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Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics



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# What remains of childhood in Palestine?

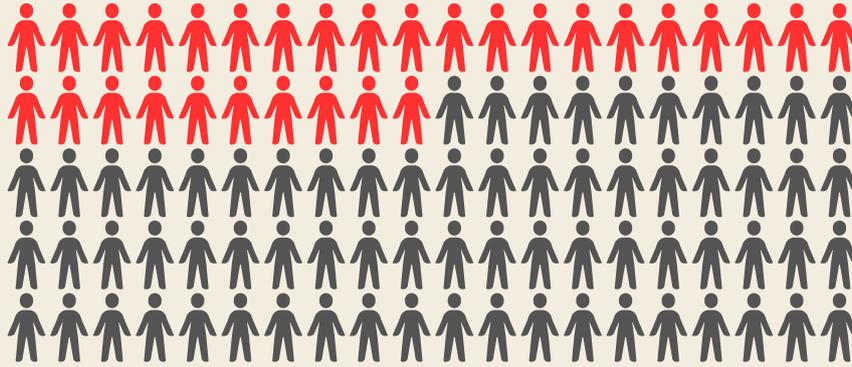


# What remains of childhood in Palestine?

## **A LENS ON LIFE AND SURVIVAL UNDER THE ISRAELI SIEGE**

As of mid-2025, the child population in Palestine (individuals below 18 years) was estimated at 2,334,253, representing approximately 42% of the total population, this includes 1,190,609 males and 1,143,644 females. Children in Gaza Strip represent 45% of the total population of the Strip, while in the West Bank they represent 41% of the total population of the West Bank.

30% of martyrs are children



Palestinian children have been neglected by the very treaties meant to safeguard them under Israeli occupation and genocide. Thirty-six years after the Convention promised protection, children in Palestine are born into survival, carrying their age as a burden. In Gaza, nearly one in three martyrs is a child.

**“Children in the Gaza Strip have faced relentless bombardments while being deprived of essential goods, services and lifesaving care. With each passing day of the aid blockade, they face the growing risk of starvation, illness and death, nothing can justify this.”**

Catherine Russell, Executive Director of UNICEF

The Palestinian people are under constant attack, depriving children of healthy development processes and basic legal rights. Under occupation, the main concerns for Palestinian children are survival and safety. Not only do they bear the same difficulties as Palestinian adults, but they also experience another layer of hardship by the vulnerabilities that come with being a child under siege. Through these atrocities, the line between adulthood and childhood has been deeply blurred.

# LIFE IN TENTS AND RUBBLE: PALESTINIAN CHILDREN'S ADAPTATION TO UNINHABITABLE ENVIRONMENTS

**“Our home was demolished, and all I have left is this tent; even my toys are gone.”**

A Palestinian Child Subject to displacement during the siege in Gaza, OCHA 2023

From her tent, Hanin, a 14 year old girl, expressed how much she and her friends miss their homes. In an interview done by the “Defence for Children Palestine”, she attempted to translate the pain of displacement. From dealing with weather conditions from her tent to accessing basic resources such as water or food, her life as a displaced child reveals multiple violations of the CRC.

Of the two million displaced Palestinians, half of them are children. Today, while some celebrate the CRC, the displaced children of Gaza have awoken in the remains of destroyed homes, tents or in overcrowded schools. Such living conditions fail to provide security or privacy. A child who belongs to one of the 288,000 Palestinian families in Gaza who lost their primary source of shelter will not sleep in a bed tonight.

*Tents as temporary shelters for the displaced in the Northern Gaza Strip.  
June 2025: Palestine in Pictures— The Electronic Intifada | Omar Ashtawy, APA images*



Housing and accommodation during armed conflict should be guaranteed to provide safety. Instead, living conditions became unfit for survival. The CRC promises the right of adequate housing. Yet, only 125,000 tents are habitable. Such tents are currently used for an indefinite time period but were made for temporary accommodation. Moreover, 268,000 housing units have been completely destroyed, and 148,000 homes have been damaged to the point of inhabitation. 14 children have died in the winter due to the lack of accommodation in freezing temperatures.

*“I was playing with my friends when a plane bombed our neighbor’s house, and since that day, I no longer feel safe even at home.”*

A Child from Gaza, 2023 UN Report on the Conflict on Children

Depriving families of their homes and shelters comes in a strategic method of enforcing a point of no return, exacerbating the genocide and ethnic cleansing. 239 shelter centers have been targeted by the Israeli occupation. Without a safe home to live in, in the midst of constant bombings and explosions, children are subject to deep emotional distress that will contribute to a lifetime of trauma.



The CRC claims that children have a right to leisure and play, and must provide safety for refugee, migrant, and disabled children. The systematic destruction of homes creates an unsafe environment for proper development and mental well-being of the child. The lack of accommodation for these children not only violates their human right to accommodation, but deprives them of the space needed to be a child. Instead of playing and learning about the world, children in Gaza are living as refugees, struggling to survive amidst unliveable homes and destroyed shelters.

**“I cannot sleep at night because of the sounds of explosions. I feel the war will never end.”**

A Child from Gaza, 2023 UN Report on the Conflict on Children

*The destruction of the Fahmi al-Jarjawi School that was used as a temporary shelter.  
May 2025: Palestine in Pictures— The Electric Intifada | Omar Ashtawy, APA images*



# WAR ON EDUCATION: A LIFETIME IMPACT ON PALESTINIAN CHILDREN'S GROWTH

From her tent, Hanin also grieved her education. She explains she tried in many ways to continue learning throughout the past two years but has been unable to access the internet or materials such as pens or notebooks. In the absence of educational training and materials, her growth as a child and as an individual will be forever affected.

School is the first experience introducing children to social life and mental growth. It should be at the center of their lives. Access to education is guaranteed by the CRC. However, Israel's perpetual attacks on the educational system and schools have made access to education a life threatening risk. While 110 students were martyred in the West Bank, more than 18,512 students were martyred in the Gaza strip. 70,000 students were deprived of their right to schooling throughout the years of 2024 and 2025. If we are to celebrate the achievements of the convention, Palestinian children should be going to school safely.

*Children and families collect remaining items from the damage on the Al Falah school in Gaza City. June 2025: Palestine in Pictures— Electric Intifada | Omar Ashtawy, APA images*





*Sarah Qannan, 17, from Khan Younis continues her studies inside a tent her family set up over the ruins of their home, 24 June. Sarah is trying to review her lessons in preparation for the tawjihi matriculation exams after she and other students in Gaza were deprived of education for the second consecutive year.*

*June 2025: Palestine in Pictures— Electric Intifa | Abdallah Alattar, APA images*

If a child in Palestine is lucky enough to go to school, he may never come back. More than 218 public schools and UNRWA schools were bombed and damaged, making the physical space of education unsafe. 179 public schools were destroyed entirely. Children are deterred from going to school because of the fear of being bombed. They also face anxiety and psychological disorders from the trauma of war, which in turn prevents them from even being able to focus on coursework and exams even if their classes are still running during the siege.

***“I dream of going back to my school; I miss my teacher and classmates.”***

A young girl, 2024 OCHA Humanitarian Report

## CHILD IMPRISONMENT AND LEGAL VIOLATIONS OF CHILD DETAINEES UNDER OCCUPATION

Majd, a 17 year old child recalls the night when Israeli forces violently raided his home in Jenin in an interview with “Defense for Children Palestine”. They arrested him and his friends, all of whom are between the ages of 13-17 years old.

After the war began in Gaza, conditions in prison deteriorated. Children were beaten and denied basic healthcare, alongside little to no access to hygienic supplies. This includes basic necessities like that of clean clothes. Since October 7th, 2023, 1600 have been arrested in the West Bank. As of now, 400 children are in Israeli prisons, subjugated to humiliation and torture.



*A child taken by soldiers, Al Mayadeen, 2022*

*You don't know what to do. When you experience beatings and fear all the time, you feel like you're dying; I was afraid I would not return to my family."*

A Palestinian child detainee, Human Rights Documentation

The CRC states that children are to be protected from violence and abuse, yet the occupation engages in these practices with no accountability. The violent arrests of children alongside the denied access to lawyers and courts is a blatant violation of IHL and the CRC. Children have been arrested in night raids on their homes, experienced physical assault in front of their family, and have been denied food, medical aid, and legal assistance. Engaging in desperate means of survival and being denied healthcare in prison can lead to infections and even death.

According to the CRC, education should be made accessible to all, and IHL insists on the protection of schools during armed conflict. When a child cannot go to school in Palestine, his day may realistically take any turn from arrest, torture to injury or death. Arrests are commonly done through violence such as shooting, blindfolding and denial of legal assistance. In the West Bank, children are confronted with a lawless world on a daily basis. Their age could never protect them from arbitrary arrest and violence. In the Gaza strip, children have often disappeared but there is a lack of information on whether they were murdered or kidnapped by Israeli forces.



*Israeli forces point their weapons at Palestinian residents and photographers.  
Palestine in Pictures: June 2025 — Electric Intifada | Mosab Shawar, ActiveStills*



***“When I was arrested, I was undergoing dental treatment. I repeatedly asked the prison administration to remove the stitches, but they refused, so I did it myself with help from other detainees.”***

**A Palestinian child detainee,  
Palestinian Prisoners Society (PPS)**

Forced arrests, disappearances, and years spent in prisons deprived these children of their right to childhood. They spent their prime years of development in prisons instead of classrooms. In addition, child detainees go through emotionally and psychologically distressing circumstances such as separation from their families, another attack on their access to a healthy environment for growth. The CRC is supposed to support the full personal, mental, spiritual, moral, and social development of children. Yet, children are regularly abused in Israeli prison; physically and psychologically. When it comes to Gaza, children have often disappeared but there is a lack of information on whether they were murdered or kidnapped by Israeli forces.

In order to live realistically, children in the West Bank have to strategically navigate around the physical and legal risks that are a part of their daily lives. Child imprisonment involving torture, violent arrests and denial of legal assistance, comes in a logic of dehumanization of the Palestinian child. Such a reality complements the Israeli method of obstructing the right of Palestinian children to healthy development.

## WARFARE WOUNDS AND ILLNESSES: THE STRUGGLE TO ACCESS HEALTHCARE

10 year old Mohammed’s leg was amputated after he was shot at a food distribution site, in another interview for the “Defense Children Palestine”. He cries as he explains he can no longer use the bathroom on his own. Six year old Nour Al-Huda, another child interviewed by the association, suffers from pemphigoid, a rare skin condition that requires constant medical support. Nour has not been able to access any medical care and has therefore been enduring blistering, ulcers, and immense pain. She only weighs 8 kilograms. Half of Gaza’s children suffer from skin infections.



*Sila Madi, 8, lies in her hospital bed, as she receives treatment at Nasser Medical Complex in Khan Younis, southern Gaza, 26 May. Sila’s right leg was amputated and her left leg is at risk of amputation due to an Israeli attack that injured several other members of her family. Palestine in Pictures: March 2025 — Electronic Intifada | Moaz Abu Taha, APA News*



*The destruction of an UNRWA supply center  
May 2025: Palestine in Pictures— Electronic Intifada | Omar Ashtawy, APA Images*

Over the past two years, children wake up aware that the day ahead is a gamble between death and survival. Instead of worrying about school, children worry about staying alive, knowing that they could very well join the other 20,000 martyred children. Hind Rajab was only 5 years old when she and her family were shot around 355 times.

***“Every day I wake up not knowing if we will survive or not.”***

A Palestinian child, Save the Children Report 2024



*People mourn over the body of a child who was killed in an Israeli strike in the Nasser Medical Complex. June 2025: Palestine Through Pictures— Electric Intifada | Abdullah Abu Al-Khair, APA images*

Numerous orphans must act like adults beyond their years just to survive. Children experience daily trauma from the death and destruction surrounding them. Even they have survived, many children have lost family members or friends. 58,554 children in the Gaza Strip have lost one or both parents and 17,000 are completely unaccompanied. 2,693 children have lost both parents. Not only are these children dealing with unimaginable struggles without guidance, they are highly vulnerable to exploitation and child labor in a ruthless environment. Yet again, childhood adds a layer of hardship.

Under occupation and genocide, access to resources and medical aid have been materially and institutionally destroyed by Israel. The economic blockade and siege on Gaza has limited the access to aid, food, and health care. Young immune systems are vulnerable to the spread of diseases, in turn requiring regular health monitoring. Getting sick and injured is a daily reality for the Palestinian child under siege. Surviving the smallest issues is a great challenge.

*“My little brother got very sick because of dirty water; medicine is scarce, and waiting in the hospital is long,” reports a child from Gaza.*

Palestinian child, Al Jazeera, July 2024

Injuries sustained from bombardments have included loss of limbs, sight, and hearing. 15 children are injured daily in the Gaza Strip through the occupation’s use of internationally banned explosive weapons. 7,065 children are reported to have lost mobile function, limbs, sight, and hearing. 18% of 4,800 amputees are children.

The continuous attacks on medical infrastructure has contributed to the death of children. This intentional strategy by the occupation has reinforced the spread of unlivable conditions. The very institutions meant to safeguard the rights of children are deliberately targeted. How are children supposed to access their fundamental rights to survival when they are unable to access hospitals and treatments under these conditions of warfare?



*Amro al-Hams receives medical care after suffering a brain injury from shrapnel. May 2025: Palestine Through Pictures— Electric Intifada | Moaz Abu Taha, APA Images*

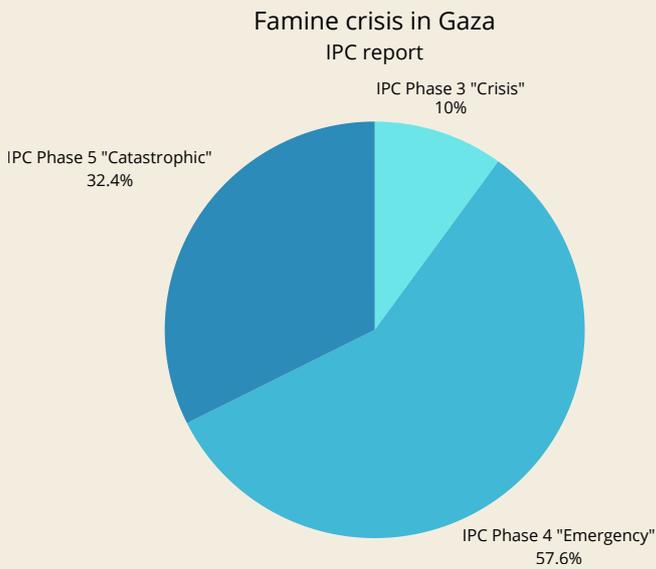
## EMPTY PLATES AND POLLUTED WATER

From her tent in Gaza, 10 year old Sham explains in an interview with “Defence for Children Palestine” how her family’s life has come to revolve around the daily search for food and drinkable water. She wistfully recalls the times preceding the war when she’d come home to cooked meals. Sham’s father sustains injuries while he attempts to feed his family. Sham now lives just to survive.

If a child in Gaza was able to survive a day of siege, they most likely would sleep on an empty stomach. The economic blockade and siege has stopped the imports of food. In fact, when aid does enter the strip, the occupation often destroys it and attacks those attempting to collect food for their survival. Food is severely rationed, to the point where the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification Report (IPC) announced Gaza entered the IPC Phase 5, the most severe level of food insecurity. The IPC currently reports that 1.07 million people reached the Emergency level, Phase 4. Of this amount, 650,000 children in the Gaza Strip are at risk of death from hunger and malnutrition. 132,000 children under five are at the risk of severe malnutrition.

*Children and families wait for food at a charity.  
May 2025: Palestine Through Pictures— Electric Intifada | Omar Ashtawy, APA images*





The youngest are the most at risk when confronted with starvation. Hunger affects these babies even before their birth. 55,500 pregnant women struggle to give life without sufficient nutrition. When they do give birth, they struggle to breastfeed due to a lack of nutrition. Today, the PCBS reports 25,000 infants urgently need nutritional support to survive. 40,000 infants under the age of one face starvation due to a lack of infant formula.

*“My mother tells us to eat just enough so we die less of hunger. I don’t want to feel this hunger every day.”*

A small child, 2023 Reuters article

An event organized by the “Four Friends” team, with the participation of dozens of hungry children in Khan Younis city, southern Gaza Strip. Anadolu ajansı, Jomaa Younis | 29.04.2025

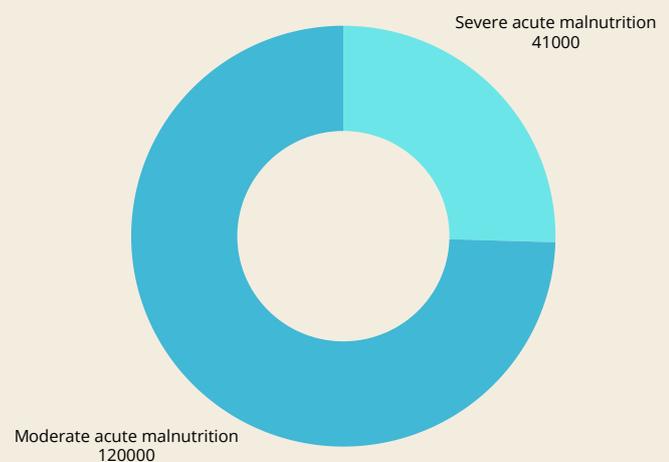




*A newborn baby is in his mother's arm. His twin brother died from malnutrition and a lack of baby formula.  
June 2025: Palestine in Pictures | Omar Ashtawy, APA images*

147 children have died due to systematic starvation and malnutrition. Malnutrition can result in bone deformities and weakened wound healing. 41,000 children are in critical, life threatening conditions. The calculated effort to deny the population of their right to basic necessities of life are blatant violations of the CRC convention and IHL. Lack of adequate nutrition creates a space incapable of providing the fundamental right to life and mental and physical development

132K cases of malnutrition in children from 6 to 59 months old  
IPC report: Gaza



*“Every day we go to fill water bottles, but there is little, not enough for drinking, cooking, or even washing.*

A Palestinian child in the Gaza Strip, 2023 UNICEF report on water access

Children not only suffer from hunger— they are also thirsty from a lack of purified water. Quenching thirst comes at the cost of getting severely ill. Pollution from constant bombings has infiltrated clean water sources, leading to illnesses and limited supply. Throughout the siege, sanitation and water infrastructure continues to be destroyed. 83% of water tanks were disrupted, and only 40% of water facilities were partially operational. The lack of access to clean water systems has created unliveable and unsafe conditions for children and their families. 70% of the population in Gaza relies on contaminated water sources. Waterborne diseases rose by 150% between the months of April and July 2025. 44% of medical consultations were related to waterborne related illnesses.



*Palestinians try to meet their daily water needs by filling jerry cans with water distributed by tankers as the humanitarian crisis in the region continues to deepen due to the total embargo on Gaza City. May 2025: Palestine in Pictures | Omar Ashtawy, APA images*

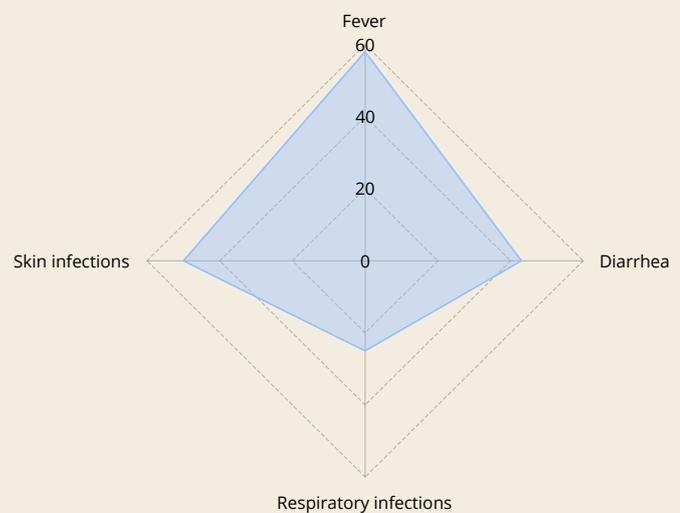
*“I feel stomach pain every day after drinking water from the nearby well; there is no quick treatment.*

A young child, 2023 WHO Report on Malnutrition

Since July of 2025, 95% of households were completely unable to access safe drinking water. Children were the most affected. 43% of them suffer from diarrhea, 58% struggle with fevers, and 25% have experienced acute respiratory infections. Exposure to waterborne illnesses and contaminated water sources creates development stunting and chronic illnesses in children.

This is a violation to the protection of life and human dignity through the lens of IHL.

Percentage of children affected by illnesses



*Usama Assaf, 4 years old, receives medical care at his grandmother's home in Gaza City after losing his entire family in an Israeli airstrike. Usama fractured both his legs and his pelvis in the attack. June 2025: Palestine in Pictures | Omar Ashtawy, APA images*



*A child recovers an elephant plush toy from the remains of the rubble in Southern Gaza/  
Palestine in Pictures: March 2025 — Electric Intifada | Doaa Albaz, ActiveStills*

## CONCLUSION

Around the world, childhood is a period of life perceived with the privilege of innocence. In Gaza, the days of childhood have been reduced to survival. With near-total absence of social care or psychological support, depression, isolation and chronic fear is the reality for most of these children under the Israeli occupation.

The institutionalized strategies of displacement and destruction by the Israeli occupation are a form of direct attacks on the right to life and safety. The war on education, man made hunger and health crisis, and unjust violence have especially targeted children. Instead of benefiting from additional protections through the CRC, children are the first to endure the misery inflicted on the whole Palestinian nation. Childhood is not protected in Palestine— rather it is a daily struggle simply to survive.

As some celebrate treaties upon the rights of children around the world, the loss of life and unlivable conditions under war in Gaza are a testament to the failed implementation of the CRC and IHL. Repair and protection of the rights of these Palestinian children lies in the hands of the international community and the upholding of International Law. Halting the violence and destruction by the occupation is the primary solution for these children to regain agency of their lives. The first step to help these children would be international accountability to ensure paths for medical aid and food. Until then, this day will add itself to years of violence, illegal arrests, starvation, loneliness, depression and complete disdain for human rights. A better future can only begin when accountability is met with implemented action aimed at upholding the dignity and equal right to life for every Palestinian child— just as it should for every child in the world.

*At least 100 children in Gaza have died due to malnutrition and hunger, prompting humanitarian actors to emphasize the urgent need to accelerate medical evacuations from the Strip and allow more food to enter. These child deaths are the latest in the war on children and childhood in Gaza,” says Phillippe Lazzarini, Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA).*

Philippe Lazzarini, Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency in the Near East (UNRWA)

# Work Team

## **THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT (AUB)**

Juliette Bejani

Ambarina Zenab

## **THE PALESTINIAN CENTRAL BUREAU OF STATISTICS (PCBS)**

Reham Mualla

Faten Abu Qara'

Nehaya Odeh

Khaled Abu Khaled

Mosab Thuminat