



مركز الميزان لحقوق الإنسان
AL MEZAN CENTER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

Israel's Genocide in Gaza and Its Impact on Palestinian Children

*Supplementary Information Provided to the Committee on the Rights of the Child
Ahead of Israel's Review, Submitted by Al Mezan Center for Human Rights*

15 August 2024

Introduction

1. Al Mezan Center for Human Rights (Al Mezan) is a Palestinian human rights organization based in Gaza. Since our establishment in 1999, we have been dedicated to documenting violations of individual and collective rights of Palestinians in the occupied Gaza Strip, regardless of the identity of the perpetrator, and to end these violations through advocacy and accountability work before national and international courts and mechanisms. Despite the ongoing genocide and the serious danger posed to our staff and their families—including the [destruction of our office in the Jabaliya refugee camp](#)—we maintain our presence on the ground in Gaza, including field researchers who document apparent international crimes and other human rights violations and lawyers who provide legal aid and support to Palestinian prisoners and detainees and their families.
2. Al Mezan has held ECOSOC consultative status since 2010. Over the years, we have consistently engaged with various United Nations (UN) treaty body mechanisms, leveraging our status to advocate for the rights of the Palestinian people and bring attention to violations of international human rights and humanitarian law in occupied Gaza. This engagement has involved submitting parallel reports to UN treaty body mechanisms, providing expert testimonies, and collaborating with other organizations to hold violators accountable and promote the protection and respect of human rights within the occupied Palestinian territory (OPT).
3. We took positive note of the statement released by the Committee on the Rights of the Child (the Committee) on [8 February 2024](#), which highlighted that “[a]ll children living in the Gaza Strip have lost their childhood. They are traumatized, and will forever live with a permanent impact on their mental health.” We also appreciated the reference to the ongoing proceedings at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) launched by South Africa against Israel. **We urge the committee to formally recognize that Israel is committing the crime of genocide, along with blatant and grave violations of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC, or the Convention).**
4. Al Mezan has long maintained the legal determination that Israel is committing acts of genocide against Palestinians in Gaza. Through documentation, analysis, and advocacy, we have concluded that the scale and nature of the violations perpetrated against the Palestinian population meet the criteria for genocide as defined under international law. This assessment is based on extensive evidence and aligns with our commitment to seeking justice and accountability for the ongoing *Nakba* experienced by the Palestinian people over the past 76 years.

5. **This submission will focus exclusively on the events unfolding in Gaza since 7 October 2023.** For information on previous violations committed by Israeli authorities against Palestinian children across the OPT, we respectfully encourage the Committee to review the [parallel report](#) submitted jointly with Palestinian organizations Al-Haq and the Community Action Center (CAC) on 15 November 2022.
6. Through the present submission, Al Mezan seeks to provide documented evidence of genocidal acts committed by Israeli forces and authorities against Palestinian children in Gaza based on the ‘List of issues in relation to the combined fifth and sixth periodic reports of Israel’ updated by the Committee on [8 March 2024](#). These acts, which also amount to blatant and grave violations of the CRC, include:
 - killings and injuries;
 - deaths by malnutrition and dehydration;
 - enforced disappearance, arbitrary detention, and torture;
 - attacks on schools and educational facilities;
 - spread of epidemics and other diseases, including polio.

The Killing and Injury of Palestinian Children

7. Over the past ten months of Israel's genocidal military campaign in Gaza, at least 39,897 Palestinians have been killed and another 92,152 wounded, according to the Palestinian Ministry of Health's update from 12 July 2024. According to the latest estimates, 16,456 of those killed are children. Another 10,000 Palestinians are missing, presumed dead under the rubble. [Save the Children](#) estimates that around 4,000 of these are children, with an unknown number potentially buried in mass graves. [UNICEF](#) further estimates that at least 17,000 Palestinian children in Gaza are unaccompanied or separated from their parents.
8. The ongoing situation on the ground makes it impossible for our [staff](#) in Gaza to verify these numbers. However, in our 25 years of experience documenting human rights abuses in Gaza, the figures reported by the Palestinian Ministry of Health have consistently proven to be largely accurate and reliable. Under the current circumstances, given that Gaza's healthcare system has been systematically and deliberately decimated by Israeli attacks, sieges, and raids, we believe many reported figures—particularly those regarding fatalities—to be underestimated. Similarly, on 25 July 2024, dozens of doctors and nurses who worked in Gaza penned a [letter](#) claiming that the true death toll in Gaza is much higher than previously reported.
9. Palestinian children and their families have faced attacks by Israeli forces in locations where they should be safe and protected under international

law—such as homes, shelters, hospitals, and places of worship. Thousands of children have been injured or killed, with many arriving at hospitals suffering from severe burns and injuries, some necessitating amputations. The collapsing healthcare system in Gaza has been unable to accommodate the overwhelming influx of wounded and sick patients. With medical facilities stretched beyond their capacity, many injured children face long-term disabilities and inadequate treatment.

10. According to the Palestinian Ministry of Health in Gaza, there are currently over 12,000 injured individuals and 14,000 critically ill patients who urgently require to leave Gaza to access essential medical care—including advanced treatment, therapy, and rehabilitation services that are no longer available in Gaza due to Israel’s destruction of the local healthcare system.
11. Due to the severe shortages of medical resources and specialized care in Gaza, many of these patients, including numerous children, have been referred for treatment in neighboring countries and beyond. However, their ability to seek such critical care has been severely hindered since 7 May 2024, when the Israeli military seized and closed the Palestinian side of the Rafah border crossing. This closure has effectively halted the movement of people and goods to and from Gaza, exacerbating the humanitarian crisis. At present, Israeli authorities have allowed only a limited number of children in need of medical care to exit Gaza through the Karem Abu Salem crossing. Despite this, Israel’s full closure and blockade of Gaza continues to impede the necessary medical evacuations and the delivery of essential humanitarian aid.
12. Through our staff exiled in Egypt, we have successfully established contact with Palestinian children who were evacuated through the Rafah border crossing and have since received medical treatment in Egyptian hospitals. The following are two illustrative cases that highlight the broader, critical situation affecting thousands of individuals:
13. **Y. M. A.** is a 14-year-old Palestinian boy from Al-Shati refugee camp, located near Gaza City. On the morning of 11 October 2023, Y. was at home with his extended family when their house was targeted by an Israeli aerial raid. Three women and a child from his family were killed by the Israeli attack, while nine persons, including Y., were injured. Y. was taken to al-Shifa Hospital in Gaza City, where he was admitted in an unconscious state. Upon arriving at the hospital, Y. underwent two surgeries—one on his leg and another on his abdomen. Platinum implants were placed in both his leg and arm. He regained consciousness five days after his admission.

14. On 1 November 2023, Y. was granted a medical referral and was allowed to travel to Egypt through the Rafah border crossing. Y.'s family remained in Gaza, with only his brother accompanying him to Egypt. He was initially treated at a hospital in al-Arish, where he stayed for 11 days before being transferred to Ain Shams Specialized Hospital in Cairo. He then was moved to the Nasser Institute Hospital in Cairo, where he underwent additional surgery to his leg.
15. **L. A. A. A.** is a 13-year-old Palestinian girl from Al-Shujaeyya neighborhood, west of Gaza city. On 29 October 2023, L.'s family was forcibly displaced and moved into a makeshift nylon tent inside a UNRWA school in Deir al-Balah that had been converted into a shelter housing thousands of internally displaced persons (IDPs). At approximately 3:30 p.m. on 2 December 2023, L. was standing at the entrance of her family's tent when a shell or bomb struck the minaret of the nearby Anas Ben Malek Mosque. The explosion caused shrapnel to scatter across the school grounds. L. was injured in the blast, and four Palestinians were killed. She sustained a laceration to her right leg and was transported to Al-Aqsa Hospital by a passing vehicle. L. remained in the hospital for a week, during which she underwent surgery and received an external platinum implant in her leg.
16. On 10 December 2023, L. received a medical referral to Egypt. She was transported by ambulance from Al-Aqsa Hospital to the Rafah border crossing, and from there, she was taken to a hospital in Ismailia, Egypt. At the hospital in Ismailia, the medical team prepared for an amputation surgery for L.. Unaware that such a procedure was planned, L.'s mother initially refused the surgery and signed a rejection form. L. was then transferred to Nasser Institute Hospital, where doctors confirmed the necessity of the life-saving surgery. Confronted with the critical nature of the situation, L.'s mother eventually signed the consent form for the procedure. L. will endure a permanent disability for the remainder of her life.
17. Several doctors who have worked in Gaza have confirmed the use of snipers by the Israeli military on the ground, a fact also verified by [Dr. Mark Perlmutter](#), an orthopedic surgeon who volunteered in Gaza, who said: "And then there's sniper bullets. I have children that were shot twice. [...] I have two children that I have photographs of that were shot so perfectly in the chest, I couldn't put my stethoscope over their heart more accurately, and directly on the side of the head, in the same child. No toddler gets shot twice by mistake by the 'world's best sniper.' And they're dead-center shots." He further added: "[During my time in Gaza], I've seen more incinerated children than I've ever seen in my entire life combined. I've seen more shredded children in just the first week [in Gaza]."

Starvation-Related Deaths Among Palestinian Children

18. According to the [Gaza Government Media Office](#), since 7 October 2023, at least 36 Palestinians have starved to death in Gaza, the overwhelming majority of whom are children. Notably, this official death toll reflects only those who die in hospitals or whose deaths are reported by their families. Al Mezan fears that the actual number is significantly higher.
19. According to the [Integrated Food Security Phase Classification \(IPC\)](#), about 96 percent of Gaza's population (2.15M people) face high levels of acute food insecurity through September 2024. While the whole territory is classified in 'emergency' (IPC Phase 4), over 495,000 Palestinians are facing catastrophic levels of acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 5). On [9 July 2024](#), following the documented deaths of a number of Palestinian children in central and southern Gaza due to hunger and malnutrition, a group of UN independent experts led by the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food declared that "famine has spread across the entire Gaza strip."
20. Al Mezan's field researchers have collected documentation and testimony on three cases among at least several dozen Palestinian children who have died from malnutrition, dehydration and lack of adequate healthcare in recent months: 9-year-old **A. A. R.**, who died on 3 June 2024 in the tent sheltering his displaced family in Al-Mawasi; nearly 6-month-old **F. A.**, who died on 30 May 2024 in Al-Aqsa Hospital, weighing only 1.5 kg; and 13-year-old **A. A.**, who died on 1 June 2024.
21. Their deaths are the result of a multifaceted pattern of genocidal acts perpetrated by Israel against the Palestinian population of Gaza. These acts include the total siege imposed on Gaza since 9 October 2023, the utilization of starvation as a genocidal weapon of war, the deliberate targeting and destruction of Gaza's healthcare system, and the recurrent forced displacement of millions of Palestinians. Israeli restrictions on the entry of humanitarian aid, coupled with the targeted attacks on humanitarian workers responsible for distributing the limited aid that manages to reach Gaza, along with the systematic destruction of agricultural land, point to a deliberate and calculated effort to starve the residents of Gaza. Al Mezan also notes the significant role played by Israel's closure of the Rafah border crossing in exacerbating the circumstances that led to the deaths of A., F., and A.
22. **A. A. R.**, born on 1 September 2014, suffered from cerebral palsy since birth, for which he underwent treatment at Al-Makassed Hospital in occupied Jerusalem before the beginning of the ongoing genocide. He lived with his family in Khuza'a, in the Khan Younis Governorate, in a house located 1,500 meters from the separation fence between Gaza and Israel. Lama, A.'s

mother, told us: "I tried to provide the necessities for [A.]'s treatment, including food supplements and vitamins, but over time medications became unavailable. My husband has lost his source of income since the beginning of the aggression, prices have skyrocketed and it has become extremely difficult to secure basic necessities for my children, including food and treatment."

23. A.'s family has been forcibly displaced multiple times. They first left their home in Khuza'a on 8 October 2023 citing safety concerns, particularly due to A.'s need for special care. Initially, they sought shelter in UNRWA's Mustafa Hafez School in Khan Younis, near Nasser Hospital, joining dozens of displaced families also seeking refuge there. On 4 January 2024, as the Israeli ground invasion of Khan Younis advanced, A.'s family was forced to relocate again, this time to Tal Al-Sultan, in the Rafah Governorate. There, they resided in a tent in difficult conditions, facing significant challenges in accessing clean drinking water, food, and other basic life necessities, and A.'s condition worsened.

24. A.'s mother told Al Mezan: "I faced difficulties in transportation and reaching hospitals, often walking long distances with [A.]. Life in the tent was hard due to the intense heat during the day, the spread of insects and flies, and the cold at night, compounded by the lack of clean toilets—which increased my daily struggles as I watched my son's health deteriorate, unable to help him. While in Rafah, an explosion occurred near us, in Tal Al-Sultan. In an attempt to flee the area, I was carrying [A.] and out of fear I dropped him, not realizing that he had a broken leg. Later, it was confirmed that the explosion was due to an Israeli strike in the area, and it was discovered that [A.] had a broken leg and was suffering from osteoporosis. He received treatment at the Gaza European Hospital in Khan Younis for 15 days. Due to the harsh conditions in the tents, we decided to return to our home in Khuza'a after the [Israeli] occupation forces withdrew from Khan Younis, despite the damage to our home and the lack of basic services there. Three days after our return to Khuza'a, the town was heavily targeted by the [Israeli] occupation forces, forcing us to flee again to the west of Khan Younis, in Al-Mawasi, with only a small tent. My family and I endured extremely harsh conditions, struggling to provide the simplest necessities like food, water, and treatment. [A.]'s condition deteriorated, showing signs of malnutrition and persistent high fever. I had difficulty getting water to lower his fever, and transportation to any hospital was difficult due to severe congestion and lack of transportation."

25. In Al-Mawasi, A.'s condition significantly worsened. His parents took him to Nasser Hospital multiple times—sometimes on foot—to monitor his condition, but on 31 May 2024, he slipped into a coma. A.'s mother said to Al Mezan: "We took him to a nearby medical point, but due to the lack of resources, they advised us to transfer him to another hospital. His father took him to Nasser

Hospital, where doctors stated he needed urgent care and nutritional supplements and required treatment abroad. After returning to the camp, I tried feeding him with a syringe, but he would vomit. He had a high fever. We took him back to Nasser Hospital on Sunday morning, but the doctors could not treat him due to lack of equipment, as the [Israeli] occupation forces had destroyed many medical equipment at Nasser Hospital. At around 6:45 am the following day, Monday, 3 June 2024, while I was next to [A.] in the tent preparing milk to try to feed him and monitoring his temperature, I realized he had passed away, watching him take his last breaths. I lost my composure, crying and screaming, feeling the pain of my inability to help and care for him. To this day, I feel like I've lost a part of my soul and my life, that I've lost everything." A. was the oldest of four children. His three-year-old sister, **N. A. R.**, also has serious medical conditions that require regular monitoring and treatment. She also shows clear signs of malnutrition.

26. **F. A.** was born on 6 December 2023. His family resides in the Al-Bureij refugee camp in the central Gaza Strip but was forcibly displaced to the Al-Mawasi area in western Khan Younis. At the time of his birth, he was a healthy infant weighing 3.5 kg. However, he soon developed breathing difficulties. He died on 30 May 2024 in Al-Aqsa Hospital, weighing only 1.5 kg.

27. His father told Al Mezan: "After birth, [F.] showed symptoms of breathing difficulties. I took him to Al Aqsa Hospital and the European Hospital to check on him, and he underwent surgery at the European Hospital. My son's health condition was accompanied by my inability to provide adequate food for my wife to breastfeed him properly. My child's condition worsened, and I moved him between medical centers and hospitals, trying to get him a referral for treatment outside Gaza, but the closure of the Rafah crossing prevented that. His condition deteriorated further, and his weight dropped to 1.5 kg. I suffered greatly and made every effort to find him appropriate treatment amidst the immense pressure in the hospitals. My suffering was compounded by the lack of resources and my inability to afford transportation costs to the hospital and provide adequate food for my wife. I have four daughters, and [F.] was my only son, but God Almighty took him on 30 May 2024 at Al-Aqsa Hospital in Deir al-Balah."

28. **A. A.**, born on 14 November 2010, had been facing health issues since birth. His condition received regular monitoring at Al-Rantisi Children's Hospital in Gaza City—one of two hospitals in the Gaza Strip specializing in children's care, which ceased operations in November 2023, following the Israeli ground invasion of Gaza. Before the ongoing genocide, Abdulqader's condition had been stable. However, forced displacement and lack of access to life-saving medical treatment and nutritious food led to his death on 1 June 2024.

29. His father told Al Mezan: “[A.] used to receive neurological treatment and consume protein-rich foods such as meat, vegetables, and fruits in sufficient quantities and regularly. However, after the [Israeli] evacuation orders, we were forced to flee our residential area in Gaza City to Al-Zawayda, in the Middle Area District, where I set up a tent to house me and my family. At that time, I only had two bottles of the necessary medication for [A.], but as time passed, the prescribed treatment ran out. I tried to buy it but couldn't find it anywhere. I also tried to look for it in Egypt, but the closure of the Rafah crossing prevented that. All of this coincided with shortages in food, meat, fruits, and vegetables. [A.]'s health deteriorated significantly, especially given the tent conditions and the high temperatures, which were unsuitable for his health. I transferred my son to Al-Aqsa Hospital on 1 June 2024, but unfortunately, he passed away.”

Enforced Disappearance, Arbitrary Detention, and Torture

30. Over the past 10 months, Israeli forces have abducted and forcibly disappeared thousands of Palestinian residents of Gaza, including women, children, elderly people, as well as professionals such as doctors, nurses, teachers and journalists. This is in addition to the 9,900 Palestinians residents of the West Bank held in Israeli prisoners and detention centers—including some 250 children—of whom 3,432 Palestinians—including 39 children—are held under administrative detention, according to [Addameer](#).

31. **The precise number of Gaza prisoners and detainees and how many among them are children remains unknown.** Some were arrested in the territory of the State of Israel on or right after 7 October 2023, while the overwhelming majority was abducted from Gaza during the Israeli ground invasion and then forcibly disappeared in military detention camps outside of the Israeli Prison Service (IPS) system, devoid of any judicial oversight and excluded from access to lawyers, their families, or the International Committee of the Red Cross. **Al Mezan estimates that approximately 2,650 Palestinian residents of Gaza are currently still held in various Israeli detention facilities, including at least ten children who are being detained in Ofer Prison alongside adults. Two young boys who were minors at the time of their arrest on 7 October 2023 and turned 18 years old while in detention are currently being held in Nafha Prison.**

32. Al Mezan has gathered numerous harrowing testimonies from released Palestinian detainees who were returned by Israeli authorities to Gaza via the Karem Abu Salem crossing or other land crossings between the occupied territory and Israel. Many of them were taken from hospitals and schools that had been besieged and raided by Israeli forces during their ground invasion, while others were apprehended at Israeli military flying checkpoints along

Salah al-Din road as they attempted to evacuate to southern Gaza following Israeli evacuation orders. Additionally, Palestinians were also seized from their homes or the houses where they had sought shelter. These testimonies indicate that during this mass detention campaign, children as young as 15—not limited to those who appeared older and could be mistaken for adult individuals—were among those detained, and suggest a pattern of indiscriminate arrests where the age of the individuals was either overlooked or deliberately disregarded by Israeli forces.

33. All testimonies point to a similar pattern. Initially, following the separation of men and male children from women and female children, Israeli soldiers proceed to forcefully strip Palestinians of their clothing and conduct a thorough search. Sometimes they are given back their old clothes; others are left in their underwear; and some are provided with jail uniforms by Israeli authorities. During this phase, numerous testimonies accounted for verbal and physical abuse and harassment, including of sexual nature. In several testimonies, Palestinian women and girls recounted being forced to remove their veil in front of male Israeli soldiers.
34. The apprehended persons are handcuffed with a plastic band around their wrists and blindfolded. They are then loaded into vehicles with tens of other detainees and taken to areas near the perimeter fence separating Gaza and Israel. The duration of their confinement in these areas can range from hours to days, but typically, detainees are subsequently relocated from Gaza to external locations, either to detention centers run by the Israel Prison Service (IPS) across the occupied West Bank and Israel or to more *ad hoc*, army-administered detention camps, such as Sde Teiman, where children are detained alongside adults.
35. Throughout their abduction and during their detention, Palestinian residents of Gaza are treated as '[human animals](#)', demonstrating that the dehumanizing and genocidal rhetoric used by the highest levels of the Israeli leadership to characterize Palestinians as a group was embraced throughout all ranks within the military and the IPS. Palestinian detainees are also subjected to horrific forms of physical and psychological torture. This includes, *inter alia*, being hung in stress positions, beaten with hammers, having their nails pulled out with wire-cutting pliers, attacked by dogs, and beaten with soldiers' fists, feet, and rifle butts. They have been exposed naked to the scorching sun while standing on sharp gravel stones, subjected to verbal abuse, and threatened with rape, death, and bombing, along with threats against their families. Detainees have also been deprived of food, water, sleep, and access to sanitation for extended periods, all while facing extremely harsh living conditions.

36. **The precise number of Palestinians who have died while in Israeli custody, and how many among them are children, remains unknown, as Israeli authorities have not disclosed comprehensive information.** The lack of transparency and refusal to provide this critical information creates a significant gap in understanding the true extent of the torture and abuses to which Palestinian prisoners and detainees are subjected.
37. At the time of writing, there is no definitive record of the total number of Palestinian prisoners and detainees who have died while in Israeli custody. The [Palestinian Prisoners' Club](#) disclosed the full identities of 22 Palestinians who died as a result of torture and/or medical negligence. This list includes not only residents of Gaza but also residents of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, as well as Palestinians holding Israeli citizenship. **In addition, the identities and circumstances surrounding the deaths of dozens of Gaza detainees have not been disclosed by Israeli authorities.**
38. **The primary legal framework utilized to incarcerate Palestinian residents of Gaza is the "Incarceration of Unlawful Combatant Law of 2002",** which was repeatedly [amended](#) by Israeli authorities through emergency orders to further expand the scope of the law, including extending the duration during which detainees are barred from meeting with their lawyers, expanding the authority to classify individuals as "unlawful combatants," and implementing exceptional measures that deny detainees essential needs such as food, medicine, hygiene supplies, bedding, and adequate blankets. These amendments and the ensuing application of the law *de facto* legalized incommunicado detention and enabled enforced disappearances. Al Mezan underscores that these legislative changes have also endorsed and facilitated ongoing violations against Palestinian detainees.
39. It is important to note that international law does not recognize "unlawful combatant" as a legal category. This designation is a construct specifically created to circumvent international humanitarian law. According to Israeli law, an "unlawful combatant" is defined as "a person who has participated either directly or indirectly in hostile acts against the State of Israel or is a member of a force perpetrating hostile acts against the State of Israel, where the conditions prescribed in Article 4 of the Third Geneva Convention of 12 August 1949, regarding prisoners of war and the granting of prisoner-of-war status under international humanitarian law, do not apply to them." This definition effectively excludes individuals from the protections afforded to prisoners of war or protected persons under international humanitarian law.
40. Notably, the International Committee of the Red Cross has not been able to visit any Palestinian detainees held in Israeli places of detention since 7 October 2023. Known to exploit legal loopholes to evade compliance with

both international humanitarian and human rights law, Israel, since the declaration of a heightened “state of emergency” on 7 October 2023, has carried out a series of changes in many of the legal amendments related to Palestinian prisoners and detainees. These legal and judicial amendments, coupled with military orders, have imposed further restrictions on Palestinian lawyers, severely impeding their ability to meet with their detained clients. Some Gaza prisoners are still denied access to lawyers to this day.

Attacks on Palestinian Schools and Education Facilities

41. As part of its genocide against Palestinians in Gaza, Israel has systematically pursued the wholesale destruction of the Palestinian education system. The term ‘[scholasticide](#)’ is used to describe this deliberate and systematic assault on educational institutions in Gaza. Since 7 October 2023, Israel’s genocidal military campaign has killed at least 9,000 school and higher education students in Gaza and inflicted injuries on another 14,000—including 3,000 students who now suffer permanent disabilities. Additionally, around 400 schoolteachers and 100 university educators have also been killed.
42. At the beginning of the [2023-2024 academic year](#), there were 803 schools in Gaza,¹ housed in approximately 550 buildings and serving approximately 625,000 students. Due to overpopulation and a shortage of facilities, exacerbated by Israel’s 17-year-old blockade and closure of Gaza, many of these schools operated in double or triple shifts. **Israel’s genocidal campaign has forced 625,000 school-aged students in Gaza to miss an entire academic year of education, with no prospect of resuming any time soon.**
43. **For over ten months, students in Gaza have been unable to attend school, and hundreds of school buildings have been deliberately targeted and destroyed by the Israeli military.** As of 10 July 2024, UNRWA [reported](#) that two-thirds of its schools—188 out of 288—had been subjected to Israeli attacks, including 76 schools that were directly targeted. Similarly, Israeli airstrikes have hit public schools, resulting in the destruction of 285 out of 448 public schools. In other words, Israeli attacks have destroyed about two-thirds of the public schools in Gaza. Rehabilitating these buildings—the majority of which have also been seriously damaged—will be a lengthy and challenging process, further straining the already overburdened educational infrastructure.
44. **Schools have remained closed since the beginning of the ongoing genocide, as most school buildings have turned into shelters housing hundreds of thousands of internally displaced persons.** Israel’s relentless

¹ Of these 803 schools, 448 are public schools, 288 are UNRWA-run schools, and 67 are private schools.

assault on Gaza's educational infrastructure has resulted in the complete disruption of schooling, leaving a whole generation of Palestinians without access to education. In an interview with Al Mezan, Mr. Farid Abu Athra, the Chief of UNRWA's Education Program in Gaza, also pointed out that the educational losses experienced by Palestinians students in Gaza over the past ten months cannot be redeemed. This disruption will significantly impact their academic achievement and personal development, increasing the likelihood of dropout, child labor, or early marriage.

45. Initiatives to restore education—either face-to-face or remotely—were launched by some individuals and civil society organizations, along with the support of displaced families. Despite these efforts, all attempts proved futile in light of continuous Israeli bombardments. Families repeatedly moved in search of safety, leading to the loss of homes and educational materials. The Palestinian Ministry of Education has worked on enabling Gaza students to access remote learning channels. However, it remains virtually impossible for students in Gaza to access online education without a stable internet connection or means to charge their devices. Additionally, they often find themselves in turmoil, trying to help their families in their daily pursuit of food and water.

46. A fifth-grade student who attended an UNRWA school told Al Mezan: "My daily routine involves standing in line for many hours to get water for my family and then carrying it back to our tent. I also search for firewood and help my mother make cookies, which I sell to help meet our needs. I used to keep my books with me, hoping to return to school one day. However, I lost them while constantly moving from one place to another."

47. **A. D.**, an 18-year-old high school senior at Haroun al-Rashid School in Khan Younis, told Al Mezan: "My whole life and future turned upside down. Instead of pursuing my dream to study interior design at university, now I work day and night to provide for my family's necessities. I feel as if I were an insignificant person with nothing to aspire to except the end of this war."

Spread of epidemics and other diseases

48. For the past ten months, 2.3 million Palestinians in Gaza—half of whom are children—have been living under relentless Israeli bombardment from the air, land, and sea, leading to daily casualties, widespread displacement, and the destruction of homes, shelters, and other civilian infrastructure. Israeli ground operations continue to take place across all of Gaza.

49. Since [13 October 2023](#), the overwhelming majority of residents of Gaza have been forcibly displaced from their homes due to a constant series of

'evacuation orders' by Israel, affecting all Gaza governorates. At the time of writing, a staggering 90% of Gaza's 2.3 million residents have been forcibly displaced from their homes, with many enduring displacement for up to 10 consecutive months and having to move multiple times.

50. Israel's wanton and widespread destruction of water and sanitation facilities in Gaza, coupled with the overcrowding in shelters caused by forcible displacement, has created an environment highly conducive to the spread of diseases. The situation is particularly dire for children, who are especially vulnerable to health risks in such conditions. With a severely crippled healthcare system, Gaza faces an imminent public health crisis that could disproportionately affect over one million children.
51. The lack of clean water, inadequate sanitation, and overcrowded living conditions create breeding grounds for waterborne diseases, respiratory infections, and other contagious illnesses. Without access to proper medical care, these conditions could lead to significant increases in child mortality and long-term health issues. On [29 July 2024](#), the Palestinian Ministry of Health classified Gaza as a "polio epidemic zone" after traces of the virus were [found](#) in sewage samples in Khan Younis and Deir Al-Balah, the most densely populated areas of Gaza at the moment.
52. Although at the time of writing no cases of polio have been recorded yet, the mere presence of viruses in Gaza's wastewater is being treated as a significant public health concern. Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, the Director-General World Health Organization (WHO), [stated](#): "[W]ithout immediate action, it is just a matter of time before it reaches the thousands of children who have been left unprotected. Children under five years are at risk, and especially infants under two because many have not been vaccinated over the nine months of conflict."
53. The detection of these pathogens in the water supply, combined with the destruction of water and sanitation infrastructure and the overcrowding in shelters, signals a potential epidemic waiting to unfold. This situation is especially dangerous for children, who are more susceptible to infections due to their developing immune systems. With the healthcare system in Gaza already severely compromised, even a minor outbreak could quickly spiral out of control.
54. Dr. Musa Abed, Gaza Ministry of Health's first care director, told Al Mezan: "The streets of Gaza are drowning in sewage water and, as you can see, small children and adults are exposed to it. All these factors have led to the spread of infectious diseases, and we will also record other diseases if these issues are not resolved soon. Damaged sewage infrastructure. Overcrowding.

Lack of potable water. If these issues are not resolved as soon as possible, we will record other diseases that we have never heard of before.”

55. The WHO is planning to deliver 1.2 million polio vaccines to Gaza, with plans to administer them in the coming weeks to prevent the spread of the disease, especially among children. Notably, the entry and distribution of these vaccines depend entirely on Israeli approval, which adds to huge logistical challenges to successfully deploy the vaccines that must be consistently stored within a specific temperature range which poses a technical challenge amid the ongoing situation on the ground and the depletion of Gaza’s healthcare system.