months after holding on for dear life, we arrived in Hamad City in Khan Yunis. Then, on 24 December 2024, we began a new chapter of suffering and loss. My father and I were awake, while my mother and my siblings Farah, Anhar, Mos'ab, and Mohammed were sleeping. My siblings and I were on one side, while my father and mother were on the opposite side. The sound of IOF warplanes was terrifying, as they hovered above us. Suddenly, I heard the sound of a missile. There was no time to escape, as the missile directly hit us, tearing apart our tent and setting it on fire.

When the missile exploded, all I could do was scream my parents' names, but they didn't reply. I felt a burning heat in my legs, as if the flames were consuming my bones. The pain was unbearable feeling like my brain would explode out of severe pain! I tried to look at my leg, but it was torn apart. The ambulance arrived, and they carried my sister Farah and me together. Through the excruciating pain, I screamed at the paramedic, "Take my brain! Take my brain!" I was on the verge of losing my sanity. The paramedic tried to calm me down, but nothing could ease the agony I was in. We reached Nasser Medical Complex, where I was immediately admitted to the operating room, from 22:30 to 4:00. When I finally came out, I was a different person. My right leg had been completely amputated, while platinum plates were implanted in my left leg after a complex surgery that doctors barely managed to complete. I also lost my little toe.

On 25 December 2024, I woke up barely able to speak, asking, "Where are my mom and dad?" They stuttered, and their eyes revealed the truth. In the morning, they quietly said to me, "They were killed." I couldn't believe it. I insisted on seeing them. In the elevator, I felt like I was falling into an abyss. I saw my father first; he was calm. I stroked his head with a trembling hand, but

¹¹ A testimony obtained by PCHR's staff on 01 February 2025 at al-Ma'madani Hospital in Gaza City.



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helplessness overwhelmed me. Then they brought my mother. They refused to uncover her face, saying her body was torn apart. I said goodbye to her from afar, my eyes filled with tears, my hands unable to touch her.

The hospital was not just a place for treatment; it was a battlefield I fought alone against pain every day. Every two days, I would be fully anesthetized and taken to the operating room to change the dressings. The pain was unbearable! I remained in this condition until January 25, 2025. During the surgeries I underwent, doctors tried to save my left leg, which had been eroded by burns on the heel. They implanted a substitute material instead of platinum plates, but it failed, and they had to remove it. With each operation to repair my leg, the pain intensified. On 29 January 2025, the doctors performed a skin graft from my thigh to my left leg. The surgery was successful, thank God, as if it were a small victory amidst a series of endless agonies. Afterward, the doctor informed me that I could leave the hospital. On February 11, 2025, I left the hospital, carrying my pain and endless suffering with me.

The truce that everyone had been waiting for was another stab in my heart, as it came too late. My mother had always wished for us to return safely to northern Gaza, but we came back without her and without my father. When I returned to Gaza, I wished I had stayed in the hospital. The destruction in the north was beyond my ability to comprehend. After I was injured, my life was never the same; I lost the ability to do even the simplest things on my own. Changing my clothes, going to the bathroom, and even moving became challenges that required help from others. I could no longer move without someone accompanying me; I lost my independence completely and became someone dependent on others for help. Long days pass, weighed down by thoughts: How did the IOF deprive me of living as a normal person? How did they turn me, in an instant, into a person with a disability? It's an indescribable feeling for a girl my age. I was deprived of my foot, my freedom, and the life I once knew.

My future now depends on getting a prosthetic limb and a bone graft in the heel of my left foot. Without this, I won't be able to stand or walk, even with crutches. I obtained a medical referral for treatment abroad, but so far, no one has contacted me to inform me if I am allowed to travel. The waiting is unbearable, and time is not on my side. Every day that passes without medical intervention means more pain, more loss, and a growing sense of being just numbers in the long waiting list of suffering, despite everything we have endured.¹²

Jannat Ma'rouf (20), single

¹² A testimony obtained by PCHR's staff on 22 February 2025 in her house on al-'Atatrah Street in Beit Lahia.



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Shatha Abu 'Aita: The IOF Stole My Future – From Dreaming of Studying Medicine to Becoming an Amputee

I was eagerly awaiting this year, as it was supposed to be the most important year of my life; the year I would achieve my dream of becoming a doctor. I imagined myself as a doctor, saving lives and alleviating the pain of others. But my dream collapsed after October 7th and turned into an endless nightmare. From the very first moments of the war, we began our journey of displacement. We sought refuge in Jabalia Elementary Boys' School C, where we stayed until 10 December 2023.

That day, the IOF raided the school and fired a barrage of missiles. I saw the missile heading towards us. I heard the explosion and then silence engulfed the area. Moments I can never forget. Seven people were killed, including my brother Yehia. He was right next to me; I had just heard his breath moments before, and now... he's gone. How can I forget this scene? How can I erase from my memory the moment I saw the missile fall on him?

I sustained an injury in my left leg, and it was severely bleeding. I remained lying in the schoolyard for hours without any first aid. The pain was unbearable. Those inside the school were screaming, but no one could hear them. and the screams echoed throughout the area, but there was no one to hear. We buried my brother in the schoolyard. After that, the IOF forced us to evacuate the school, but I couldn't move due to my injury.

The IOF besieged the school from all directions, accompanied by heavy gunfire. My uncle placed me in a donkey-drawn cart while I was bleeding, trying to get me out of that hell. We were an easy target for the IOF, with gunshots flying over our heads. I didn't know if I would survive. After two days, we were forced to move again to a school in Jabalia. I remained there without any medical care or even painkillers to relieve my pain until 14 December 2023. My condition worsened as my leg became infected.

On 15 December, I difficultly managed to reach al-Shifa Medical Complex. All hospitals in northern Gaza Strip were out of service after being targeted by the IOF or due to lack of medical resources. I could not move, and the pain was unbearable.

When the doctors examined me, they discovered that the blood vessels in my leg had been severed. The hospital was overwhelmed with the injured, so I had to wait for hours near the bathroom door before they were able to treat me.

The biggest shock was when doctors decided to refer me to the Patient's Friends Benevolent Society Hospital (PFBS) and informed me that they would have to amputate half of my leg. On 26 December 2023, I lost part of my body forever, as if my soul was shattered with it. But the tragedy didn't end there; after five days, my condition severely worsened. The amputated leg became severely infected due to the lack of resources and malnutrition. After the IOF withdrew

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from northern Gaza, I was transferred to al-Awda Hospital, where the doctors decided to amputate the leg above the knee due to gangrene and shrapnel injuries.

I am only eighteen years old. I had limitless dreams and ambitions. I dreamed of studying medicine, helping people, and making a difference. I have lost my future, and my dream has faded away. I live with indescribable heartbreak. I lost my home and my brother, and all my family members sustained injuries. I don't even have a shelter to ease my pain. I returned to school, not as a student, but as a displaced amputee.

I need a wheelchair, medication, a prosthetic limb, and even a medical mattress. I have none of these. Despite all this, I still cling to a thin thread of hope. I believe that I will stand on my feet again, I will walk, and I will continue my life. I will do my best not to let this tragedy steal my dream forever.¹³

Shatha Abu 'Aita (18), single

Mona al-Sdoudi: In one moment, I lost my leg and my parents forever.

Since 07 October, our lives have been turned upside down, no longer resembling the life we once knew. Our greatest hope has become to experience just a moment of safety. The latest war launched by the IOF on the Gaza Strip was unlike any previous wars or escalations; it was the most brutal war we have witnessed since the beginning of our struggle.

Due to intense airstrikes and evacuation orders on our residential area, al-Karama, we were forced to flee on 10 October 2023, moving from one place to another. On 03 July 2024, my father, Yousef al-Sdoudi, was killed after inhaling toxic gases from an airstrike near a school in Khan Yunis. We remained in Khan Yunis for 3 months before being invaded again by the IOF. Afterwards, we were forced to seek refuge in al-Shiekh Khalil School in al-Maghazi refugee camp. With every displacement, we left something behind.

At approximately 21:20, on 15 December 2024, a loud explosion shook the entire area. The vision became unclear due to the thick smoke that followed. It turned out that IOF warplanes had targeted the classroom we were taking refuge in, along with a nearby classroom. We were buried under rubble, with dead bodies scattered everywhere. Amidst the screams and darkness, my mother, Wafaa' al-Sdoudi, along with 10 displaced people in the nearby classroom, were killed. Many others, including my sisters, were injured. I heard their screams, calling for help, as their feet and faces were burned in the explosion, but I was unable to help them. I was unaware

¹³ A testimony obtained by PCHR's staff on 22 August 2024 at al-Ayoubiyia Boys Elementary School C in Jabalia refugee camp.



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of what was happening around me. I found myself being carried by some people. I remember that my right leg was still there.

Her aunt, Asmahan al-Sdoudi, said: “The doctors did their best, but her injury was critical. An external platinum fixation was placed from her thigh to the foot. She was severely bleeding, with her blood levels dropping to 4.5. During her first days at the hospital, she was given about 30 units of blood in an attempt to save her leg, but her condition worsened. Her leg turned into a dark bluish color and began to rot due to the complete loss of blood flow. On 22 December 2024, the doctors made the toughest decision, which was the amputation of her right leg below the knee. There was little hope of saving it, but her condition deteriorated seriously, and her life was at risk. Even performing the surgery was a life-threatening risk. The doctors told us clearly: she might not survive due to severe complications with her blood. But God granted her a new life. This was not the end; it was the beginning of a series of 20 more surgeries, which were performed every two days to clean the wound and prevent her condition from deteriorating further.”

The amputation was not just the loss of a body part; I felt as if I had been deprived of my former life, as if I had been reborn into a world completely different from my own. I spent many months in the hospital, unable to move and completely dependent on others. Even the simplest tasks, like going to the bathroom, seemed like an unattainable dream. On 27 January, I felt a strong urge to prove to myself that I could do it, so I decided to go to the bathroom on my own, using crutches. Unfortunately, I slipped and fell, and this time the fall was painful and unbearable. It felt as though the bone that had started to heal had fractured again, as if I had gone back to square one. As a result, I had to undergo another surgery to implant a new platinum plate.

On 05 February 2025, I left the hospital and returned to my grandfather’s tent in Deir al-Balah, where even the most basic necessities of life were unavailable, especially with my new condition. I then began my physical therapy sessions, during which my heart was filled with pain and sorrow. On 12 February 2025, we returned to northern Gaza, but I did not feel happiness. I wished for the war to end with all of us safe, to return with my mother and father, but the IOF deprived me of that.

The truth I couldn't deny is that the war has not ended for me; it has started again in other forms and in harsher ways. I am still here, trapped between an irreplaceable loss and a merciless reality. I can't do anything on my own; I rely on my sisters and aunts, who help me with changing my clothes and showering. Even when I go to the bathroom with my crutches, there is always someone there to assist me.

The war did not only deprive me of my leg, but it also stole my precious ones. It stole my mother's embrace and my father's support at the moment I needed them the most. After the amputation, I needed someone to reassure me, telling me that I would be fine. I feel a deep depression, as I am alone facing pain, injuries, and disability. My heart is filled with sorrow. I



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cling to a small hope that keeps me from collapsing: that I will travel, I will get a prosthetic limb, and I will return to my life again. To this day, I don't even have a wheelchair to go out and see the world.¹⁴

Mona al-Sdoudi (18), single

Amal: From Lecture Halls to an Amputee

When the Israeli war began on the Gaza Strip on 07 October 2023, we were living in our house in al-Yarmouk area in Gaza City. On 06 December 2023, Israeli tanks were stationed just 500 meters away from our home, while quadcopter drones hovered above, targeting any moving object. This made leaving the house a highly risky endeavor. At 00:10, we were in our four-story house. I was sleeping in the living room on the second floor. There were more than 30 people inside, including my brothers, sisters, and their children, who had sought refuge in our house to escape the bombing and destruction.

I suddenly woke up to the sound of a loud explosion. When I looked down, I found my legs trapped in a large hole created by the missile that had hit our house. The hole was just two meters away from where I had been sleeping. The force of the explosion had pulled me toward it. Dust filled the air, making it hard to breathe. I felt intense pain as I bled heavily from my legs. I was shocked when I lifted one of my legs and realized it had been amputated.

I didn't lose consciousness. My siblings rushed to help me, and my brother, who works as a nurse, was the first to tie my leg to stop the bleeding. After my leg was tied, intense pain overwhelmed me, especially in my left foot. The amputation was below the knee. We then realized that the missile hadn't exploded but had penetrated all four floors of the house without detonating. Immediately, we decided to leave and went to our neighbors' house, which was only four meters away from ours.

The quadcopter drones were heavily hovering above, making it nearly impossible to leave. We tried to contact the ambulance teams and the Red Cross to take me to the hospital, but no one answered. Any vehicle attempting to move was targeted, which made the situation even more dangerous, leaving us trapped in the midst of death and destruction.

I remained at the neighbors' house for over six hours, bleeding and suffering from unbearable pain. They tried to ease my pain by giving me some painkillers, but they were ineffective. Despite the continuous bleeding, I did not lose consciousness. At 07:00, after repeated attempts to contact the ambulance, one finally arrived and transported me to al-Bandar clinic in al-Daraj neighborhood. On my way to the clinic, I lost consciousness due to severe bleeding, so I was

¹⁴ A testimony obtained by PCHR's staff on 22 February 2025 in her house in al-Karama area in Gaza City.



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given a saline solution. After an hour, I was transferred to al-Ma'madani Hospital, but the hospital was overcrowded with the injured, and there were no available beds, so they had to place me on the hospital floor. The doctors were overwhelmed with treating critical cases, as the hospital was filled with victims from repeated airstrikes.

We had no choice but to stay there, as the other hospitals were either besieged by the IOF or had completely ceased operations. At 13:00, I was admitted to the operating room, and my blood level had dropped to 3 due to severe bleeding. The doctors had to perform another amputation, 10 centimeters above the knee, because the bones were completely shattered and could not be fixed. The first amputation had been 10 centimeters below the knee.

Ten days after the surgery, the doctors informed us that we had to evacuate al-Ma'madani Hospital after receiving evacuation orders from the IOF, who threatened to raid the hospital. We had to leave and head to al-Shifa Medical Complex, but we found it out of service after being destroyed by the IOF. We sought refuge in a relative's house near the hospital, where I found myself trapped in pain and suffering, facing an uncertain fate.

On 18 January 2024, I noticed that my amputated leg had become infected and saw maggots coming out of it. I was supposed to undergo another surgery to clean the wound after the amputation, but due to the evacuation of the hospital, the surgery was not performed, and no medical care was available. The bandages were insufficient to clean the wound, which worsened my condition. When my brother, who is a nurse, noticed the deterioration of the wound, he cleaned it without anesthesia. The procedure took 20 minutes, during which I screamed from the intense pain. After the cleaning, my leg's condition stabilized somewhat.

Now, my health is stable, and I am continuing my treatment at the prosthetics center, where I have been undergoing physical therapy sessions since November 2024. Although my condition has stabilized, my journey with pain and suffering is not over. I am still coping with the aftermath of the amputation and its effect on my daily life. At first, I was overwhelmed by shock, sadness, and depression. I felt like my life collapsed in an instant, and I lost a part of myself with the loss of my leg. However, over time, with the constant support of my parents, I began to regain my strength and move past that difficult phase. Still, there are moments when feelings of helplessness and sorrow take over, especially when I think about what I've lost.

I feel helpless after being injured. I used to help and support my mother, but now I am the one who needs help, and my sister is the one who assists me. Before the war, I worked as a teacher in private institutions, but after the amputation of my leg, returning to my job has become impossible. I refuse to accept that I am no longer able to work. Therefore, I am doing everything



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I can to get a prosthetic limb, whether through treatment abroad or within the Gaza Strip, so I can return to my job and regain my independence.¹⁵

Amal (33), single.

Sabreen Abu Saleh: This is how I was forcibly displaced from my house by IOF and lost a part of my body.

When the Israeli war on Gaza began on 07 October 2023, I refused to evacuate my home despite suffering from diabetes, my father's old age, and Nisreen's disability. Later, the indiscriminate bombings made it impossible to stay. On 09 October, we were forced to evacuate, holding my father's hand and pushing Nisreen's wheelchair among the rubble. We fled from death to an unknown destination, beginning a new chapter of the nightmare of displacement and endless suffering.

On Monday morning, I walked for long hours until 18:00, despite having diabetes. This caused painful cracks in my heel, which then deepened and became difficult to heal due to my illness. This was the reason that ultimately led to the amputation. For diabetics, getting injured is not a simple matter; it marks the beginning of a journey filled with suffering and pain. My condition worsened due to the bitter cold and humidity in the place where I was displaced. I had no mattress to protect me from the rough ground or enough clothes to keep me warm. I shivered at night and struggled to endure during the day.

We remained in that situation until September 2023, when the IOF's bombing on Khan Yunis had intensified, and an evacuation order was issued to its residents. At first, we sought refuge in al-Najjar family council and then to al-Hayat School before moving to Siham School near Nasser Medical Complex. At that time, my health severely deteriorated, as I began suffering from severe vomiting and diarrhea, along with a high fever and a sudden drop in blood sugar (Hypoglycemia) and blood pressure (Orthostatic hypotension), until my hemoglobin level dropped to 4. I was transferred from the school's medical point to the hospital, where doctors initially suspected that I had cancer due to my symptoms. However, after conducting several tests, it turned out that I had gangrene in my foot. The doctors attempted to save it, but my condition kept worsening. The greatest fear was that the gangrene would spread to the rest of my body, so the doctors immediately decided to amputate my foot.

Even in the hospital, I did not feel safe, as drones ordered everyone inside to evacuate and indiscriminately opened fire, making movement impossible. I was then transferred to the Gaza

¹⁵ A testimony obtained by PCHR's staff on 24 February 2025 in the Prosthetics, Paralysis, and Orthotic Devices Center in Gaza City.



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European Hospital before beginning a new journey of displacement to the Al-Mawasi area in Khan Yunis, where I endured the cold, severe pain, and an uncertain fate inside the tent where my family and I stayed.

At that time, I felt severe pain and helplessness, as my foot had been recently amputated, and my body was barely adjusting to the loss. The pain was not just physical—it was a battle with a new reality I never chose. I was in a wheelchair, but it was useless on the sandy ground, making it almost impossible to get to the bathroom. I had no other choice but to rely on diapers instead of going to the bathroom on my own. Even taking a shower inside the tent became extremely difficult, as it was faraway and impossible to reach.

My suffering was not only physical. The healthy food I needed as a diabetic was scarce, and when it was available, it was too expensive for me to afford. I also had to clean and disinfect my wound constantly to prevent bacteria from coming back and causing the gangrene to spread again. But how could I do that when cleaning supplies became scarce and then completely ran out? I checked my wound every day, fearing that it might get infected.

During that harsh time, my niece, Azhar, took care of me as if I was a child. She fed me, changed my clothes, helped me bathe, and pushed my wheelchair whenever I needed to move. I was completely dependent on her.

Currently, I have eventually returned to my house in 'Abasan al-Kabira village, but it is no longer the same, and neither am I. My sisters, who have sought refuge in my house, take care of me, cook for me, and clean the house, while I, who once moved freely, cooked, and managed my home with my own hands, have become incapable of doing the simplest tasks. Disability is not just a physical condition, but a psychological state that slowly ravages me.

Fears constantly haunt me. What will happen when my sisters return to their homes after the reconstruction? What if I am left alone, unable to take care of myself? My life before the war was full of movement, ability, and independence. Now, I feel like to be imprisoned in my own body, as I need help from others. I fear that one day I will find no one to help me, and I will drown in my solitude and helplessness.

Sabreen Abu Saleh (46), single.

Dina al-'Ajrami: I lost my hand and my leg... When life becomes a burden after surviving death

When the Israeli war on the Gaza Strip began on 07 October 2023, we were in our house in Jabalia refugee camp. On 14 October 2023, one of our neighbors received a phone call from the IOF, who ordered: "evacuate the area immediately". We had no other choice but to obey their orders, as all the surrounding areas received evacuation orders as well.

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At that time, we began our journey of displacement, seeking refuge in my aunt 4-storey house in al-Trans area in Jabalia and staying on the ground floor. At approximately 21:00, on 16 November 2023, my cousins Lama and Raneen (19), my cousin Mohammed (16), and I were sitting on the balcony, unaware that the next few minutes would change our lives forever. Suddenly, and without warning, an explosion occurred. The Al-Eman building, just 5 meters away from us, was bombed and completely destroyed. The nine-story building, which had been sheltering many displaced people seeking safety, was reduced to rubble in an instant. The explosion suddenly occurred. It was too dark and everything around me vanished. I didn't realize that I was covered in rubble, as I had lost consciousness.

From amidst the destruction, my uncle Mohammed was calling out, "Is anyone here?" I wasn't fully conscious, but his voice woke me, and I screamed, "I'm here... I'm under the rubble!" Then I lost consciousness again. Later, they told me they had thought I had been killed. When they pulled me from under the rubble, I was motionless, my clothes torn, my body bleeding profusely, and even the blanket they covered me with was soaked in blood. At that moment, they called my father to identify me, but he didn't recognize me. My face was completely burned, and my body was no longer the same.

I arrived at the Indonesian hospital at 22:00, unconscious. The doctors carried me to the operating room, where I underwent surgery at 2:00. During the operation, I received five units of blood, as my left leg was amputated above the knee, and I lost four fingers of my left hand and half of the palm, leaving only the thumb. I sustained severe injuries all over my body and shrapnel in my right leg with lacerations that have yet to fully heal. Additionally, I sustained first-degree burns on my face, to the point that my father could not recognize me. I also received 12 stitches on my face.

I woke up early that day after the surgery and found myself lying on the hospital floor. There was no bed for me, nor any place to ease my pain. The hospital was overcrowded, with injured people in every corner and doctors rushing between them. My grandmother Mariam was also receiving treatment in the same hospital. Unfortunately, she passed away that morning, and I took her hospital bed.

In the afternoon of 20 November 2023, the IOF besieged the Indonesian Hospital and stationed at its front gate, monitoring anyone attempting to enter or exit. Quadcopter drones and Israeli snipers were targeting and shooting at anyone who tried to move around the hospital. At that moment, my father realized that staying was no longer an option, so he carried me and took me out through the back door, but death was chasing us. We saw red laser beams piercing the darkness as Israeli snipers attempted to kill us. Additionally, the IOF's warplanes and drones hovered above us and heavily shot at us, inflicting many injuries and killings. We managed to flee and kept walking until we reached Al-'Awda Hospital. We thought we had survived, but the hospital's doors were shut and no longer receiving patients, as it had received evacuation orders.

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An ambulance transported us to Yemen Al-Saeed Hospital, but it was overcrowded and there was no space available. With no other option, we returned to my grandfather's house in the al-Trans area in Jabalia. I was taken there in a wheelchair, while my father searched for doctors or nurses who could come to the house in order to clean my wounds and take care of me.

I was overwhelmed with pain, barely able to move. Can you imagine how I endured being displaced from one hospital to another, from one potential death to another? As commonly known, a patient should receive adequate rest, but I didn't get that. I moved from one place to another. The pain was indescribable. We remained in my grandfather's house until the first ceasefire was announced.

When the war resumed on 08 December 2023, artillery shells fell heavily and indiscriminately around us, forcing us to flee with my father pushing my wheelchair. We sought refuge in a school, but we were soon forced to leave due to Israeli bombing in the area. We continued our journey of displacement until we finally found a shelter near al-Shifa Medical Complex, where we remained until 12 January 2024. On 28 January 2024, we returned to our burned house. We covered its walls with fabrics. It was no longer a proper shelter, but its walls protected us from staying in open areas.

Before my injury, I had a lot of responsibilities at home, assisting my mother with everything and contributing to my family's stability. However, after losing my hand and leg, I became the one in need of help. My parents now care for me, but the weight of helplessness presses heavily on my soul.

At my age, I was supposed to start a new life, become independent, and pursue my dreams, but none of that came true. This feeling haunts me, pushing me into isolation. I have spent countless nights drowning in tears, overwhelmed by concerned thoughts of my condition. I cry when I cannot help my mother, when I realize I am no longer the active girl my family relied on but instead have become a burden. This pain tears me apart from the inside.

I was a special education specialist, working in kindergartens and volunteering at a charitable organization. Unfortunately, my injury disrupted my career. Even writing, which was once a part of me, has become a challenge after losing my left hand—the hand I relied on.

I obtained a medical referral for a prosthetic leg, while my hand cannot be replaced. I am currently following up at the prosthetics clinic to be ready when I am allowed to travel. I hope to get the prosthetic leg, regain some of my independence, and resume part of my life and work as I used to. However, no one provides me with psychological support except for my parents¹⁶.

Dina al-'Ajrami (24), single

¹⁶ A testimony obtained by PCHR's staff on 24 February 2025 the Prosthetics, Paralysis, and Orthotic Devices Center in Gaza City.



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Lama Abu Warda: Despite the amputation... I dream of becoming a doctor and saving the lives of others

In 2023, my life began to turn into a nightmare I never imagined. I was a newlywed, and only forty days had passed since my wedding. I dreamed of a life filled with love and stability, in a small house with my husband, and with children filling the house with joy. But everything shattered suddenly, just as the walls of our home collapsed on top of us. The IOF deprived us of any opportunity to dream or to live.

Since the first day of the Israeli war, my journey of displacement began. On 9 October 2024, my husband and I rented a small apartment in the al-Zaytoun neighborhood. I tried to live each day as normally as possible, convincing myself that we would rebuild our lives and that our days would still be filled with love and life, even though my heart constantly trembled with fear.

On the evening of Friday, 10 January 2025, I had a terrifying feeling. I imagined what would happen to us before it actually occurred. I spent that night trying to push the obsessive thoughts from my mind, but I couldn't. I finally slept in a bad state. At that moment, I didn't know the reason for this feeling—was it due to the horrors we experience every day?

At approximately 23:00, while I was sleeping, a loud explosion occurred, shaking the entire area. The force of the explosion threw my body away. An Israeli tank shell had directly targeted our apartment. We were on the 4th floor, but the force of the explosion threw me and my husband 40 meters away from the building.

When our neighbors came to rescue us, they found my husband Mahmoud and me in the yard of a nearby house, with the rubble of our apartment covering our bodies. I felt nothing with only the sound of the explosion echoing in my head. I immediately lost consciousness and later woke up to find myself at al-Ma'madai Hospital.

My mother was holding my hands tightly, and my brother was standing next to me. I didn't feel any pain in my body. I tried to sit up on the hospital bed and bent my left leg without realizing what had happened to it. For a moment, I thought it was still there, but the truth was harsher than I could imagine. My left leg had been completely amputated in the incident scene. I looked at my right leg and saw platinum plates implanted in it, in a desperate attempt to save it from amputation. I remained in that condition for 12 hours, while everyone had lost hope for my survival due to the severe bleeding. Amid the overwhelming number of injured and the lack of necessary medical resources to stop the bleeding, I was considered nothing more than a body awaiting to be pronounced dead.

On Saturday, 12 January 2025, after hours of continuous bleeding, a medical delegation including surgeons decided to amputate my right leg, fearing that the severe bleeding would



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lead to Septicemia (Blood Poisoning). The operation lasted five hours. I was between life and death, but my body didn't give up. When I woke up from the anesthesia, the first thing I did was check my fingers, counting them one by one, afraid that I had lost any of them. My fingers were intact, but my body wasn't. I looked at my broken body and my soul, which no longer had the strength to scream. I felt a deep emptiness, as if something had been taken from me forever.

Twenty days after being injured, I tried to be brave and looked at myself in the mirror. It wasn't just physical pain, but psychological pain as well, because I still couldn't accept the loss of a part of my body. My dream was to become a doctor to save lives, but how can a doctor move forward without a leg? I felt as though my dream faded along with the amputation. My loss was not only the amputation, but also the loss of my beloved husband, who was my support system. He left me alone in the battle for survival. Despite everything, I still hold on to a single thread of hope: traveling abroad for prosthetic limbs and then returning and walking toward my dream. No matter how difficult the road may seem, I am determined to study medicine and save the lives of others.¹⁷

Lama Abu Warda (19), a widow

Hanan al-Shishi: From a Strong Mother to a Helpless Body After Amputation

I lived in Beit Lahia, but after the Israeli war on the Gaza Strip began, I sought refuge in Girls' Preparatory School (C) in Jabalia refugee camp. On 19 December 2023, the security situation in Jabalia was tragic, as the IOF besieged several areas, including al-'Awda and Kamal 'Adwan Hospitals. On that day, my children, Mohammed and Mahmoud, were visiting my father, who had sought refuge in Khalil al-Wazir School in Gaza City near al-Shifa Street. I was worried about my children, as the security situation was unstable. With every explosion and the constant hovering of IOF warplanes, fear overwhelmed me. I decided to bring my children to the school where I had sought refuge, to keep them close and safe. I went to Khalil al-Wazir School and hugged my children tightly, as if I could shield them from all harm. We took a cart and began our journey back. When we reached the destroyed al-Nazha Street in Jabalia al-Balad, where rubble was scattered everywhere, one of the cart's tires suddenly punctured. I got off and decided to walk to lighten the load, leaving my children on the cart. I walked a few meters ahead, turning back from time to time to make sure they were still behind me. Then, what I had never imagined happened. Suddenly, without any prior warning, an explosion occurred. I never heard the shell when it fell on us. I only felt when my left hand had separated from my body. When I looked down, I saw it dangling, held by a piece of skin. The artillery shell's shrapnel had torn my right leg and left shoulder. I could not understand what I was seeing. The pain was indescribable. In a single moment, my life was turned upside down and everything around me collapsed.

¹⁷ A testimony obtained by PCHR's staff on 03 February 2025 in Al-Helou International Hospital in Gaza City.



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After walking a few steps, I lost consciousness. Five minutes later, people gathered around me, tied my hand to stop the bleeding, and carried me to the UNRWA clinic in Jabalia, as no hospitals were operating in northern Gaza at that time. The IOF had besieged Al-'Awda and Kamal 'Adwan Hospitals, making access to them impossible.

The young men risked their lives to transport me to the clinic, where there were no specialized doctors, no treatments, and no painkillers, while my hand bled profusely. They did their best to stop the bleeding and informed me that I urgently needed to be transferred to a hospital, but amid the siege on Jabalia, that was impossible.

I returned to my tent at Girls' Preparatory School (C), where nurses tried to help me with cleansing solution, but the bleeding did not stop, staining my mattress with blood. My suffering intensified when the IOF besieged the school, and quadcopter drones opened fire indiscriminately around us. We remained trapped inside the school, and my health deteriorated. I bled severely and endured severe pain without any painkillers. The pain was unbearable, causing me to faint multiple times. I cried endlessly, enduring indescribable fear and suffering.

Two days after the IOF besieged the school, the situation outside became calm. We learned that the IOF had withdrawn from the area. At approximately 09:00 on 21 December 2023, I began my nightmare journey to the hospital. I, along with my nephew, my neighbor, my children, and my children's friends, took a donkey-drawn cart. Our journey was terrifying, as dead bodies were thrown onto the streets. I saw dogs scavenging martyrs' bodies scattered everywhere. All street were covered with stones and rubble, so we difficulty could reach al-'Awda Hospital.

When we arrived at the hospital, we were shocked. The hospital had collapsed, with part of it bombed and destroyed by the IOF. The generators were damaged, doctors were exhausted and trapped, and the injured were lying on the hospital floor. I couldn't enter the hospital, so I lay in the hospital yard, where a doctor came to examine me. Unfortunately, he informed me that the only solution to my condition was to amputate my hand. I was admitted to the hospital, where doctors dressed my wounds without performing surgery to me because the generators were damaged. They conducted tests for me, which showed that my blood level was 5 because of the severe bleeding. I was then admitted to the Intensive Care Unit (ICU), where I remained until 22 December 2023. The hospital's generators reoperated, and I was admitted to the operating room at around 08:00. After 8 hours in the operating room, I woke up and found that my left hand was amputated below the elbow.

I bled a lot during the surgery, my blood pressure dropped, and my temperature rose to 40 degrees. I was shivering and felt excessively cold. The doctors covered me with four blankets and those around me told me that I was in danger of death. I cried, fearing for my life. I endured harsh moments that took everything from me, leaving me only with feelings of helplessness and fear.



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I spent four days at the hospital and was discharged on 26 December 2023. I then went to a school in Jabalia refugee camp, where I found myself in an overcrowded classroom sheltering several families. There was no privacy, and the space was too limited to move freely. I had no private bathroom, which intensified my suffering. I needed help from others just to go to the bathroom. I experienced severe pain and was in a bad psychological state, as I required special care. Additionally, the medications were limited, and the available painkillers did not alleviate my pain. Not all the medications I needed were available, which increased my suffering.

On 05 October 2024, while we were staying inside the classroom, artillery shells fell around us, and quadcopter drones directly opened fire at the people, resulting in several martyrs and injuries. On 15 October 2024, we had no other choice but to flee. We sought refuge in our friends' house in Beit Lahia, where we spent the worst night of our lives. The houses were bombed with their residents inside, artillery shells fell heavily everywhere, and quadcopter drones hovered above us.

On 27 October 2024, Israeli tanks surrounded the house where we had sought refuge, and Israeli soldiers threatened us through loudspeakers. We were forced to evacuate without taking any of our belongings—no clothes, no blankets, and no food. We walked while Israeli tanks pursued us, with dust filling the air. We difficulty reached al-Yarmouk stadium that was sheltering displaced people. That night, we slept on the ground without mattresses or blankets, hungry and exhausted.

Currently, my family of 8 and I live in a tent. We only have three thin mattresses and five blankets. The weather is freezing, and we cannot light a fire because the tent is made of nylon. We wait for the sunrise, hoping it will give us a little warmth. One night, it rained heavily, and the rain flooded our mattresses and blankets. We stood the whole night, shivering, unable to do anything.

My 2-year-old daughter could not bear the harshness of displacement. Her health deteriorated due to the bitter cold and cold water. She trembled in my arms, and I couldn't warm her. In that moment, I felt helpless. I rushed to a nearby medical point to get medicine for her. I tried to appear strong in front of her, but inside, I was overwhelmed with sadness.

Before I got injured, I was the backbone of my family. I used to cook, wash clothes, and hold my children close to make them feel warmth and safety. I was a mother who embraced her home with love, but all of this collapsed after I was injured. I lost part of my body, and with it, I lost part of my soul and my motherhood. I can no longer take care of myself or take care of my little daughter.

My sister, who seeks refuge in a tent next to mine, takes care of my children and my husband, who suffers from paralysis. I see her moving between her tent and mine, exhausted and weighed



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down with responsibilities, while I watch her and feel helpless. My son, Mohammed, despite his young age, has had to bear responsibilities. I watch him, and my heart is filled with sorrow.

I feel deeply sad, as I am no longer that strong mother. I live in a whirlwind of sorrow and helplessness. I feel guilty because I can no longer hug my children with both hands, nor wipe their tears with my amputated hand. I fear the day when I will have to return to my home without my sister by my side. How will I take care of my children on my own? How will I live as a helpless mother?

I am overwhelmed with pain, and the shrapnel in my body reminds me every moment that I am amputated. I need a medical referral for treatment abroad, and if possible, a prosthetic limb. I want to return to being a normal mother, without disability. I want to regain my dignity and my ability to care for my family¹⁸.

Hanan al-Shishi (46), married and mother of 6 children

Rajaa' al-Nadi: The IOF Took My Soul After Amputating My Leg and Killing My Daughter

On 10 November 2023, my family of 6, including 4 girls and 2 boys, and I were forced to flee our house due to the Israeli bombing and seek refuge in my mother-in-law's nearby 3-storey house on al-Nadeem sub-road, which was safer than ours.

At approximately 09:30, on 18 November 2023, an Israeli warplane targeted my mother-in-law's house with a missile that penetrated the 3rd and 2nd floors before exploding on the second floor. My children and I were on the balcony when the attack occurred. As a result, my daughters Nagham (20) and Su'ad (12) were immediately killed, while my daughter Yara sustained second-degree burns. As for my two sons, they were fine.

When the incident occurred, I felt trapped in an unbearable nightmare. Suddenly, rubble rained down on us, dust filled the air, and my body was buried beneath the rubble. I screamed for my children, but no one could hear me. Later, neighbors told me that when the house was targeted, my leg was amputated, and I lost consciousness. I was then taken to the Indonesian Hospital, far from our home, because al-Shifa Medical Complex was completely besieged by the IOF during their ground invasion into Gaza City on 10 November 2023. Meanwhile, at al-Ma'madani Hospital, doctors were unable to perform surgeries due to relentless attacks and the overwhelming number of injured, leaving us with no choice but to go to the Indonesian Hospital.

At the Indonesian Hospital, which crowded with hundreds of martyrs and injured, I was admitted to the operating room at around 17:30. The room was overwhelmed with injured, and doctors

¹⁸ A testimony obtained by PCHR's staff on 06 January 2025 in al-Yarmouk stadium camp in Gaza City.



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were performing surgeries at a rapid pace. Due to my serious health condition, the doctors decided to amputate an additional part of my leg, which had already been severed by the Israeli missile. Only about 10 centimeters of my leg remained.

All of this happened while I was unconscious. I had no idea that my left leg had been amputated. As I gradually regained consciousness after the surgery, the doctor came to inform me that my leg had been amputated. I was in complete shock; I never expected to hear such news. It felt as if my soul had left my body. My heart was filled with deep sorrow for my condition. But the greatest shock was when the doctor told me that I had to leave the hospital because there were no medicines or painkillers available for my treatment. He said it would be better for me to continue my treatment at home with follow-up by doctors and nurses. It was a harsh moment, I couldn't understand what was happening to me.

On 19 November 2023, I was discharged from the hospital and went to my relative's house in the al-Daraj neighborhood. There, I kept asking about my children. Twenty-two days after I was injured, my sister-in-law informed me that my daughters Nagham and Su'ad had been martyred. They were afraid that this shocking news would affect my health. The news of their martyrdom was even more devastating than the loss of my leg. After their father passed away, I had devoted my life to raising and caring for them. In an instant, Israeli missiles mercilessly took them away from me.

After hearing the news, I was engulfed in a spiral of psychological and physical pain, and my health deteriorated rapidly. A month passed during which I couldn't eat or drink anything. I was in a state of shock, as if the entire world had collapsed around me. As time passed, my condition worsened indescribably. It felt as if I had lost everything in an instant. I had lost my daughters, my leg, and my heart shattered at that moment.

I remained in bed for more than three months, with my body collapsing due to the severe pain and skin ulcers caused after the amputation of my leg.

I was in desperate need of a medical air mattress to alleviate my pain, but the Israeli siege deprived me of having it. On 18 January 2024, the doctor allowed me to go out in a wheelchair. At that moment, my mental state began to deteriorate, and I felt like something humiliating had affected my mental health. I had once been an active woman, moving freely, walking through markets, and doing everything without restrictions. But now, I found myself in a wheelchair, needing help from others to do even the simplest tasks of my day. My life had turned upside down, and I was in shock, unable to fully comprehend what had happened to me.

I cried for my past life, my daughters, and my inability to move, but eventually, I began to come to terms with reality. I asked my son to bring me crutches, and while the beginning was undeniably challenging, I gradually relied on them to move around. I struggled to cope with my new condition and felt hopeless, especially when my children had to carry me. However, I



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decided to be strong and prove to them that I could still live, despite the pain tearing me apart. The beginning was harsh; I felt like I was no longer myself, and others looked at me with pity. Despite this, I stayed strong, like a mother who taught her orphaned children how to be strong. Now, I am facing the reality that I once feared to confront.

After I was injured, my life changed completely. My family and relatives take care of me, and my children have started helping me with everything. I tried to regain some of my duties as a mother, like washing dishes, cooking, and taking care of the house, but I can no longer do everything as I did in the past. My wish now is to continue my treatment abroad and get a prosthetic limb. In May 2024, I managed to obtain a medical referral for treatment abroad from al-Shifa Medical Complex, and since then, I have been waiting to travel and have the prosthetic limb fitted, which will be my new hope. Currently, I continue physical therapy, which is the preparation I need for the next stage. This step represents a new beginning toward recovery, but the road is still long and full of challenges¹⁹.

Rajaa al-Nadi (43), widow.

Buried Leg, Unburied Pain: Farah Abu Geinas Faces Her New Reality

Since 07 October 2023, we had lived in our house in Gaza City in al-Jalaa' neighborhood, fearfully listening to the sounds of bombardment that have not ceased for a moment since the onset of the war. Bombings drew closer day by day, instilling fear deep within us. On 13 October 2023, we received calls and text messages from IOF ordering us to evacuate northern Gaza to the so-called "safe zone" south of Gaza Valley. We grabbed whatever we could from our belongings and left our homes behind. We took Salah al-Deen Street until we reached al-Nusseirat, where we stayed overnight at my paternal aunt's house. From there, we left for Deir al-Balah- al-Jorah area, where my father, his wife and my siblings stayed in a relative's house while I stayed in a nearby house belonging to my father's aunt. Her house was frail with an asbestos roof, too weak to withstand in the face of this devastating war.

It was nearly midnight on 28 June 2024. I was sitting on the couch when suddenly, an explosion occurred but I did not hear its sound. I only found myself drifting between consciousness and darkness; my body was burdened with pain, particularly in my right leg, and tears unstopably streamed down my face. I was told later that I was unconsciously screaming, "come and look at my leg, is there something wrong with it?" Then in a grieving voice, I said, "What did I do? I did not do anything... what is my guilt?" The missile struck only three meters away from me, but it has changed my life forever in one instant.

At that moment, I did not know my foot had been amputated. It hurt me a lot, but it was not there. The bombing had severed it from below the knee, but I had no idea. My father and

¹⁹ A testimony obtained by PCHR's staff on 24 February 2025 in the Artificial Limbs and Polio Centre (ALPC) in Gaza City.



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relatives rushed towards me and quickly carried me to a car that drove me to al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital. I arrived there at around 00:30.

I lost a lot of blood, and I was unconscious upon arrival at the hospital. Later, I was told that my blood level dropped to 6 due to heavy bleeding, so I received many blood units to save my life. The hospital was overwhelmed with injured people while I was left lying on the floor of the Intensive Care Unit (ICU). With no bed to sleep on, I spent the whole night on the cold floor with my injury tightly bandaged in a desperate attempt to stop the bleeding.

On the morning of 29 June 2024, my foot was laid to rest, but I was left to face an unfamiliar and cruel reality. I was discharged from the ICU to the hallway as there was not any empty bed at the hospital overwhelmed with injured people. I was given an IV and some painkillers that were not enough to relieve my unbearable pain. I was shifting between consciousness and awareness, screaming and crying out of severe pain. The hours stretched endlessly, each moment dragging me deeper into the torment.

My suffering continued until my surgery was decided. At around 18:00, I was admitted to the Operating Room, where doctors found out that it was impossible to save my left leg as the bones had been completely crushed and could not be fixed. Unfortunately, they had to amputate above the knee as well. For my right leg, it had suffered a deep wound, and it was treated but left a deep scar which now requires reconstructive surgery.

I am now trapped in a suffocating state of despair. I feel that my life has stopped at the time my leg was amputated, like every path I once walked has been closed off. My future vanished in front of my eyes with all my dreams that I had shaped for myself as if they were gone forever. I spend my time alone, silent and lost in a cycle of dark thoughts. What will I do now? How will I go on with my life? How will my future look like? Will I get married after losing my leg? I am terrified of the future, fearing I will be a burden forever.

I cry all the time, feeling helpless stripped of my will. I can no longer do the smallest things, I always need help, and my sister, Nagham, helps me with everything. Amputation has not only taken my leg away but also my freedom and dignity. I rarely leave home and only go out when I borrow the wheelchair from my neighbor. The more time I spend trapped within these walls, I feel more suffocated. Since I was injured, I have not been given any psychological support which I need more than anything else.

I applied at the MOH for a medical referral for treatment abroad, so I can leave Gaza and have a prosthetic limb that would restore a little from my ability to move. Now, I am undergoing physical therapy at the prosthetics center to prepare me for the next phase with whatever hope



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I can hold onto. What I pray for now more than anything is undergoing surgery very soon and regaining a part of my life, driving me out of all this despair.²⁰

Farah Abu Geinas (22), single

Hala Salah's Indescribable Pain— When War Steals Both a Limb and a Mother's Identity

My journey of displacement started on 02 November 2023, moving from my home in Qizan al-Najar area to my father-in-law's house in Khan Younis and then to Rafah on 10 December. There, I had lived in a tent in Tal al-Sultan neighborhood with more than 10 people, including my baby girl. Amid surging threats to invade Rafah, I went back to Qizan al-Najjar, unaware of the hell awaiting me there.

I spent the most terrifying times in Qizan al-Najjar in Khan Younis. The latter is located near Miraj area in Rafah, which IOF had invaded, turning our neighborhood into a relentless battle zone amid unstoppable bombardment. Shrapnel penetrated the house wall, and bullets reached my kitchen and bedroom, part of which collapsed due to the heavy bombardment. Each day brought a new battle that did not subside until dawn. With each passing hour, fear grew more in our hearts, anxiously waiting for an unknown fate.

On 28 December 2024 at around 19:00, I was lying on the couch when suddenly the ceiling collapsed on my leg. At that moment, I felt it was my last moment in life. I was aware of everything, the pain, the fear and my looming end. I felt severe pain in my right and left legs as if they were engulfed in flames. My husband was lying motionless next to me covered in burns while my baby girl was thrown out of the house by the intensity of the explosion, causing her a skull fracture.

When I was pulled from under the rubble, I saw my leg amputated. It was not only pain that shattered my body but the scene itself. My body was torn apart and with it my life was shattered. I was taken to the hospital, where I spent a month in the ICU surrounded by machines, swinging between death and life. Later, I was taken to the general ward though I needed constant care and monitoring. However, the hospital was overcrowded, and priority was only given to those teetering on the edge of death.

After being discharged from the hospital, I could no longer identify my face, now damaged by scars. I also sustained burning pain in my eyes and ears, and later doctors found out that missile had left me with holes in my ears, partially losing hearing, particularly in the left ear. Regarding my eyes, 3 tiny shards of glass lodged in them. I continued my treatment with Doctors without

²⁰ PCHR received this testimony on 22 February 2025 at the Prosthetics, Paralysis, and Orthotic Devices Center in Gaza City.



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Borders, moving between sessions for amputation care and burns treatment. I am always wondering, I survived but at what cost?

My injury has affected me physically and psychologically, stripping me of my role as a mother. My daughter, who is almost 2 years old, needs me in everything, but when she saw me at the ICU, she stayed away from me crying all the time. She could not recognize me as my face was full of scars, wounds and stitches, building a high wall between us. She is not by my side anymore as she is now with her grandmother in a nearby tent. My husband and my mother-in-law are taking care of me and her. I once was her only source of affection, but now I need someone to take care of me. My wounds are fresh and have not healed yet. Losing my leg was not only about losing a body part but a part of my whole life.

My only hope now is to travel for treatment abroad and have a prosthetic limb that will allow me to walk again, take care of my daughter and bring my life back as well as my work in medical analysis. However, until now, this dream looks so far just like the specialized medications I need for the burns that cover my whole body. These medications are very expensive if found and I pay for them myself amid no kind of support. All I need is my right to an opportunity to heal, live normally and bring the life I once had as well as my identity as a strong and independent woman just as I was before the Israeli missile had stolen it all.²¹

Hala Salah (26), married

Mervat al-Basyouni: Ordeal of Losing Her Leg and Her Husband

We were forcibly displaced to Abu Husein School in al-Fakhoura area, Jabalia refugee camp after our house had been bombed and partially damaged. In their latest invasion, IOF accompanied by military vehicles and tanks raided on 05 October 2024 Jabalia amid heavy air and artillery bombardment.

On 09 October 2024 during the invasion, I decided to leave Abu Hussein School and go home in al-Hawja area to bring some heavy clothes. I left at noon and brought what we needed from home. On my way back to school along with my husband and my sons, Baraa' (6) and Bahaa' al-Deen (4), IOF fired a shell at us. I felt a sudden severe pain in my back and right leg and then fainted as I was bleeding a lot.

I was taken to Yemen Sa'id Hospital, the nearest hospital to the school. An hour later, an ambulance arrived and took me to Kamal 'Adwan Hospital due to lack of medical resources at Yemen Hospital. I was bleeding a lot and my blood level dropped to 3, requiring 4 blood transfusions. Amid no specialized surgeons, I was referred the next day to al-'Awda Hospital due to my serious injury and need for critical surgery.

²¹ PCHR received this testimony on 19 February 2025 at Naser Medical Complex in Khan Younis.



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On 10 October 2024, I was admitted to the Operating Room, where doctors removed damaged parts of my right leg as its bones had been crushed. And due to the poor medical care I received, I took a lot of time to recover, moving between many hospitals amid no specialized doctors and chronic shortages of medicine and necessary treatments. This delay in medical care provision has led to the deterioration of my health to the point where I could still feel sensations in part of my leg. Amputation would not have been essential if my condition had been treated quickly and properly.

After the amputation, I totally broke down. I could not absorb the idea of losing a part of my body and when doctors told me about it, I felt that the ground collapsed beneath my feet. His words stood helpless in front of my tragedy- how can I accept this bitter reality? I had no space for grief or chance to comprehend what happened as I was drowning in my own cycle of physical pain.

I stayed at al-'Awda Hospital for 2 days, enduring dire conditions and overcrowded hallways. They changed my injury dressings, but there was a shortage of medical supplies leaving me with no proper medical care. While changing the dressing, the pain was unbearable, invading each part of my body to the extent that I felt my heart would stop at any moment. I was screaming out of pain that was beyond my ability to bear. Things got worse when some dressings were improperly changed, worsening the infection in my wound. Meanwhile, the necessary treatments were not available as the Israeli siege on the Gaza Strip continued.

After surgery, I was discharged from the hospital overwhelmed with pain and despair. I came back to Abu Hussein School, where I was displaced, but life there became harsher than ever. I am no longer able to do the simplest tasks such as carrying water jerricans or doing daily activities that were part of my routine before my injury. It felt like I had lost control over my life as if my disability has not only affected my body but shattered my soul as well.

Everything became more complicated- even the mere idea of handling house chores, cooking food and taking care of my children is very exhausting. Painful questions never left my mind: how could I return to be the mother I was once? How would I meet their needs amid this whole helplessness? Before my injury, my life was full of hope surrounded with the love of my husband and children. I lived in a stability I had wished would last forever. But in a single moment, the Israeli occupation has destroyed everything, leaving behind a bitter reality. My innocent children are trying to help me by carrying the heavy jerricans with their tiny hands acting like adults, but I see in their eyes helplessness that does not fit their age. Seeing them like this is way painful than any physical pain as if my loss has extended to them, carving scars in their life that will never easily heal.

What made the suffering of my children and mine worse is the arrest of my husband. On 27 December 2024, I lived the worst moment in my life. Kamal 'Adwan Hospital had been besieged, and my husband who was accompanying a patient, was arrested. Ever since the International

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Committee of the Red Cross informed us of his detention in 'Anatot Prison, we have never heard anything about him. my husband was the main provider of our family, and now I do not know if he is still alive or dead. I cannot bear all this pain alone.

What I have been through has turned my life upside down. I feel devastated and each time I remember how my life was before injury; I drown in a wave of pain and grief. I started physiotherapy sessions, standing as a massive challenge but clinging to my only hope that I would have a prosthetic limb to walk again. I dream of staying strong for my sons to be able to take care of them like I did before my injury, despite all what I have endured.²²

Mervat al-Basyouni (34), married

Sharifah Thabet: from Free Woman to Prisoner Trapped in Her Own Body

On the morning of 07 October 2023, we woke up to the deafening sound of missiles, followed by insane artillery shelling and gunfire. We had no choice but to escape. The next day, my family and I carried whatever belongings we could with us and headed to al-Nuseirat at a relative's house. It was only the beginning of a harsh prolonged journey of displacement that has turned our life into a suitcase we take with us from one place to another amid hope fading away with each step we took.

After months of relentless displacement, we were in al-Sultan Mahmoud Camp in Mawasi Khan Younis. On 13 July 2024, I decided alongside my siblings to leave the tent we were sheltering in, searching for calmness amid a living hell. We headed to al-Nos Street in Mawasi Khan Younis, not knowing that death was awaiting us. Suddenly, I felt something throwing me in the air and then I fell on the ground. I only felt my sister's hand holding mine and screaming, "Sharifah, come on, we have to run." But I could not. I looked at her in astonishment and said, "How could I run, and my leg is lying beside me?"

There was no time for absorbing the shock as another missile fell on the gas pipes on the street, causing a strong explosion that pushed me meters away while bleeding and my leg was not anymore a part of my body. A fragment penetrated my abdomen, and flames engulfed my body, leaving me with severe burns. The pain was unbearable mercilessly tearing through my body. At that moment, I felt as if time had stopped, and the sense of surrender overcame me. Death was inevitable leaving me with no hope that I would survive.

Someone found me- he was pushing a wheelchair for a person with disability. He carried me onto it and took me to the ICRC. I started regaining sensation in my amputated leg, not as a part of me but as a burning coal. I screamed in pain: "I want to undergo surgery. Please, put me under

²² PCHR received this testimony on 24 February 2025 at the Prosthetics, Paralysis, and Orthotic Devices Center in Gaza City.



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anesthesia! I do not want to feel this pain!" The situation was catastrophic- I lost a lot of blood, with my hemoglobin level dropping to 5 and my blood type not available. Spending the most terrifying moments of my life, swinging between life and death, they could finally bring me 2 blood units. I was admitted to the Operating Room, but the pain did not end there. Up to this moment, pain consumes me as if my amputated leg is still there, torturing me with phantom pain that never fades. I tried all types of painkillers, but in vain; the pain was beyond my ability to endure.

Every day I wake up to severe waves of pain tearing my whole body apart- pain in my amputation place and pain in my intact knee which now holds the weight of my whole body. I can no longer do my simple daily activities, nor can I stand up alone or even turn over in bed without the help of my niece. Every morning, I wait for her to wake up to make me a cup of coffee, and even if I need a simple thing to do, I have to wait until she wakes up.

Psychologically, I am not the same person I was before amputation. I am someone else, disfigured and incomplete. I am not that strong woman any more freely moving, walking long distances and managing my home in full energy. Now, I am scared from every loud noise, and each unexpected movement makes my heart beat fast, taking me back to the moment of the explosion. I live in a constant nightmare, I see my amputated leg in my dreams, wake up stretching my hand to touch it and then remember it is not here anymore. I cry for no reason, and sometimes I am not able to cry even if I want to. I feel helpless and broken, imprisoned in a body I no longer recognize in a life I no longer control.

My injury is not only physical as it has stolen my independence away, imprisoning me in pain and reliance on others. Yet, I am still clinging to the last glimmer of hope: to get a prosthetic limb that will allow me to walk again and restore a little part of what I lost in the past.²³

Sharifah Thabet (60), single

Eman Abu 'Aser: My Leg Was Amputated—So Were My Soul and Motherhood

Since 07 October 2023, we had been displaced to al-Daraj shelter-turned School after al-Shuja'iyah neighborhood, where our home is located, has become a dangerous zone as it is adjacent to the eastern borders. I had to take the decision to leave home to protect my life and the life of my husband and children. However, displacement was not the end of the suffering story but was the onset of a harsh journey fraught with pain, hunger and fear.

On 29 December 2023, we were displaced at school when goods ran out of markets and if found they were highly expensive that we could not afford amid no sources of income. I only had one

²³ PCHR received this testimony on 02 February 2025 in al-Sultan Mahmoud Camp in Mawasi Khan Younis.



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choice to return home in al-Shuja'iyah neighborhood to bring what little food remained, including flour, sugar, rice, canned food and legumes. I was terrified to death as the area was under the Israeli control and very dangerous. However, I had no choice but to risk my life to feed my starving children.

I went with my husband and children, Dalia and Ibrahim while Amar and 'Oday had gone before us. On our way home, we saw a young man's dead body lying on the ground. For a moment, I thought he was 'Oday. We continued walking gripped with fear until we safely reached home. We started collecting food as fast as we could to go back to the shelter.

Suddenly, the situation turned upside down. Israeli quadcopters roared overhead raining bullets while shells fell like rain amid houses collapsing in front of us. Death was surrounding us from every corner. We stayed home for 2 nights seeking protection from the relentless bombardment and were overwhelmed with fear.

On 31 December 2023 at around 08:00, we decided to leave after the bombings calmed a little. We carried whatever food we could and started walking. When we arrived near Ibn Sultan Mosque in al-Tufha neighborhood, the worst nightmare was awaiting us. Without prior warning, an Israeli drone fired 2 missiles, turning the scene into a living hell. My children Dalia (14) and Ibrahim (12) were killed in front of me and their little bodies were torn into pieces. Meanwhile, Qamar sustained shrapnel injuries in her legs, and my husband sustained several shrapnel injuries. I lost consciousness as I was heavily bleeding and sustaining many injuries throughout my body.

At the time, there were two young men on a donkey-drawn cart. They rushed us to al-Ahly Hospital, which was overcrowded and overwhelmed with injured people, so they refused to receive us. The cart then took us to the Patients' Friends Clinic, which was in no better condition - full of casualties and refused to receive us as well. Finally, we arrived at al-Shifa Hospital, where doctors said I had a fracture in my right foot, severed tendons and deep wounds across my body. I waited for a week to have surgery, during which, they had placed a platinum fixator in my right leg and treated the other. I went back to the shelter so that my daughter Nibal, who is a nurse, would take care of my wounds.

After surgery on 07 January 2024, I had to go back to the shelter as the Israeli tanks had advanced near al-Shifa Hospital, leaving me unable to continue the follow-up. At the time, all hospitals and medical facilities across Gaza, including al-Ahly Hospital, were overcrowded with the injured, with no space available for them to sleep or have a follow-up for their injuries. Only emergency operations were performed. Meanwhile, medical supplies at the school shelter were not available, increasing my suffering and worsening my health. On 16 January 2024, my right leg turned blue, and maggots started coming out of it. There was no choice but to have an amputation to save my life from gangrene. They amputated my leg and with it they took my soul and motherhood, leaving me imprisoned in my despair and helplessness.

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I have never imagined things will go this way, turning from a strong mother, responsible for her children to a helpless woman in need of help and assistance from her children even in the simplest tasks that I used to do easily. How painful it is to lose my ability to move and find myself incapable of meeting my basic needs after I once was the backbone for my children. Today, after losing my children, Dalia and Ibrahim, I buried part of my soul with them. I spend my days in a shelter with no minimum dignified life essentials, especially for my condition. There is no privacy, no nearby bathroom or hope in sight to escape this tragic reality.

I am in dire need of travel for treatment abroad. My left leg is totally paralyzed due to severed tendons while my right hand is useless due to fractures and severed tendons. Everyday I wake up dreaming of going back home and living a more human life. However, the bitter reality shatters me with no choices left. This is my new reality now- a genocidal war that has stripped me of my responsibility and strength and has thrown me deep into the well of helplessness and need. How painful it is to become a mother grieving the death of her children and incapable to be the support for the remaining ones and even relying on their help. ²⁴

Eman Abu 'Aser (55), married

Rima Abu 'Atiyah: From Rushing to Aid Patients to Stumbling for Her Own Recovery

On 07 October 2023, the war broke out in the Gaza Strip. We stayed in our house in Tal al-Za'atar in northern Gaza, anxiously and silently listening to the sounds of bombings and news of destruction drawing closer. We were not aware then of the danger awaiting us within the walls of our house, which once we thought was our haven.

On 15 November 2023, IOF's fire belts heavily pounded our neighborhood, causing the houses to collapse and turning everything into ruins. Amid smoke and dust, I along with my family could get out from under the rubble, not believing we had survived. I only sustained bruises, but the fear overcame any pain. Without hesitation, my father decided we should leave for my grandfather's house in Beit Lahia Housing Project. We rushed out carrying nothing but our surviving souls- no clothes, no belongings and unaware of what was awaiting us.

On 13 December 2023 at 09:00, I went out with my brother, Hasan (20), my uncles, Ziad and Murad, as well as 5 of my cousins. We had decided to go home in Tal al-Za'atar to bring some of our belongings and clothes that we previously prepared for evacuation, but we had not had the chance before to grab them. After one hour of walking, we arrived home at around 10:00.

My brother and I rushed inside and carried the belongings we needed. As we were on our way out, we split a little. I was walking with my brother by my side while my uncles were only a few meters away from us and my cousins remained home. Suddenly and without prior warning, a

²⁴ PCHR received this testimony on 25 December 2024 at al-Daraj School in Gaza City.



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barrel bomb fell in the middle of the neighborhood. In one moment, three houses were destroyed at once, including our house of 300 square meters.

I did not hear the sound of the explosion, nor did I feel anything, just finding myself lying on the ground and bleeding heavily. Both my legs were injured, and my right hand severely bleeding. I looked at my hand to find shockingly that I had lost five fingers. Next to me, my brother was lying drenched in his blood. I could feel unbearable pain, but the shock was even greater.

Neighbors gathered around us, rushing to save us. There were no ambulances, so we were evacuated by donkey-drawn carts to al-'Awda Hospital. My cousins are still trapped under the rubble. It was a harrowing massacre- more than 120 people were killed and tens more were injured amid indescribable destruction.

After half an hour, my brother, Hasan, and I arrived at al-'Awda Hospital with our legs dangling barely attached to our body with a layer of skin. The injuries were below the knee. They were impossible to save, so doctors instantly decided to amputate our legs below the knee. At that moment, I had also lost the five fingers in my right hand due to the shrapnel sprayed by the explosion. The pain was beyond words. I could not comprehend what happened, not able to believe I had lost both legs and would never walk again. The life I had once ended in one instant.

Meanwhile, IOF advanced near al-'Awda Hospital, and the situation got worse. My father feared the hospital would be bombed, so we left the next day, 14 December 2023 at around 06:00. There were no ambulances, so we took a worn-out cart. I was in deep pain, my eyes filled with tears and my heart weighed down by indescribable sorrow. We went to Abu Husein School in Jabalia as displacement was not a choice, but a fate imposed on us by the force of bombardment and death.

I could not bear the pain; my wounds were still open and relentlessly bleeding. The doctors had not cleaned them afterwards. I left the hospital with no painkillers to relieve the pain that was way beyond my ability to bear. I would faint due to the severity of pain, and when I woke up, all I could do to cry.

Upon arrival at the school after prolonged suffering, IOF besieged it. We sought protection inside a crowded classroom with 20 more people, but the quadcopters started raining down bullets. We lay on the ground sticking to each other with our breaths shallowing, anxiously waiting for the bullets to penetrate the walls and windows. Minutes passed like years, and we did not dare to move. When a young man tried to stand up, he was shot directly with a bullet in the head. He died instantly. We had no choice but to wait, and waiting death is harder than death itself.

We remained like that until the afternoon of 16 December 2023 when the IOF finally withdrew. They left us behind in a devastating condition. We had not eaten or drunk anything. There were no medicines or bandages to change the wound dressings. Hunger and pain ravaged our bodies.

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I was in an indescribable condition, pain tearing my body apart and fear consuming me. Those were the hardest three days in my whole life.

We remained in Abu Hussein School after all what had happened, but my suffering did not end there, it had become worse. The amputation had been done improperly as my exposed bones started draining fluids unstopably. The pain got worse, and internal abscesses emerged at the ends of my amputated legs, making my condition deteriorate day by day. I went to the doctors at al-'Awda Hospital for a check-up, and I underwent two surgeries for cleaning the wounds. However, the problem was not totally solved, and now I need another surgery because fluids have accumulated again and leaked from the bones.

On the evening of 05 October 2024, the bombardment on Jabalia escalated, and warplanes were hovering at very low levels, rendering our stay there impossible. At dawn on 06 October, upon IOF's threats to target Abu Hussein school, where we were seeking shelter, we left for my grandfather's house in Beit Lahia Housing Project.

On 22 October, IOF besieged the area and ordered us to evacuate instantly. We left amid a mass wave of displacement, fully aware that every step we took could be our last.

At the house door, all the displaced gathered. Suddenly, an Israeli drone fired a deadly missile at us. I felt the heat of shrapnel penetrating my right leg while my 10-year-old brother, Hussam, fell on the ground screaming in pain after shrapnel had struck his back. I was on a wheelchair pushed by my sister and mother. There was no time to think or panic- we had to move. As I have experience in nursing, I immediately wrapped the wounds with the gauze I had despite the pain and blood flowing unstopably.

We moved towards Salah al-Deen Street fraught with the threat of tanks and soldiers screaming at us, "move" we were not allowed to stop or pick up anything falling from us- we had no chance to even rest. The road was destroyed, and wheelchairs kept getting stuck in the rubble, but we had no choice but to go on despite all the fear and pain. All the way, bodies were scattered, and the soldiers were relentlessly shooting. We were ordered to head south through Salah al-Deen Street, but we changed our path to al-Shati' refugee camp, where we temporarily sought shelter in a house belonging to my father's friend, who had been displaced to the south. When the displaced returned from the south to the north, we had to leave the house and moved to live in a tent we set up in al-Yarmouk Stadium amid no essential supplies that would help me cope with my health condition as an amputee. The tent does not protect us from the scorching heat or the bitter cold amid no facilities and moving around was incredibly difficult, requiring twice the effort for every simple task. There was no medical care, no assistive devices, nothing.

After my injury, I have suffered a lot from exhaustion and fatigue. My mother and sister were my main source of support. However, my injury has affected me psychologically, experiencing excessive waves of anger and not bearing to speak to anyone. I find myself drowned in my own

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thoughts about the future: will I resume my education? What is awaiting me in the coming days? This feeling is aggravated by the life in tents which lack the minimum life essentials, forcing me into living dire and unbearable conditions.

Due to my health condition, I started thinking about changing my career as I am no longer able to continue as a nurse. I had been always the person aiding others, but now I find myself in dire need of help, deeply affecting my psychological status.

I am always worried about my future and even the idea of getting married occupies my thoughts and concerns me. My injury has weighed down on how I see life, it looks now more complicated. Despite my desperate need for psychological support, there is not any. I applied for treatment abroad to have protistic limbs, clinging to this last opportunity so I will regain a little part of the life I had and pursue my future.²⁵

Rima Abu 'Atiyah (23), single

²⁵ PCHR received this testimony on 09 February 2025 at al-Helou International Hospital in Gaza City.



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3. Legal analysis

Article II of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, as well as Article 6 of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, state:

"Genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial, or religious group, as such:

1. *Killing members of the group;*
2. *Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;*
3. *Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;*
4. *Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;*
5. *Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group."*

The second act of the crime of genocide, embodied in causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group, is defined in international jurisprudence as inflicting severe harm to health, including disfigurement or causing serious injuries to external or internal organs or senses. Examples of such harm include the use of excessive force, such as beatings with rifle butts or injuries caused by sharp weapons. Article II(b) requires that the perpetrator has intentionally caused serious bodily or mental harm to at least one member of the group. According to the general standards of liability, the harm must be inflicted intentionally.²⁶

Regarding mental harm, causing serious mental harm does not require a physical attack or any physical effects of mental harm. This interpretation is supported, first of all, by the wording of the definition, which places the two modalities of conduct on an equal footing. Second, causing serious mental harm as such to members of the group can have a significant effect on the group's social existence. Thus, the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda has rightly assumed that the criterion of mental harm possesses its own separate scope.²⁷

The mental or bodily harm that was caused must be serious. The ICTR has held 'serious mental harm' to mean more than minor or temporary impairment of mental faculties, such as temporary unhappiness, embarrassment or humiliation. Rather 'a grave and long-term disadvantage to a person's ability to lead a normal and constructive life' is necessary; whether this is the case must be decided by taking account of all circumstances surrounding the individual case. It is, however, not necessary that the harm be permanent or irreversible.²⁸

Inflicting serious bodily harm to women who have lost their limbs: the amputations suffered by women in the Gaza Strip have met the criteria for severe bodily harm as a crime of genocide

²⁶ **Previous reference:** *The UN Genocide Convention: A Commentary*, paragraph 98.

²⁷ Ibis.

²⁸ Ibis, Paragraph 99.



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as these women have suffered from a permanent disability and severe harm inflicted to their health. Testimonies documented by PCHR and integrated within this report have proven that women, who lost their limbs, lost their ability to move and have been deprived of leading a normal life as well as their fundamental roles in motherhood, work and productivity. These women suddenly find themselves in the face of a bitter reality of helplessness and dependency amid a total collapse of the healthcare system and no access to rehabilitative services alongside IOF's ongoing and strangulating siege on the Gaza Strip, which restricts entry of medical supplies and denies them of treatment abroad. With their suffering exaggerating under such circumstances, recovery remains a complicated and prolonged process, leaving them with lifelong scars.

Inflicting serious mental harm: the impact of amputation exceeds the bodily harm and initial trauma and causes a permanent disability that inflicts long-term psychological consequences, including social isolation, hopelessness in future, and feeling of not being able to return to a normal life. For a woman, psychological impact is even more severe as she endures compounded challenges related to her reproductive and social role. Amputee women suffer from profound psychological distress stemming from their feeling that their role has become incomplete. These feelings lead to excessive anger, shifting mood, extreme sensitivity, depression and profound and long-lasting psychological trauma. Feelings of frustration and despair may push some into self-isolation, further worsening their mental state and reducing their ability to actively participate and effectively contribute to rebuilding and developing their communities.²⁹

Meanwhile, injured women endure more severe social, economic and cultural challenges than men. Women with disabilities are viewed as unqualified for marriage or might be abandoned by their husbands due to their disability. Moreover, these women face hardships that impede their access to medical care and rehabilitation either due to social traditions which restrict their mobility outside home, their families unaware of the importance of providing these women with assistive support for they remain at home or not affording their treatment and transportation costs. This discrimination exacerbates women's suffering and hinders their ability to cope and reintegrate into society.³⁰

Women's testimonies featured in the report reveal that losing a limb was a deeply traumatic experience that shook their sense of stability and profoundly altered their self-perception and outlook on life. The suffering did not end with the moment of amputation; rather, it became an ongoing struggle that shadowed every move and attempt to restore their normal lives. Many have felt that amputation stripped them of an important part of their identity and trapped them into a cycle of despair, devastation and fear of the future. Moreover, many had a feeling of being a burden weighing down their families, becoming unable to do their daily tasks without help and

²⁹ Interview with Hashem al-Modalal, psychiatric and director of development and planning department at the mental health hospital, 26 February 2025 in Bandar Clinic in al-Daraj neighborhood.

³⁰ Charlotte Lindsey, International Committee of the Red Cross, Women Facing War, P138



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thereby affecting their roles as mothers as they cannot anymore take care of their children as they used to before the amputation. Others confirmed that psychological endurance is way more severe than physical suffering as they have experienced acute episodes of depression, anxiety, mood swings and social isolation. Despite all this, some are clinging to a faint glimmer of hope- however distant it seemed amid the current situation in the Gaza Strip- dreaming that one day they might have a protistic limb which will give them the opportunity to restore part of their life before.

Due to the severe impact of amputations on civilians, including women, international law and humanitarian organizations emphasize the importance of providing them with specialized care. The injured in times of conflict due to gunfire, shrapnel or explosives need urgent and effective medical care before being evacuated to the hospital followed by immediate surgical procedures and physical rehabilitation services. Often, Amputations and landmine-related injuries not only cause permanent disabilities but psychological trauma, making rehabilitation a dire need for their reintegration within their families and societies and resumption of their normal life. Rehabilitation includes providing them with protistic limbs in addition to medical, psychological and social rehabilitation to help survivors overcome the impact of helplessness and trauma.³¹ However, this protection with its forms has not been available for women who have lost their limbs in the Gaza Strip. They were left to endure devastating physical and psychological suffering without offering them any urgent and adequate medical or psychological care.

Deliberately inflicting bodily and mental harm to members of the group: women's amputations were caused by IOF's deliberate use of warfare designed to inflict the maximum harm to civilians, including weapons spraying shrapnel at widescale, causing permanent and serious injuries. These indiscriminate attacks have resulted in limb amputations among 391 women as reported by the MOH until the writing of this report. These destructive and deliberate military attacks embody openly clear statements by the Israeli leaders on the extermination of the Gaza Strip population. Since 07 October 2023, women in Gaza have become direct victims of the crime of genocide amid Israeli leaders' clear and explicit statements of their intent to annihilate them as part of this genocide. Among those statement was Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's reference to the biblical story of the Amalek's' extermination by the Israelites. He declared: *"The soldiers of Israel are committed to completely eliminating this evil from the world for our existence and for the good of all humanity. You must remember what Amalek did to you. We are committed, we remember, and we fight"*³² On 03 November 2023, Netanyahu reiterated the reference to Amalek in a message to Israeli soldiers and officers, stating: *"Now go, attack Amalek, and destroy everything that belongs to him. Do not spare anyone—kill both men and*

³¹ Ibis, Charlotte Lindsey, International Committee of the Red Cross, Women Facing War, P138

³² Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in an official press conference broadcast on the Israel PM YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IIPkoDk6isc>.



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women, children and infants, cattle and sheep, camels and donkeys."³³ These statements explicitly reflect genocidal incitement against civilians, including women, by committing killings and inflicting harm and destruction. Moreover, IOF's ongoing perpetration of genocidal acts, despite the ICJ's decision to stop violations that may amount to a crime of genocide, including the second act of it, explicitly confirms its systematic intent to continue genocide with disregard for international legal obligations.

Conclusion and Recommendations:

Israeli attacks during the genocide in Gaza have inflicted severe bodily and mental harm to women as Israel has deliberately used high destructive weapons designed to spread shrapnel at widescale, leading to severe injuries among civilians. PCHR's staff has documented in its report 17 cases of women who have lost limbs due to these attacks. These weapons resulted in immediate loss of limbs among many women while their metal shrapnel penetrated bones and tissues, leading to late amputations. Amid the Israeli siege and collapse of healthcare system, injured women's access to urgent and adequate medical treatment and rehabilitation has become almost impossible, deepening the impact of their injury, impeding opportunities for recovery and rendering any future interventions more complicated.

Beyond the bodily harm, amputations cause profound and lifelong mental harm. Women are experiencing depression, anxiety and PTSD amid no adequate psychological support. As a result, women can no longer lead a normal and constructive life, thereby restricting their active participation in society as well as undermining job and education opportunities for them. This has also affected their roles as mothers, facing increased marginalization and undermining their contribution to construction and development.

In light of the above, PCHR calls for:

1. The international community to assume its legal and moral responsibilities by complying with the International Court of Justice's ruling in South Africa Vs Israel Case and exert pressure on Israel to implement a ceasefire and end the genocide against the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip.
2. States to impose a comprehensive arms embargo on Israel, including the suspension of all arms trade agreements- whether for import, export, or transfer. Moreover, the transfer of dual-use items that could be used to commit genocide against the occupied Palestinians must be prevented. Therefore, any state abstaining from taking these measures is considered complicit in the crime, requiring accountability and punishment under Article III of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide.

³³ South Africa Vs Israel Case before the International Court of Justice on Israel's alleged violations of its obligations under the Genocide Convention in the Gaza Strip. Page 60



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3. Obliging the international community to fully comply with the International Criminal Law rules and global justice principles and take decisive measures to hold Israel, its leaders and those responsible for committing grave international crimes against the Palestinian people accountable and bring them to justice before international and national courts. Inaction in this regard fuels impunity and undermines the rule of law worldwide.
4. The international community to take decisive measures to face the illegal Israeli occupation of the occupied Palestinian territory in accordance with the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the legal consequences of Israel's policies and practices in Palestine. This requires reconsideration of international community's relations with Israel to ensure that its illegal occupation is not supported, including suspending or revoking treaties that reinforce the occupation or apartheid. Moreover, those involved in crimes must be investigated, including dual nationals serving in the Israeli forces, to achieve justice and accountability.
5. Scaling up international efforts to ensure immediate and unconditional reopening of Gaza's crossings to evacuate the injured women, including amputees, and guarantee their access to urgent and adequate treatment abroad, particularly amid the destruction of the healthcare system and ongoing Israeli siege. The ongoing closure of the crossings constitutes a deliberate crime that exacerbates the injured women's suffering, prolongs their recovery and deepens the impact of their disability. Moreover, safe and sustainable evacuation corridors must be established for the entry of medical supplies and international relief teams to stop the total devastating collapse of Gaza's healthcare system.
6. Ensuring an inclusive rehabilitation programme for amputee women in the Gaza Strip. This programme should provide advanced prosthetic limbs within a sustainable healthcare system that includes physiotherapy services and mobility rehabilitation alongside psychosocial support to ensure their recovery from trauma and enhance their ability to adjust. This program must also integrate an economic empowerment plan, including vocational training opportunities adapted to their conditions, to ensure their financial independence and prevent their marginalization within their families and societies. Moreover, it is essential to provide these women an inclusive social environment through initiating awareness campaigns that confront discrimination, change stereotypes of amputee women and strengthen their integration in public life. Provision of such services in a safe and sustainable environment is a humanitarian and human rights commitment enforced by international law. It is also a dire need to alleviate the suffering of these women and protect them from the long-term consequences of the disability forcibly inflicted on them.



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