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**H.E. Dr. Awad, highlights the Palestinian children's situation on the eve of the Palestinian Child Day, 05/04/2024.**

**H.E. Dr. Ola Awad, President of the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), on Thursday 04/04/2024, highlighted the reality of the Palestinian children's situation, as follows:**

**Almost half of the Palestinian society are children**

The expected number of children under 18 years of age by mid-2024 in Palestine is 2,432,534 children; (1,364,548 children in the West Bank and 1,067,986 children in Gaza Strip). Children constitute approximately 43% of the total population in Palestine (41% in the West Bank and 47% in Gaza Strip). The estimated number of children under 18 years of age in Gaza Strip is 544,776 males and 523,210 females, with about 15% of them being under the age of five (341,790 children).

**The Israeli occupation kills around 4 children per hour in Gaza Strip<sup>i</sup>**

Since the beginning of the Israeli aggression on Gaza Strip on October 7<sup>th</sup>, 2023, until the date of the issuance of this press release, there are more than 14,350 child martyrs, constituting 44% of the total number of martyrs in Gaza Strip. Additionally, women and children constituted 70% of the missing persons in Gaza Strip as a result of the Israeli aggression, totaling 7,000 individuals.

It is worth noting that there are 455 martyrs in the West Bank since October 7<sup>th</sup>, 2023, until the issuance of this press release, including 117 children. Additionally, there are 724 injured children out of a total of 4,700 injured persons since the beginning of the aggression. Furthermore, 1,620 Palestinians, including 710 children, have been displaced from various parts of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, due to the demolition of their homes. More than half of them were displaced during military operations, especially in refugee camps in Tulkarm and Jenin<sup>ii</sup>.

During 2023, 1,085 children were arrested<sup>iii</sup> from the West Bank, including 500 children were arrested following the Israeli aggression on Gaza Strip, of whom 318 from Jerusalem Governorate. According to the Commission of Detainees and Ex-Detainees Affairs, the Israeli occupation continues to detain 204 children, including 202 from the West Bank, one from Gaza Strip, and one from the occupied territories in 1948, among them, there are 11 sentenced child detainees, 158 detained children, and 35 children under administrative detention.

**43,349 children live in Gaza Strip without one or both of their parents**

In 2020, there were 26,349 children aged (0-17 years) who were orphans (having lost one or both parents) in Gaza Strip. However, estimates prepared by UNICEF indicate that around 17,000 children in Gaza Strip became orphans after losing one or both parents since October 7<sup>th</sup>, 2023. Each of those children represents a heartbreaking story of loss and bereavement, constituting approximately 1% of the total number of displaced persons, of about 1.7 million



displaced individuals in Gaza Strip<sup>iv</sup>. As a result, they live in extremely difficult conditions and exceptional circumstances, lacking proper shelter, which can lead to profound negative effects on children, including psychological and social impacts such as loneliness, deteriorating mental health, diminished learning, and social development.

### **Famine and malnutrition threaten the lives of children in Gaza Strip**

The Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) report for the period from February 15<sup>th</sup> to March 15<sup>th</sup>, 2024, showed an increase in the risk of famine in Gaza Strip. It indicated that 95% of the population in Gaza (approximately 2.13 million people) faces high levels of acute food insecurity, with up to 1.1 million people in Gaza Strip facing catastrophic levels of food insecurity. This includes an increase of approximately 80% in the number of people facing the highest classification of food insecurity since December. Hence, those households are characterized by extreme lack of food, famine, and depletion of coping capacities, leading to alarming rates of acute malnutrition among children under the age of five and a significant increase in mortality rates. The Ministry of Health reported that 28 children have died due to malnutrition and dehydration in hospitals in Gaza Strip<sup>v</sup>.

According to nutrition tests conducted by UNICEF, acute malnutrition rates among children in North Gaza and Rafah nearly doubled compared to January 2024. Among children under the age of two, acute malnutrition increased from 16% to 31% in North Gaza and from 13% to 25% in Rafah. Additionally, the rate of severe wasting, which is the most life-threatening form of malnutrition requiring therapeutic feeding and treatment not available in Gaza Strip, increased from 3% to 4.5% among children in shelters and health centers in North Gaza, quadrupling from 1% to 4% in Rafah, and reaching 28% in Khan Younis, where 10% suffer from severe wasting<sup>vi</sup>.

It is worth mentioning that in 2020, the percentage of children suffering from moderate underweight in Gaza Strip was 2.1%, while severe underweight was 0.3%, and the percentage of children suffering from moderate stunting was 9.0% timely, while 1.8% suffered from severe stunting. The percentage of children suffering from moderate wasting was 1%, and severe wasting was 0.5%.

### **Newborns in Gaza Strip are struggling for survival amidst the health and food crisis**

Newborns in Gaza Strip find themselves in a tough battle for survival. Health data from UNICEF reveals that around 20,000 children have been born<sup>vii</sup> since the beginning of the Israeli aggression on Gaza Strip. Approximately 60,000 pregnant women<sup>viii</sup> in Gaza Strip, with an average of 180 births daily, face numerous challenges. Pregnant women suffer from malnutrition, dehydration, and severe food scarcity; as a result, many of their children are born underweight and suffer from health problems, in addition to the possibility of not receiving vaccinations due to their shortage, this means the emergence of diseases that have been eradicated and were not present among children, such as measles, whooping cough, polio, and others. Consequently, the continuation of these disastrous conditions leads to the deaths of many newborns, as the neonatal mortality rate in Gaza Strip in 2020 reached 8.8 deaths per 1,000 live births. It is worth mentioning that the number of children in the vaccination age group (0-23 months) reached 208,300 children.



## **More than 816,000 children are in need of psychological assistance due to the ongoing Israeli aggression on Gaza Strip**

Considering the scenes of killing and destruction resulting from the ongoing Israeli aggression for the past 181 days, it leaves deep psychological effects on the children of Gaza Strip. These effects may include negative emotions such as fear, anxiety, depression, and psychological shock due to continuous psychological pressure and material and human losses, such as the loss of relatives or homes. The aggression can also affect their behavior and daily life patterns, such as changes in sleep patterns, nutrition, and social relationships. Additionally, children may suffer from painful physical injuries or the loss of loved ones, increasing their need for psychological and emotional support to recover from these traumatic experiences. Data indicate that more than 816,000 children in Gaza Strip are in need of psychological assistance due to the ongoing Israeli aggression<sup>ix</sup>.

## **620,000 students in Gaza Strip have been deprived of their right to school education<sup>x</sup>**

Due to the continuous bombardment with intense airstrikes on Gaza Strip and the toll of martyrs among students and teachers, as well as the destruction of infrastructure of a significant number of schools, the educational process has been disrupted in Gaza Strip since the beginning of the aggression, depriving approximately 620,000 students of their right to school education for the scholastic year 2023/2024. The number of martyrs among enrolled students in schools in Palestine reached 6,050 martyrs; 5,994 martyrs in Gaza Strip and 56 martyrs in the West Bank. Furthermore, the number of injured students enrolled in schools in Palestine reached 10,219 injured students (9,890 in Gaza Strip and 329 in the West Bank). As for the number of detained students enrolled in schools, it reached 105 students, all of them are from the West Bank.

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<sup>i</sup> [https://www.pcbs.gov.ps/site/lang\\_ar/1405/Default.aspx](https://www.pcbs.gov.ps/site/lang_ar/1405/Default.aspx) As of 31 March 2024.

<sup>ii</sup> <https://www.ochaopt.org/ar/content/hostilities-gaza-strip-and-israel-flash-update-134>.

<sup>iii</sup> **Commission of Detainees and Ex-Detainees Affairs.** Updated data up to 24/03/2024. Ramallah – Palestine.

<sup>iv</sup> <https://www.who.int/ar/news/item/09-08-1445-children-s-lives-threatened-by-rising-malnutrition-in-the-gaza-strip>

<sup>v</sup> <https://www.ochaopt.org/ar/content/hostilities-gaza-strip-and-israel-flash-update-137>

<sup>vi</sup> [Acute malnutrition has doubled in one month in northern Gaza Strip \(unicef.org\)](https://www.unicef.org/acute-malnutrition-has-doubled-in-one-month-in-northern-gaza-strip)

<sup>vii</sup> <https://aja.ws/sokvoi>

<sup>viii</sup> <https://m.facebook.com/MOHGaza1994/posts/703661851938760/>

<sup>ix</sup> <https://gazaishere.com/>

<sup>x</sup> **Ministry of Education.** Israeli Occupation Violations against Education in Palestine 07/10/2023-02/04/2024. Ramallah – Palestine.