

MISSING FUTURES



Save the Children

THE URGENT NEED TO PROTECT GAZA'S CHILDREN & SAFEGUARD THEIR FUTURES





Young girl observes a gathering with Save the Children and people of Rafah, Gaza.

CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	4
Key Findings	4
Key Recommendations	5
INTRODUCTION	6
IMMEDIATE THREATS TO CHILDREN'S SURVIVAL	8
Lack of Newborn and Maternal Healthcare	8
Harm from Explosive Weapons	10
Starvation and Dehydration	12
Lack of Access to Healthcare	14
LASTING HARM TO SURVIVING CHILDREN	16
Mental Harm	16
Lack of Access to Education	18
Broader Impact on the Future of Gaza	20
CHILDREN'S DRAWINGS	22
LEGAL FRAMEWORKS	24
International Humanitarian Law	24
International Human Rights Law	24
Grave Violations Against Children	25
The Genocide Convention (1948)	25
Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC)	25
RECOMMENDATIONS	26
Parties to the Conflict	26
Government of Israel	26
International Community	26
United Nations	27
SAVE THE CHILDREN'S RESPONSE IN GAZA	28

Front cover photo:
Sacha Myers/Save the Children

Children walk down the destroyed streets of Khan Younis, the Gaza Strip where homes, schools, health facilities and infrastructure have been completely destroyed.

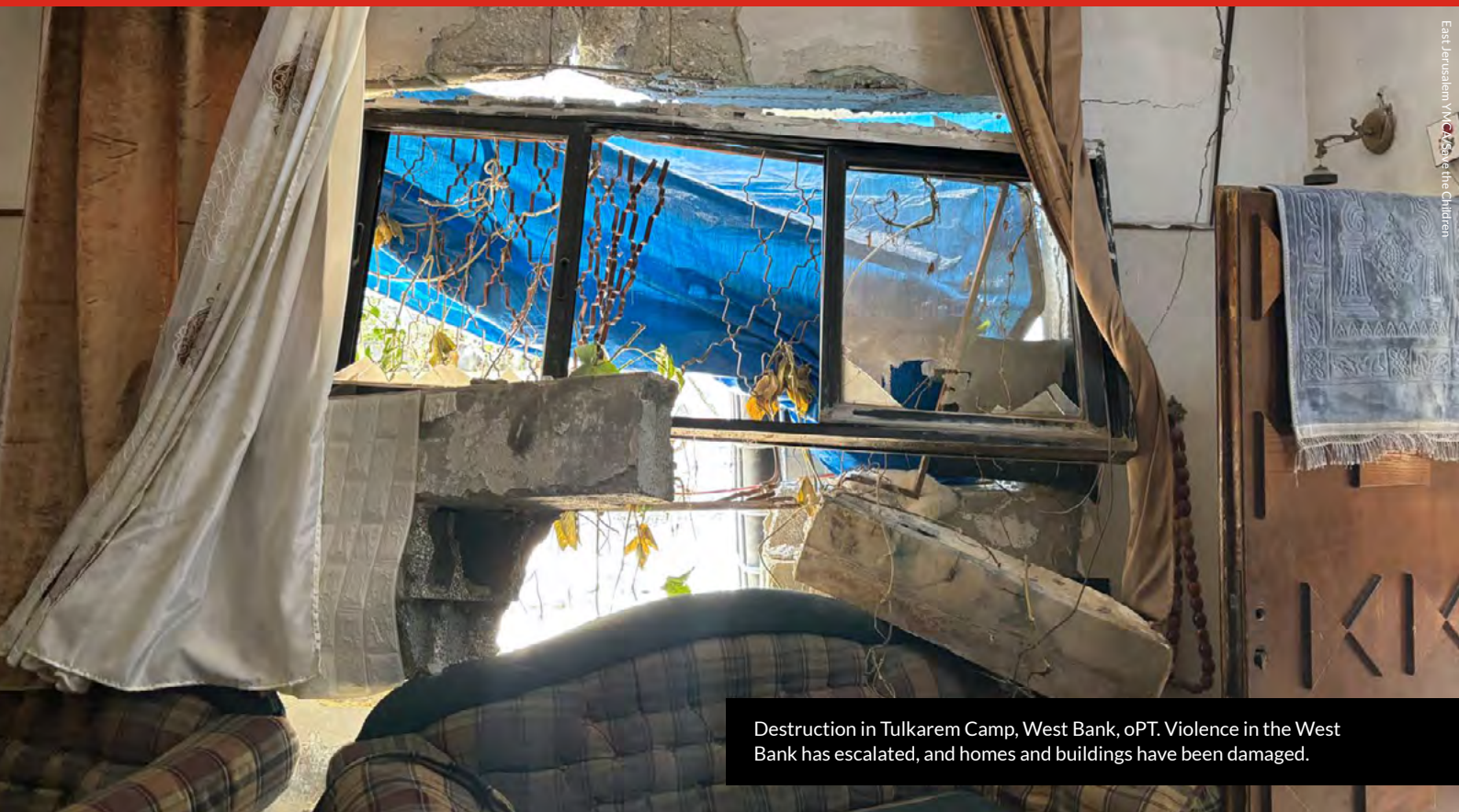
*Names have been changed to protect identities.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The ongoing armed conflict in Gaza has inflicted unprecedented and potentially irreversible harm on Palestinian children, with consequences that threaten not only their individual futures but the very fabric of Palestinian society for generations to come. While all parties to the conflict have committed violations of international humanitarian law (IHL), this paper focuses on the systematic undermining of Palestinian children's fundamental rights as enshrined in IHL and international human rights law (IHRL). The conduct of Israeli forces in Gaza has exacerbated a humanitarian crisis to levels of unprecedented magnitude, with particularly concerning implications for children's rights.

KEY FINDINGS:

- Immediate Threats to Survival:** Children in Gaza face acute risks from explosive weapons, starvation, disease, and lack of essential services. [UN experts have also documented deliberate targeting and extrajudicial executions of children in places of refuge or while fleeing. Children have been found by the UN to be the main victims of the hostilities, with children aged five- to nine-years-old most represented in the verified fatalities.](#) The destruction of medical facilities and the Government of Israel's systematic denial of humanitarian access have led to a catastrophic health crisis that disproportionately and uniquely impacts children.
 - Widespread Destruction:** The Israeli government's conduct has eviscerated Gaza's infrastructure, including homes, schools, hospitals, and essential services. This destruction has profound long-term consequences for children, depriving them of a safe and healthy environment, access to education, and healthcare necessary for healthy development. The UN Commission of Inquiry has concluded that the Government of Israel has *'perpetrated a concerted policy to destroy Gaza's healthcare system as part of a broader assault on Gaza, committing war crimes and the crime against humanity of extermination.'*
 - Lasting Harm for Surviving Children:** Malnutrition, inadequate healthcare, and constant exposure to violence are inflicting lasting damage on children's physical and cognitive development. The mental health crisis threatens to create a generation traumatised beyond recovery. The widespread destruction and interruption of education jeopardises children's prospects and the long-term social and economic development of Gaza.
 - Lower Threshold for Harm:** Children are uniquely vulnerable to the effects of conflict, with a significantly lower threshold for harm compared to adults. This heightened susceptibility must be a central consideration in protection efforts, assessments, investigations and accountability mechanisms.
 - Systematic Erosion of Palestinian Futures:** The cumulative impact of these harms to children represents an existential threat to the continuity of Palestinian society, cultural identity, language and values, culture, and identity. [The UN Human Rights Office \(OHCHR\)](#) stated that Israel's strikes have *'destroyed fundamental social structures and support networks of Palestinians in Gaza, raising inferences that Israeli forces also intended to weaken the overall cohesion of the Palestinian community in Gaza.'* The widespread and systemic nature and scale of the damage inflicted on children is compelling evidence that international law is not being adhered to.
- Today's children are tomorrow's adults.** They are the future of their communities and societies. The futures of Gaza's children – and by extension, the future of the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt) itself – hang in the balance. To safeguard these futures and prevent further irreparable damage, urgent and comprehensive action from the international community is needed.



Destruction in Tulkarem Camp, West Bank, oPT. Violence in the West Bank has escalated, and homes and buildings have been damaged.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. All parties must implement an immediate ceasefire.
2. The Government of Israel must end its unlawful presence in the occupied Palestinian territory within 12 months in line with the timeline outlined in the [UN General Assembly resolution](#) on adherence to the [Advisory Opinion from the International Court of Justice \(ICJ\)](#).
3. All parties must ensure unfettered humanitarian and commercial access throughout Gaza.
4. All UN Member States must support relevant international accountability mechanisms to investigate and address potential war crimes and any violations against and affecting children, recognising their lower threshold for harm.
5. All relevant stakeholders must develop child-centred recovery plans addressing immediate and long-term needs, through an inclusive process.
6. Donors should increase foreign assistance funding for child protection, education, and mental health services.

By implementing these recommendations, we can begin to address the grave and long-term disadvantages imposed on children in Gaza and work towards restoring their ability to lead healthy, normal and constructive lives. The international community has both a moral and legal obligation to act swiftly and decisively to protect the futures of Gaza's children.

The stakes could not be higher – we are fighting to preserve Palestinian children's lives, futures, potential, and collective identity.

INTRODUCTION

The conflict in Gaza has inflicted indescribable harm on children, compounding vulnerabilities created by the Government of Israel's 17-year blockade. The current conflict began on 7 October, 2023, when Palestinian armed groups launched attacks in Israel, killing and injuring civilians, as well as taking people, including many children, hostage. Armed groups have also indiscriminately fired rockets into Israel. These attacks did not “[happen in a vacuum](#)”, but rather in the context of an ongoing military occupation of the Palestinian territory by the Government of Israel – since deemed to be unlawful by the [International Court of Justice in its Advisory Opinion](#) – and the life-limiting blockade of the Gaza Strip.

The International Court of Justice (ICJ) has observed that there is a [plausible risk of genocide being committed by the Government of Israel](#). Similarly, the UN Special Committee to investigate Israeli practices affecting the human rights of the Palestinian people [concluded that](#) ‘the policies and practices of Israel... are consistent with the characteristics of genocide’. Children have been killed, maimed, starved, forcibly displaced, deprived of education, subject to the cruellest forms of inhumane and degrading treatment, and have witnessed and endured atrocities. These experiences will have grave and long-term consequences on children's ability to lead healthy, safe, and constructive lives – if they survive at all.

As ‘the prerequisite for the enjoyment of all other human rights,’ the right to life must be effectively protected. In Gaza, children's fundamental right to life is under threat. As of November 2024, at least 14,100 children have been killed according to the Ministry of Health in Gaza¹. Gaza is home to the largest cohort of child amputees in modern history, while the medical evacuation of children requiring treatment and the entry of medicine and prosthetics have been largely blocked by Israeli authorities. Many more children have been killed by [secondary impacts](#), such as starvation, disease, and lack of access to services. The Government of Israel has conducted a sustained military campaign against Gaza, involving systematic and widespread bombardment, destruction of civilian infrastructure, and severe restrictions on humanitarian aid, creating conditions of deprivation for the population.

For surviving children, childhoods have been replaced by trauma and deprivation. Destruction of schools, healthcare facilities, and vital infrastructure has severely disrupted education and key services, and created dire living conditions. Children face heightened protection risks and a pervasive mental health crisis that threatens their development and future prospects. The destruction of Gaza itself – homes, communities, and the environment – leaves children without safe spaces to grow up and develop.

Crucially, the full scale of the immense harm remains unknown due to limited humanitarian access, as Israeli forces have systematically undermined – and attacked – [journalists, human rights monitors, aid workers and civil society organizations](#). UN experts have emphasised that [unlawful attacks](#) on clearly identifiable journalists [appear to be a deliberate strategy by Israeli forces](#) to silence critical reporting. This lack of visibility and monitoring is especially true in northern Gaza, where Israeli authorities imposed a renewed siege starting on 5 October 2024. UNICEF has reported that ‘[the entire Palestinian population in North Gaza, especially children, is at imminent risk of dying from disease, famine, and the ongoing bombardments](#)’, and the UN Secretary General [warned of ‘potential ethnic cleansing’ of the Gaza Strip without decisive action from the international community](#). Only with a definitive ceasefire and unimpeded access will we truly understand the extent of the crisis and what children have endured.

Today's children are tomorrow's adults. Protecting children is essential to safeguarding the future of the entire population. This briefing outlines the unique vulnerabilities facing Gaza's children and the resulting impacts that threaten their futures. It examines immediate survival threats, long-term health consequences, mental health impacts, educational disruptions, and broader societal effects.

By exploring these interconnected issues, we illustrate how this crisis fundamentally assaults and attacks children's futures, with consequences extending to the collective future, cultural continuity, and socio-economic prospects of the whole community. Accountability is at the heart of protection, and justice and reparations are vital to a community's ability to heal, rebuild and move forward. Palestinian children must be at the heart of these efforts.

¹ This is likely to be a gross underestimate as the Ministry of Health has not formally updated verified figures of child casualties in several months.

Summary: Short and Long-Term Consequences of the Conflict in Gaza on Children*

	Short-Term	Long-Term
Lack of Newborn & Maternal Healthcare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased maternal deaths and birth complications • Higher rates of miscarriage, stillbirth, premature birth • Lack of essential care for newborns 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intergenerational cycle of malnutrition and poor health • Lifelong health issues from lack of early intervention • Reduced fertility and reproductive capacity
Harm from Explosive Weapons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High child casualty rates • Severe injuries including amputations, burns, head trauma • Acute psychological distress 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lifelong disabilities • Chronic health conditions • Long-term psychological trauma • Reduced educational and economic opportunities
Starvation & Dehydration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acute malnutrition • Increased child mortality • Weakened immune systems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stunted growth and cognitive development • Lasting impacts on academic achievement • Reduced lifetime earnings (22–45% reduction) • Higher risks of chronic diseases • Increased exposure to illness and disease • Long-term psychological trauma
Lack of Access to Healthcare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Untreated illnesses and injuries • Disruption of routine care and vaccinations • Increased risk of death 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased risk of death • Worsening of chronic conditions • Emergence of preventable diseases • Long-term health complications • Reduced life expectancy
Mental Harm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acute stress, anxiety, depression • Behavioural changes and regression • Difficulty coping with trauma 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher rates of mental illness in adulthood • Cognitive and developmental impairments • Increased risk of negative coping mechanisms and high-risk behaviours • Intergenerational transmission of trauma
Lack of Access to Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Immediate loss of learning • Disruption of social development • Increased risk of child labour 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced academic achievement • Fewer years of completed schooling • Lower lifetime earnings (up to 10% per year lost) • Diminished economic prospects • Reduced protections • Mental harm

*This table presents a summary of the impacts of conflict on children in Gaza as discussed in this briefing and is not exhaustive.



IMMEDIATE THREATS TO CHILDREN'S SURVIVAL

LACK OF NEWBORN AND MATERNAL HEALTHCARE

The ongoing conflict in Gaza has created an environment that severely endangers the health of pregnant women, girls, and newborns. Since November 2023, [the World Health Organization has warned](#) of increasing maternal deaths due to lack of healthcare. Over [65,000 babies](#) have been born in Gaza since October 2023, many without access to essential care. According to the Ministry of Health in Gaza, at least 120 infants have been born – and been killed – during the war. This number is likely to be higher, as many babies were killed before their births could be formally registered, their entire lives unlikely to be counted in any official tolls.

The concerted and systematic destruction of healthcare infrastructure, coupled with [severe food insecurity](#) and chronic stress, has created an environment that gravely endangers both maternal and foetal health. This poses severe and long-lasting threats:

- Developmental Impacts:** Maternal malnutrition [directly impacts](#) foetal development, leading to low birth weight, stunted growth, and cognitive impairments that can last a lifetime. The [critical stages](#) of foetal and neonatal development are extraordinarily susceptible to disruptions, with lifelong consequences for a child's ability to lead a normal and constructive life.
- Increased Health Risks:** The lack of essential supplies, medication, and healthcare workers has left the remaining medical staff overwhelmed and unable to provide adequate care for pregnant women and girls, as well as new mothers. Israeli authorities have [denied the entry of critical medical supplies, including anaesthetics and anaesthesia machines, oxygen cylinders, ventilators and cancer medicines](#). [According to](#) the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East ([UNRWA](#)), of the total – and extremely limited – humanitarian supplies that have entered Gaza since October 2023, just 2% were medical supplies. On 4 November 2024, the United Nations Population Fund ([UNFPA](#)) [announced](#) that attacks on critical hospitals – including Kamal Adwan Hospital, the main provider of emergency obstetric care – have forced the only functioning neonatal intensive care unit in northern Gaza to close. There has been a [300% increase in miscarriages](#), and pregnancy complications that would typically be manageable have become [fatal](#). Preterm births and low birth weights are [increasingly common](#), setting the stage for lifelong health challenges.
- Intergenerational Effects:** Malnourished mothers are [more likely](#) to give birth to smaller babies, perpetuating a [cycle](#) of malnutrition that can affect future generations.

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“We’ve seen the continuous stress and misery taking a toll on women, with some making drastic choices such as self-inducing labour using medication out of fear they might lose their babies if they have to flee again for survival... We had another case of a mother who delivered her child safely and was discharged the following day.

However, she was back three days later when her baby was lethargic, had a high temperature,

was refusing to breastfeed, and had a swollen umbilical cord that was discharging pus. This condition is only common in places with poor hygiene and a lack of clean water. It can be life threatening if untreated as the infection can spread to the bloodstream. Unfortunately, this is not an isolated case.”

Sharifa Khan, a midwife with Save the Children’s Emergency Health Unit.

The constant threat of violence and displacement also creates chronic stress for pregnant women and girls, leading to [higher rates](#) of pregnancy complications. Trauma experienced by pregnant women and girls can cause [hormonal imbalances](#) affecting foetal brain development, potentially resulting in lifelong behavioural and mental health issues for the child.

- **Loss of Reproductive Capacity:** The crisis is affecting not only current pregnancies, but also future reproductive potential. Doctors have had to perform otherwise unnecessary [hysterectomies](#) to save women’s lives, and the [destruction](#) of Gaza’s largest fertility clinic has impacted future family planning efforts through the loss of thousands of embryos and reproductive specimens.



A baby sleeps in a crib outside a tent.

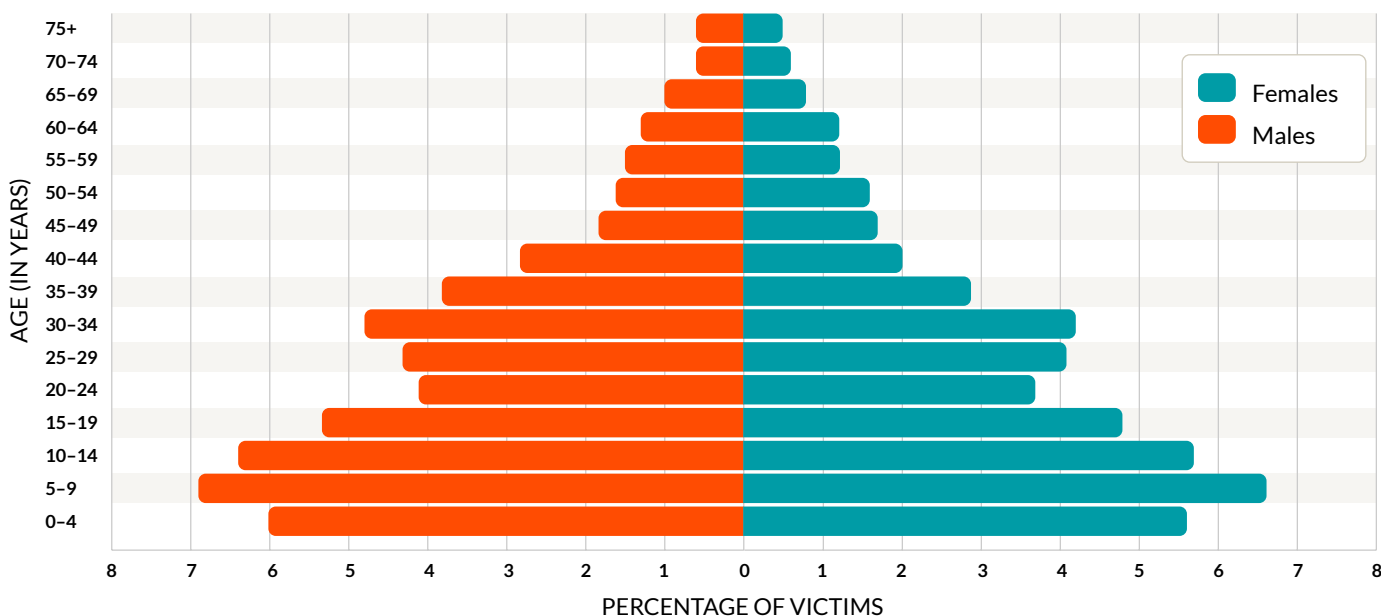
Denying access to newborn and maternal healthcare, and the removal of the conditions necessary to give birth safely, represent a grave threat to the survival and future of Gaza’s population and their ability to reproduce.

HARM FROM EXPLOSIVE WEAPONS

Gaza's dense urban population of 600,000 people in 365 km² has made it particularly vulnerable to the catastrophic impacts of explosive weapons. Since October 2023, Israeli forces have dropped an estimated **75,000 tonnes** of explosives on Gaza, including bombs as heavy as **900 kg**. This use of explosive weapons in populated areas has resulted in widespread and indiscriminate harm to children.

OHCHR has condemned the high number of civilians killed, with its analysis showing that around 44% of verified victims were children. The ages most represented among the dead were five- to nine-year-olds. This was primarily attributed to Israeli forces' use of weapons with wide-area effects in densely populated areas. Of the verified fatalities, about 80% were killed in residential buildings or similar housing.

Pyramid of Age no.1 – fatalities verified by OHCHR killed in residential buildings in Gaza since 7 October 2023



Children's physiological vulnerabilities make them far more susceptible to the dangers of explosive weapons than adults. [Research](#) conducted by Save the Children in different conflict zones has shown that children's bodies are uniquely vulnerable to explosive weapons in several ways. Their smaller size means they can be more easily thrown by blast forces, leading to head, chest and abdominal injuries that are often lethal. Their still-developing organs and weaker skin and musculature increase their risk of severe trauma from fragmentation, shrapnel, and rubble. They also have higher respiratory and heart rates, which can result in more significant injuries from inhalation of toxic fumes and smoke. Overall, children are [seven times](#) more likely to die from blast injuries than adults.

The use of explosive weapons in Gaza has inflicted **grave and long-term disadvantage** on children, severely impairing their ability to lead normal and constructive lives.

- Lifelong Disability:** Children's injuries from explosive weapons often result in long-term debilitating [physical conditions](#), including loss of limbs, blindness, loss of hearing, and brain trauma. Scores of children have undergone amputations, often [without anaesthesia](#) or proper treatment due to the lack of medical resources. These disabilities also jeopardise children's safety in an ongoing armed conflict, putting them at risk of becoming separated from their families, malnutrition, and trauma. According to a UNICEF [partner](#) in Gaza, 'children with disabilities bear the brunt of the situation, where evacuation and response plans did not take their needs into consideration. Many who use wheelchairs are stuck in tents put up on sandy grounds.' In the long run, children with disabilities in Gaza are more likely to experience [stigma and isolation](#). In 2018, UNICEF [estimated](#) 32.5% of six- to nine-year-old children with disabilities in the oPt were out of school compared to

0.9% of those without disabilities, putting them at a lifelong disadvantage compared to their peers.

- **Psychological Trauma:** Children are [more likely](#) than adults to experience traumatic brain injuries from explosions, often leading to [cognitive issues](#) that affect their emotional and behavioural regulation. Among all children exposed to explosive weapons, Save the Children has [documented](#) extensive and complex feelings of grief, anger, self-blame, disbelief, depression, and anxiety. In many cases, these effects have been shown to [persist](#) into adulthood, long after an incident has passed. Children can also be psychologically impacted by explosive violence, even if they do not experience a blast first-hand – a phenomenon called [‘interpersonal exposure’](#).
- **Long-term Exposure:** The danger to children from explosive weapons continues long after active hostilities. The war has left an estimated 37 tonnes of debris. The UN Mine Action Service has estimated it will take at least [14 years](#) to clear unexploded ordnance from the area.

Such ordnance poses a [particular threat](#) to children, who may not recognise the danger and are more likely to handle these devices out of curiosity.

The physical injuries, psychological trauma, and continued exposure to explosive ordnance combines to create an environment where children’s fundamental rights to life, health, education, and development are systematically violated. The pervasive use of explosive weapons in Gaza has created a multifaceted crisis for children, extending far beyond immediate casualties. It has fundamentally altered the physical and psychological landscape of their childhood, leaving behind not just visible scars but invisible wounds that may take decades – or generations – to heal.

SPOTLIGHT ON: PAEDIATRIC AMPUTATIONS

Amputees in Gaza are at risk of fatal complications if they don’t receive proper medical treatment. Many of these traumatic amputations, including on children, are performed without anaesthesia, without adequate equipment, and in poor hygiene conditions. Gaza is currently witnessing the biggest cohort of paediatric amputees in history.

Most of the amputations being performed would have been [preventable under usual circumstances](#). Outside of conflict, amputations of major limbs in paediatric populations [are rare](#). [Studies show](#) that major amputations on children – either on lower or upper limbs – lead to a substantial disfigurement of the amputated limb, carrying with it an increased risk for postoperative morbidity and mortality. The immense psychological impact, including [depression and anxiety](#), are also widely evidenced. Lower limb amputations in particular are often associated with several complications, mostly being bone overgrowth regarding the amputated end of the limb, and leading to permanent internal penetration of soft tissue under load. [Postoperative complications are frequent and often require revision surgery](#). This is not possible in Gaza, risking children – who have already endured severe bodily and mental harm – dying needlessly, and in pain.

Beyond survival, children who have undergone an amputation require [sustained and specialist care from a multidisciplinary team](#) to ensure a future without unregulated pain, and to improve their quality of life and independence. This includes pain management, stump wound care, prosthesis fitting, physiotherapy, psychological support, educational support, and provision of equipment. Prosthetic requirements change as a child grows, and the device should be changed as often as needed, usually once a year. All of this is essential – and must be repeated as the child grows and develops – in helping children to regain self-sufficiency and giving them the best possible chance of participating in all aspects of life. Again, this is not possible in Gaza.

[The WHO says](#) just 12% of equipment needed for injured people – such as wheelchairs and crutches – is available in Gaza. Prostheses have not been able to enter Gaza at the scale and speed required and [the pre-existing prosthetics centres are no longer operational](#), while the evisceration of the health system and its experts renders adequate, long-term support impossible. Children living with disabilities are at heightened risk of being killed or maimed as they face additional challenges when forcibly displaced, especially if ‘evacuation orders’ are not effective, or do not give children sufficient time and safe, accessible routes to flee.



Samar*, 28, and her children eating falafel in the tent where they live in Deir al-Balah, Gaza.

STARVATION AND DEHYDRATION

The ongoing conflict and the systematic denial of humanitarian assistance have pushed Gaza to the brink of famine. According to the latest Integrated Food Security Phase Classification [report](#), the entire population is on the brink of famine. The population facing 'Catastrophic' food insecurity, the highest level, is expected to nearly triple in the coming months. Between November 2024 and April 2025, more than 90% of the population is projected to face crisis levels of food insecurity. Water scarcity is equally dire, with people surviving on just 4.74 litres per person daily, far below the [emergency standard](#) of 15 litres.

The impact on children is profound and potentially irreversible:

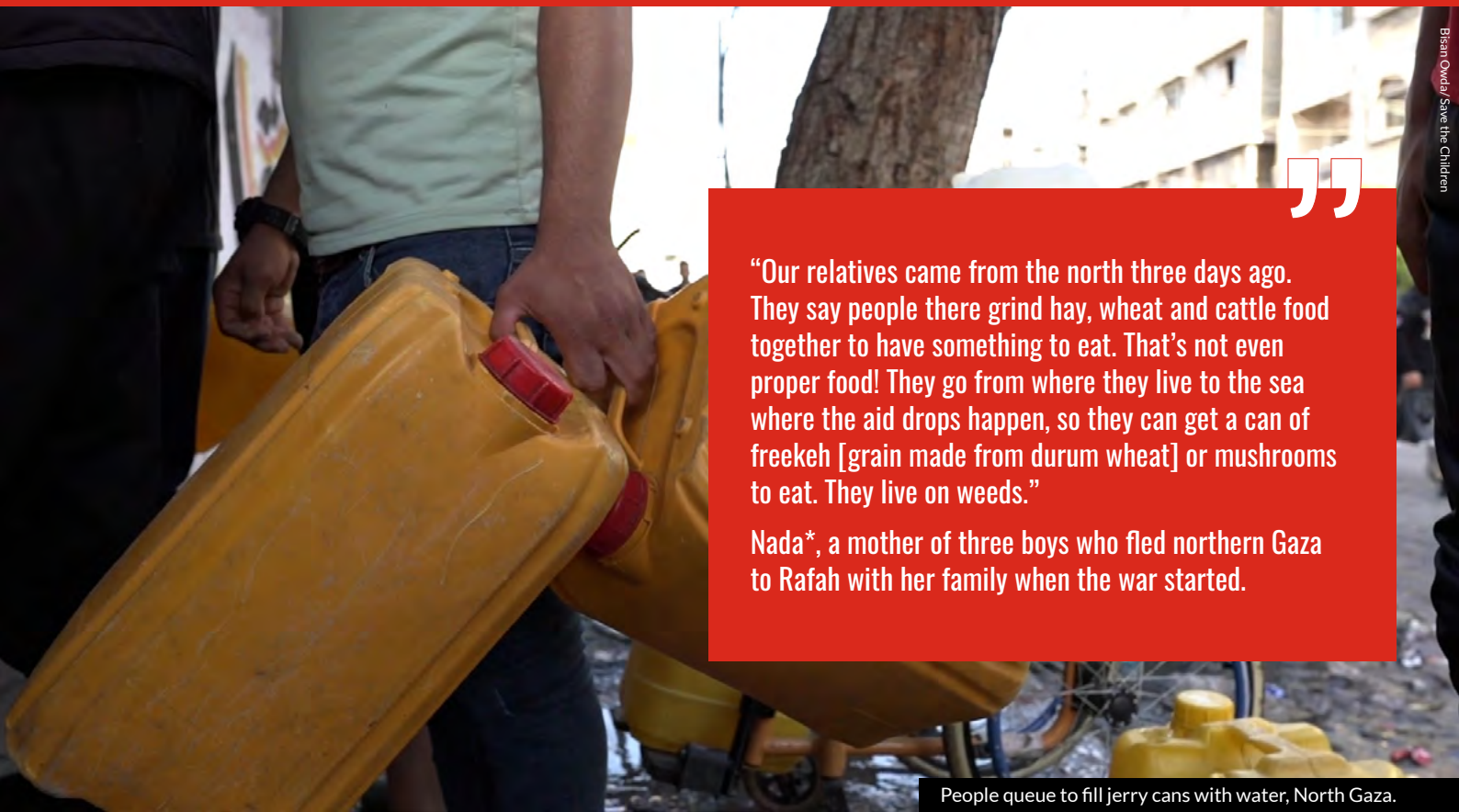
- **Physical Effects of Acute Malnutrition:** Gaza now has the [highest rates](#) of child malnutrition globally according to WFP. Children can begin experiencing critical effects of malnutrition after just [three weeks](#). In Rafah, Save the Children spoke to Mostafa*, 48, a father of eight. He noted the visible impact of malnutrition on his children, explaining: "The children... lost a lot of weight, did not have energy to play. Even their skin started to get yellowish due to lack of iron and sugar. My 10-year-old son started to develop cracks in his skin, especially around the eyes." Prolonged malnutrition leads to stunting, wasting, weakened immune systems, chronic diseases, and digestive dysfunction. These conditions significantly elevate the risk of death and can have lifelong health implications.
- **Cognitive and Developmental Impairment:** Malnutrition profoundly [impacts](#) children's cognitive development, affecting emotional and behavioural regulation.

These effects often persist into adulthood, permanently altering a child's developmental trajectory.

- **Educational and Economic Setbacks:** [According](#) to the WHO, 95% of households in Gaza are limiting meals and portion sizes, with 64% eating only one meal a day. One potentially severe consequence of such restriction for children is stunting (low weight for age). [Stunting](#) in childhood is [linked](#) to an average loss of 0.7 grades in schooling and a seven-month delay in starting school. This educational disadvantage compounds over time, affecting future opportunities. Malnourished children face a 22–45% [reduction](#) in lifetime earnings. On a [societal level](#), endemic malnutrition can reduce a country's GDP by 2–3% or more.
- **Intergenerational Consequences:** The effects of malnutrition can span generations, as malnourished children grow into less educated, less economically productive adults. This perpetuates a [cycle](#) of poverty and disadvantage that affects the entire population.

UN experts have [declared](#) that the Government of Israel has conducted an 'intentional and targeted starvation campaign against the Palestinian people'. The UN Special Rapporteur on water and sanitation similarly [said](#) that Israeli authorities are using water as a weapon of war in Gaza. On 21 November, the ICC issued arrest warrants for the war crime of using starvation as a method of warfare (among other alleged crimes)². The [UN Special Committee concluded](#) that 'Israel has used starvation as a method of war in Gaza.'

2 On the same date, the [ICC](#) also issued an arrest warrant for Mohammed Diab Ibrahim Al-Masri, commonly known as 'Deif', for alleged crimes against humanity and war crimes committed on the territory of the State of Israel and the State of Palestine from at least 7 October 2023.



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“Our relatives came from the north three days ago. They say people there grind hay, wheat and cattle food together to have something to eat. That’s not even proper food! They go from where they live to the sea where the aid drops happen, so they can get a can of freekeh [grain made from durum wheat] or mushrooms to eat. They live on weeds.”

Nada*, a mother of three boys who fled northern Gaza to Rafah with her family when the war started.

People queue to fill jerry cans with water, North Gaza.

SPOTLIGHT ON: THE LIFE-SAVING ROLE OF UNRWA

In October 2024, a vote on two bills in Israel’s Knesset passed which aim to evict and prohibit UNRWA from operating in Israel and East Jerusalem. This will likely result in the closure of UNRWA headquarters in East Jerusalem and severely obstruct its activities across the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt).

UNRWA is the backbone to the humanitarian response in Gaza, with up to 80% of aid entering via the agency. UNRWA plays an indispensable role in the overall aid response and NGOs, including Save the Children, rely on it for fuel coordination, storage, and physical infrastructure for distributions. It hosts 1.4 million people in its shelters, supplying food and water to children and their families who have nowhere else to go.

Disruptions to UNRWA services contribute to the denial of humanitarian access for children in Gaza – a grave violation under UN Security Council Resolution 1261. Any further disruptions or delays in an already severely hindered humanitarian response will have devastating consequences for children. If UNRWA is no longer able to play its life-saving role, other humanitarian organisations risk losing access to a huge part of the population, likely resulting in a catastrophic gap in assistance, which children rely on to survive.



A young girl holds a plate of food at a UNRWA shelter.

LACK OF ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE

The conflict in Gaza has precipitated an unprecedented healthcare crisis, severely compromising children's access to essential medical services. Israeli authorities have [blocked](#) the transport of many paediatric medications, such as antibiotics, asthma inhalers, and epilepsy drugs, leaving them in critically short supply. Out of 36 hospitals in Gaza, [35 have been out of service at least once](#), [31 have been directly targeted](#), and [11 have been under siege – some multiple times](#). A severe shortage of [fuel](#) and cold chain storage also threatens children's access to care. The Health Cluster has [reported](#) over 1,120 attacks on healthcare facilities since October 2023.

Children in Gaza face dire, and potentially long-term health challenges as a result:

- **Increased Mortality:** The destruction of healthcare infrastructure, lack of medical supplies, and limited access to specialised care significantly increases the risk of child mortality. About 90 percent of children in Gaza lack nutrition and face 'severe' threats to their 'survival, growth and development', [according to UNICEF](#). Children with treatable conditions may face [life-threatening situations](#) due to the inability to receive timely and appropriate care. At least [14,000 people](#) in Gaza, including children, need medical evacuations for health concerns such as cancer, kidney dialysis, severe burns, and acute chronic conditions. However, since May 2024, medical evacuations have almost [completely ceased](#), with few exceptions (just [229 people](#) in this period – between May and November 2024).
- **Inability to Manage Health Conditions:** Due to the destruction of the healthcare system in Gaza, children are unable to receive routine care for childhood illnesses or management of chronic conditions. Inadequate care provided for these conditions has been [shown](#) to lead to more severe disease progression and complications in adulthood, which can significantly impact quality of life and life expectancy. The decimation of healthcare facilities and the [targeting of medical professionals](#) by the Israeli military has left a critical [shortage](#) of paediatric specialists. This is particularly lethal for children with complex medical needs, such as those with cancer or congenital conditions.
- **Reduced Immunity:** The cessation of vaccination programs resulting from the breakdown of the healthcare system significantly increases the risk of outbreaks of preventable diseases like [polio](#). Worryingly, doctors have [confirmed](#) at least one case of polio leading to paralysis in Gaza – a threat looming large over unvaccinated children with limited

access to healthcare. [Research](#) shows that disruptions to vaccination programs and basic paediatric care in conflict zones can lead to outbreaks of preventable diseases, potentially increasing child mortality rates for years after a conflict has ended. Pockets of people without vaccinations have also been [shown](#) to contribute to wider outbreaks and the re-emergence of previously controlled diseases.

- **Increased Vulnerability to Future Health Crises:** The current healthcare crisis is likely to leave children more vulnerable to future health challenges. Weakened immune systems, untreated conditions, and a lack of preventive care may make children more susceptible to diseases and health complications in the future, potentially creating a long-term burden on an already strained healthcare system.

The UN Commission of Inquiry has concluded that the Government of Israel has '*perpetrated a concerted policy to destroy Gaza's healthcare system as part of a broader assault on Gaza, committing war crimes and the crime against humanity of extermination*'.

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“He has a swollen belly and irregular breathing due to an upper respiratory tract infection. [...] This ordeal began two months ago when he was forced to relocate to a tent in Rafah. Shortly after, he started experiencing severe vomiting and diarrhoea. Now, owing to the harsh living conditions in the tents and the dearth of accessible healthcare services, he has been admitted to the ICU and is receiving mechanical ventilation. His mother said: “I am seeing my son dying and can't do anything, it's really heart-breaking.”

Mariam*, a Save the Children staff member told us about her one-year old nephew who is suffering from severe acute malnutrition.



Hospital beds at abandoned medical facility, Khan Younis.



Sandy* (7) lives with two of her siblings and her mother Amal* (35) in a crowded informal camp in the Gaza Strip. They were displaced on the first day of the war in October 2023, and have been displaced several times since then.

LASTING HARM TO SURVIVING CHILDREN

MENTAL HARM

The psychological impact of the ongoing crisis in Gaza on children is profound and, without immediate and ongoing critical services, potentially irreversible. Even before the latest escalation, Save the Children's [research](#) in 2022 found that 80% of children in Gaza were experiencing extreme emotional distress. The research showed that many children were already demonstrating signs of trauma, including nightmares, bed-wetting, selective mutism, and most expressed feelings of sadness and grief. More than half of caregivers reported noticing a trend in harmful coping mechanisms among children and young people, including substance abuse, self-harm (59%) and suicidal thoughts (55%). The current conflict will have inevitably severely exacerbated this pre-existing crisis – but the extreme level of hostilities and insecurity, coupled with the restrictions of providing meaningful follow-up support to children, mean that it is impossible to responsibly and meaningfully carry out large-scale research.

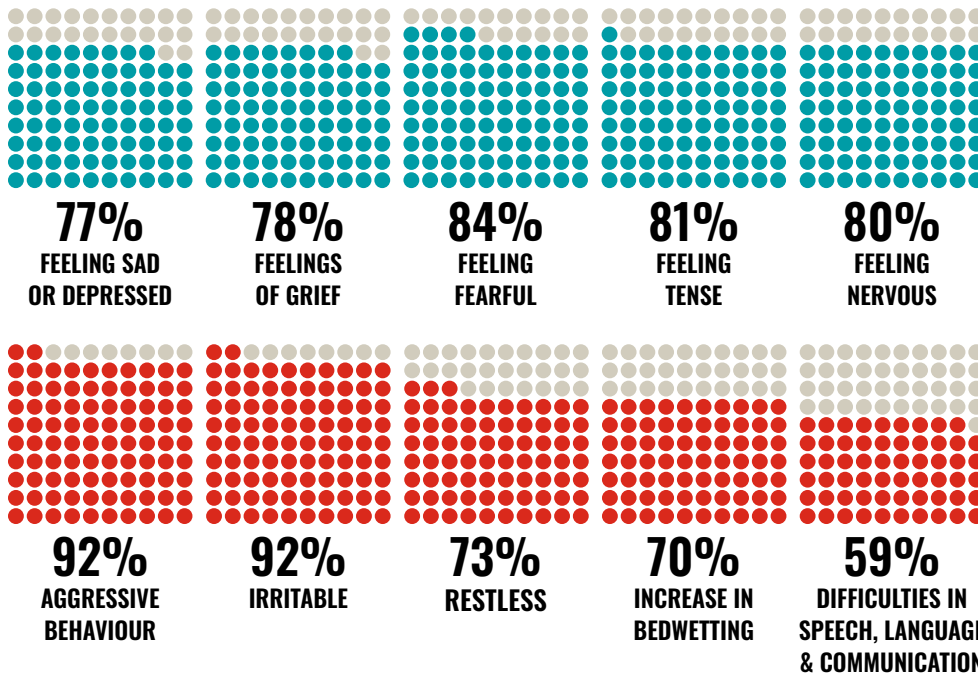
Adding to this trauma is the use of dehumanising language by some Israeli officials to describe Palestinians, including children. Terms such as '[human animals](#)' have been used by public officials, who have also used rhetoric such as making Gaza a '[slaughterhouse](#)' and '[erasing the Gaza Strip from the face of the earth](#).' This type of language not only contributes to a broader [increase in violence](#), but can also have [long-lasting impacts](#) on children's sense of self-worth and identity.

The mental harm inflicted on children in Gaza has severe consequences, including:

- **Trauma and Severe Emotional Distress:** Children are [exhibiting](#) symptoms such as fear, anxiety, sleep problems, bedwetting, aggression, and regression to earlier developmental stages, as reported to Save the Children by parents and caregivers. Many struggle to envision a future for themselves, focusing solely on day-to-day survival. [Studies show](#) that children in Gaza suffered high levels of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (more than half of children), even before the current conflict. With normal coping mechanisms, such as stable routine, opportunities for play, and family support, completely eroded in Gaza, these children face higher risks for chronic mental health challenges.
- **Impaired Cognitive Development:** Exposure to prolonged conflict and trauma can significantly impair children's cognitive development. [Research](#) has found that Palestinian children exposed to war trauma show deficits in attention, concentration, and memory functions, which can affect [academic performance](#) and future life outcomes.
- **Physiological Changes:** Chronic stress from prolonged conflict exposure can lead to lasting changes in children's physical health. Children who experience major stressors in their first decade of life are more likely to have heightened [inflammatory responses](#) in adulthood, potentially

IN 2022

- Children's and young people's feelings (2022)
- Behavioural manifestations of children's and young people's distress (2022)



IN 2022

MORE THAN HALF OF CAREGIVERS REPORTED NOTICING A TREND IN HARMFUL COPING MECHANISMS AMONG CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE, INCLUDING

SUBSTANCE ABUSE, SELF-HARM (59%) AND SUICIDAL THOUGHTS (55%)

A summary of key findings Save the Children found in our report [‘Trapped’](#).

increasing the risk of various physical [health problems](#).

Chronic stress has also been linked to [damage](#) to multiple body systems, including the cardiovascular, immune, and metabolic systems, potentially predisposing children to a range of health issues later in life.

- **Intergenerational Impacts:** A mother's experience of severe trauma can be [directly transferred](#) to her offspring by influencing the developing foetus' hormone regulation and gene expression, potentially predisposing future generations to mental health complications. This underscores the potential long-term, multi-generational consequences of conflict-induced trauma on mental health.

The cumulative impact of these factors can severely impair children's ability to lead healthy and constructive lives. Without proper intervention, the psychological toll may manifest in lasting and severe distress, reduced educational attainment, limited economic prospects, and perpetuated cycles of poverty and disadvantage. In a statement underlining the gravity of the situation, Ann Skelton, the Chair of the UN Child Rights Committee, [emphasised](#): “Some [children] have lost their lives, others have lost their limbs, their parents, siblings, and friends. All children living in the Gaza Strip have lost their childhood. They are traumatised and will forever live with a permanent impact on their mental health.”



“Some of my children can't concentrate on basic tasks anymore. They forget things that I've told them immediately and can't remember things that have just happened. I wouldn't even say that their mental health has deteriorated – it's been obliterated. Complete psychological destruction.”

Amal*, a mother of four children in Gaza aged between seven and 14.

LACK OF ACCESS TO EDUCATION

The ongoing conflict in Gaza has precipitated an educational crisis of unprecedented scale. The Education Cluster [reports](#) that 96% of all school buildings in Gaza have been damaged or destroyed since October 2023. Currently, all school-age children – at least 625,000 – are [out of school](#), having been without access to formal education for the second academic year in a row. [According to the Ministry of Education](#), more than 11,000 students and 440 educational staff have been killed since the beginning of the conflict.

This educational crisis inflicts profound and far-reaching damage on children’s development, societal resilience, and the future of children, society and the economy:

- **Loss of Learning:** The extended period out of school significantly increases the risk of students never completing their studies. For those who do eventually return to school, exposure to conflict could lead to a [drop](#) in overall academic achievement and the number of years of learning they complete. In Gaza, where educational disruptions have been [recurrent and prolonged](#), these impacts are likely to be even more severe. For girls in particular, prolonged school closures [increase](#) their risk of dropping out permanently, [early marriage](#), and gender-based violence, potentially widening existing gender gaps in educational attainment and future economic opportunities.
- **Loss of Protection and Access to Other Essential Services:** Out-of-school children are at greater risk of violence, abuse and exploitation, in particular forms of [sexual and gender-based violence](#) (such as rape and child marriage), harmful work, recruitment into armed groups and other life-threatening activities. Without access to school, children cannot access school meals, have reduced access to water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) facilities, and fewer opportunities to receive psychosocial and mental health support.
- **Reduced Lifetime Earnings:** Research has shown that each year of schooling lost can result in up to a [10% reduction](#) in future earnings. With an entire generation out of school, the cumulative effect could have considerable consequences for the Palestinian economy in the long-term.

- **Loss of Safe Spaces and Cultural Hubs:** Beyond the immediate loss of learning opportunities, the destruction of Gaza’s education system represents an attack on the very fabric of Palestinian society. Schools in Gaza have historically served as vital hubs for cultural conservation and communal life through learning, playing a crucial role in preserving Palestinian identity, history, and values across generations. The attacks on schools, therefore, threatens the ability of Palestinian society to preserve and transmit its culture and knowledge to future generations.

UN Special Procedures experts have raised concerns about ‘scholasticide’ – the intentional destruction of the Palestinian education system. The destruction of Gaza’s education system not only violates children’s fundamental right to education but also threatens the long-term social, cultural, and economic fabric of Palestinian society. Without immediate and sustained intervention to restore and strengthen educational opportunities, an entire generation of Gaza’s children faces the risk of being denied the knowledge, skills, and cultural heritage necessary for building a stable and prosperous future.

”

“One of my sons dreamt of becoming an engineer and the other a policeman. Now one wants to drive a donkey cart – because he sees this reality [...] [My other son’s] dream is selling biscuits in front of the house.”

Samer*, a father.



A destroyed university in Khan Younis, Gaza.



A child standing among a pile of rubble on a street in Gaza.

BROADER IMPACT ON THE FUTURE OF GAZA

The ongoing conflict in Gaza has inflicted profound and far-reaching harm on children, threatening their long-term wellbeing and the future of Palestinian society as a whole. This devastation extends beyond immediate physical dangers, creating a multi-faceted crisis that undermines the very foundations of children's development and future prospects.

- Family and Community Disruption:** UNICEF [reports](#) that at least 17,000 children – 3% of Gaza's population – have been orphaned or separated from their families since October 2023. This massive disruption of family units severely impacts children's emotional, social, and cognitive development. Orphaned children face significantly [higher risks](#) of mental health problems, as well as [violence, abuse and exploitation](#), while those forced into premature caregiving roles experience challenges with normal developmental processes and educational attainment.
- Forced Displacement:** The conflict has led to widespread forced displacement, with [about 90%](#) of Gaza's population forced to flee their homes. This upheaval [disrupts](#) children's sense of security, social networks, and access to familiar support systems. Displacement often leads to overcrowded and unsafe living conditions, [increasing](#) children's vulnerability to exploitation and abuse. The level of [destruction](#) and remaining [unexploded ordnance](#) threaten prospects for safe return, meaning some communities may never be reunited.
- Economic Devastation:** The conflict in Gaza has propelled Gaza from de-development to total economic ruin. The Gaza Strip Interim Damage Assessment report estimates direct damages to Gaza's built infrastructure at USD \$18.5 billion as of January 2024, which will only have increased since. UN Trade and Development ([UNCTAD](#)) [estimates](#) that even when a ceasefire is reached, a return to the 2007–2022 growth trend would imply that it would take Gaza 350 years just to restore GDP to its level in 2022. The International Labour Organisation [estimates](#) an unemployment rate of 79%, plunging many families into severe poverty. This economic collapse directly impacts children's lives, forcing many into child labour. An International Labour Organisation (ILO) [survey](#) found that 7.1% of respondents reported their children to work as a coping strategy, [exposing](#) them to physical risks and stunting their social and educational development. Girls are at [increased risk](#) for early marriage. [Research](#) shows that conflict leads to an increased risk of adverse health and education outcomes for children, which can reduce lifetime earnings.



Boy standing in front of tents, Al Mawasi.

- Environmental Destruction:** The conflict has caused [severe damage](#) to Gaza's already fragile environment, with Palestinians [facing](#) temperatures rising 20% faster than anywhere else in the world. Widespread destruction of infrastructure has led to contamination of soil and water resources, while the collapse of waste management systems poses serious public health risks. The long-term environmental degradation threatens food security, access to clean water, and overall public health, with children being particularly vulnerable to these impacts.

These interconnected factors create a perfect storm that threatens to produce a “lost generation” of children in Gaza. Without targeted interventions addressing both immediate needs and long-term development, the cumulative impact of this destruction undermines the future stability and prosperity of Gaza. The implications extend far beyond the current generation, potentially perpetuating cycles of poverty, instability, and conflict for decades to come.



Children outside the tent where they live in Deir al-Balah.

CHILDREN'S DRAWINGS

A COLOURFUL JOURNEY OF EMOTIONS TOWARDS HEALING

Save the Children's operation of Child-Friendly Spaces (CFS) provides children with the opportunity to heal by expressing their experiences, emotions, conflicts, wishes, and dreams. Through their drawings, they narrate their journey toward recovery, transforming these activities into more than just recreational pastimes but essential steps in their emotional healing.



Dana*, 13, is battling cancer. She drew a place that she wishes could exist in reality, where she can play in peace.



Reem*, 12, witnessed the killing of her best friend. In this drawing, she drew what she felt for her friend and her parents.



Amal*, 10, was displaced from her home in northern Gaza. She dreams of returning to play in the garden with her cat, beneath her favourite apple tree.



Maha*, 14, drew the pain that the people of Gaza feel.
Translation: The tears of the people of Gaza for their city which was completely destroyed.



Qais*, 12, drew his home that was destroyed in the war. He dreams of returning to his house and the flowers he had lovingly cared for. He said, 'The house is gone, and the flowers are gone, but we will rebuild the house and plant the flowers again'.



Yara*, 13, drew people in Gaza on a football pitch, while the world watches what's happening in Gaza.



Lina*, 10, lost her closest friend, who remains buried under the rubble to this day. What pains her most is that she never had the chance to say goodbye.

LEGAL FRAMEWORKS

The violations against children in Gaza implicate several specific legal frameworks and provisions under international law.

Understanding these can help contextualise the severity of the harm inflicted on Palestinian children.

INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW

IHL, primarily codified in the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols, provides **specific protections** for children in armed conflict:

- The Fourth Geneva Convention guarantees **special care for children**, and Additional Protocol I lays down the principle of special protection.³ Article 77 provides that children shall be the object of special respect and shall be protected against any form of indecent assault. Parties to the conflict shall provide them with the care and aid they require, whether because of their age or for any other reason.
- **The principle of distinction** requires parties to distinguish between civilian and military objectives, with attacks only directed against military objectives.
- **The principle of proportionality** prohibits attacks that may cause incidental loss of civilian life, injury, or damage excessive in relation to the concrete and direct military advantage anticipated.
- Article 13 of Additional Protocol II, which governs non-international armed conflicts, provides for the **general protection of the civilian population** against the dangers arising from military operations.⁴

INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS LAW

Several human rights treaties contain provisions particularly relevant to the situation of children in Gaza:

- The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights protects the **right to life** (Article 6) and **prohibits torture** and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment (Article 7).
- The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights enshrines the **rights to education** (Article 13) and the **highest attainable standard of health** (Article 12).
- The Convention on the Rights of the Child provides comprehensive protection for children's rights, including:
 - The right to life, survival, and development (Article 6)
 - The right to an adequate standard of living, which encompasses the provision of adequate food, water and housing. (Article 11)
 - Protection from all forms of violence (Article 19)
 - The right to education (Article 28)
 - The right to health (Article 24)
 - Special protection in situations of armed conflict (Article 38)

³ The provisions setting out this protection may be summarised as follows:

- evacuation, special zones – Art. 14, 17, 24 (2), 49 (3) and 132 (2) GCIV; Art. 78 API; Art. 4 (3e) APII;
- assistance and care – Art. 23, 24 (1), 38 (5), 50 and 89 (para. 5) GCIV; Art. 70 (1) and 77 (1) API; Art. 4 (3) APII;
- identification, family reunification, and unaccompanied children – Art. 24-26, 49 (3), 50 and 82 GCIV; Art. 74, 75 (5), 76 (3) and 78 API; Art. 4 (3b) and 6 (4) APII;
- education, cultural environment – Art. 24(1), 50 and 94 GCIV; Art. 78 (2) API; Art. 4 (3a) APII;
- arrested, detained, or interned children – Art. 51 (2), 76 (5), 82, 85 (2), 89, 94 and 119 (2) and 132 GCIV; Art. 77 (3) and (4) API; Art. 4 (3d) APII;
- exemption from death penalty – Art. 68 (4) GCIV; Art. 77 (5) API; Art. 6 (4) API

⁴ Today, the four 1949 Geneva Conventions—as well as most provisions of the 1977 Additional Protocols—have gained the status of customary international law. This means that even States that have not ratified them must abide by their rules.



Aerial shots/Drone of camp sheltering people who are displaced, Khan Younis, Gaza.

GRAVE VIOLATIONS AGAINST CHILDREN

UNSC Resolution 1612 (2005) established the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM) on six grave violations against children in armed conflict:

1. Killing and maiming of children
2. Recruitment or use of children as soldiers
3. Sexual violence against children
4. Abduction of children
5. Attacks against schools or hospitals
6. Denial of humanitarian access for children

THE GENOCIDE CONVENTION (1948)

The Genocide Convention is an instrument of international law that codified for the first time the crime of genocide. The acts include killing members of the group, causing them serious bodily or mental harm, destroying their living conditions so as to bring about their destruction, and forcibly transferring their children to other groups.

ROME STATUTE OF THE INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT (ICC)

The Rome Statute⁵ codifies several war crimes and crimes against humanity relevant to the situation in Gaza, including:

War Crimes:

- Article 8(2)(b)(i): Intentionally directing attacks against civilian populations
- Article 8(2)(b)(iv): Intentionally launching an attack in the knowledge that it will cause excessive incidental civilian damage
- Article 8(2)(b)(xxv): Intentionally using starvation of civilians as a method of warfare

Crimes Against Humanity:

- Article 7(1)(h): Persecution against any identifiable group or collectivity on political, racial, national, ethnic, cultural, religious, gender, or other grounds
- Article 7(1)(b): Extermination
- Article 7(1)(k): Other inhumane acts of a similar character intentionally causing great suffering, or serious injury to body or to mental or physical health

⁵ The State of Palestine acceded to the Rome Statute on January 2, 2015, and it entered into force for the country on April 1, 2015. The ICC's Pre-Trial Chamber I ruled that the court has criminal jurisdiction in the situation in Palestine, and that its jurisdiction extends to Gaza and the West Bank.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The futures of Gaza's children – and by extension, the future of the oPt itself – hang in the balance. The scale and severity of harm inflicted on these children not only jeopardises their individual lives but threatens the very fabric of Palestinian society for generations to come. To safeguard these futures and prevent further irreparable damage, urgent and comprehensive action from the international community is needed.

If the international community does not intervene soon, an entire generation of children in Gaza will be erased, along with their futures. There must be a ceasefire, and aid must be allowed to reach people. **The ICJ has concluded that there is a plausible risk of genocide being committed, and ordered Israel to desist from the commission of any and all acts within the scope of the Genocide convention. All states have a legal obligation to prevent the crime of genocide.**

The following recommendations outline critical actions needed to address both the immediate crisis and the long-term impacts on children's futures:

PARTIES TO THE CONFLICT

- Implement an immediate and definitive ceasefire to protect civilians.
- Adhere to international humanitarian and human rights law.
 - Respect and protect civilians and civilian objects, including schools and hospitals.
 - Reinstate services critical to the survival of the population, including water, electricity, communications, protection, mental health, and education.
- Stop the use of explosive weapons in populated areas.
- Authorise and facilitate the safe and unimpeded access of humanitarian personnel to civilians into and throughout Gaza.
- Allow access for human rights investigators and monitors.

GOVERNMENT OF ISRAEL

- Implement the [provisional measures ordered by the ICJ](#), including ensuring that its military 'does not commit acts which constitute a violation of any of the rights of the Palestinians in Gaza as a protected group under the Genocide Convention'.
- Create necessary conditions for an at-scale humanitarian response, including sparing aid workers from attack and ensuring unfettered access into and throughout Gaza.
- Adhere to the obligations outlined in the [Advisory Opinion of the ICJ](#), including the total withdrawal from the oPt and the immediate cessation of all settlement activities, and the provision of reparations for the damage caused to individuals.

- [Provide full reparation](#) for the damage caused by its internationally wrongful acts to all persons concerns. Reparation includes restitution, compensation, and/or satisfaction.
- End the siege on Gaza in its entirety. All crossings must be (re)opened to allow goods in accordance with IHL obligations.
 - Lift restrictions on commercial access to Gaza, allowing the resumption of normal trade flows.
- Uphold the right of Palestinian people, including children, to self-determination.

INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

- Act to ensure adherence to the Geneva Conventions, in line with Common Article 1. This includes a legal obligation for third states to take action to prevent, stop, or avoid violations of the Geneva Conventions by parties to an armed conflict.
 - All governments must stop fuelling the crisis with a foreign supply of weapons and ammunition.
- Take every possible measure to 'prevent the crime of genocide', as per obligations under the Genocide Convention.
- Take action, both individual and collective, to bring Israel's unlawful occupation to an end, including by taking all possible diplomatic and political measures, as outlined by the [UNGA resolution](#).
- Politically and financially support and cooperate with all existing international accountability mechanisms (non-judicial and judicial) to document, investigate, collect and preserve evidence of all potential violations and crimes,



Three young girls dressed in red look out towards the sea in Rafah, Gaza.

especially those affecting children. The mandate of accountability mechanisms must be supported, not undermined.

- Ensure that all accountability mechanisms integrate a child-rights approach at all phases of their documentation and investigations.
- Support the provision of domestic expertise in investigating crimes against children and conflict-related sexual violence.
- Publicly restate and demonstrate commitment to protecting UNRWA's operations and Palestinian civil society organisations
 - Maintain and increase funding for UNRWA and other civil society actors working towards accountability and humanitarian response.
- Develop a child-centred recovery plan that addresses the immediate and long-term needs of children.
- Establish a comprehensive reparations program for Palestinian children and families, including compensation and rehabilitation services.
 - Ensure reparations are child-sensitive and directly address the needs of the children.
- Increase funding for child protection, education, and mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) services in Gaza.
- Support the reconstruction and rehabilitation of damaged educational and healthcare facilities.

UNITED NATIONS

- Ensure all relevant recommendations of accountability mechanisms are supported, respected and implemented.
- When appropriate and feasible, put in place all measures to ensure the voices of all child survivors are supported to be part of justice processes.
- Recognise and uphold children's special status and rights in conflict, as enshrined in international law.
- Children and their specific needs must be included in response plans. Where possible, children's meaningful participation in the emergency response should be enhanced, as well as in transitions to early-recovery phases.

By implementing these recommendations, we can begin to address the grave and long-term disadvantages imposed on children in Gaza and work towards restoring their ability to lead healthy, normal and constructive lives. The international community has both a moral and legal obligation to act swiftly and decisively to protect the futures of Gaza's children. The stakes could not be higher – we are fighting to preserve Palestinian children's lives, futures, potential, and collective identity.

SAVE THE CHILDREN'S RESPONSE IN GAZA

Save the Children has worked in the oPt since 1953, with a permanent presence since 1973. Since then, we have worked with partners to help provide quality education, protection for children, early childhood development support, and employment opportunities for at-risk youth. We also focus on child-centred climate change programming, advocacy and campaigning, focusing on environmental education, community-based adaptation and climate activism.

Since the war in Gaza began in October 2023, Save the Children has scaled up its response team to more than 150 staff to deliver emergency programming directly and through our civil society partners. Our core focus is child protection, health, and nutrition, complemented by critical food security, livelihoods, and emergency education support. Multi-purpose Cash Assistance is a core pillar of our response in both Gaza and the West Bank.

Our child protection, health and nutrition assistance is provided in child-friendly spaces and primary health centres through integrated programming including protection case management and referrals, mental health and psychosocial support, maternal, newborn and primary paediatric care, water, sanitation, and nutrition support, and informal education, complemented by cash assistance to caregivers.



Children receiving the polio vaccination at a Save the Children's clinic in Deir Al-Balah, Gaza.



Save the Children

Save the Children International

St Vincent House
30 Orange Street
London WC2H 7HH
UK

Tel: +44 (0)20 3272 0300
Fax: +44 (0)20 8237 8000

info@savethechildren.org

Company registration number 3732267
(England and Wales)
Charity registration number 1076822