



General Assembly

Distr.: General
24 September 2024

English only

Human Rights Council

Fifty-seventh session

9 September–9 October 2024

Agenda item 7

**Human rights situation in Palestine and other
occupied Arab territories**

Written statement* submitted by Organization for Defending Victims of Violence, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[11 August 2024]

* Issued as received, in the language of submission only.



Gazan Children

Background

In order to understand the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT), including the Gaza Strip, we need to consider the context of 75-year apartheid, the 65-year occupation and the 15-year blockade which has deprived the Palestinians and children from adequate access to almost ALL economic, social and cultural rights, civil and political rights, as well as all aspects of the right to development and attainment of all sustainable development goals.

The extensive violation of human rights and children's rights, is being committed by an occupying power whose presence is found to be illegal in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. We draw the attention of the Committee to the ICJ Advisory opinion which found Israel occupation illegal, on 19 July 2024.

2023-2024 War

The long history of violation of all human rights and children's rights in the Occupied Palestinian Territory led to serious escalation of conflict on Oct 7th, 2023 when Israel attacked with a heavy bombardment campaign unprecedented in modern history, leading to thousands of civilian and children's deaths and injuries. Since the Oct 7th. the civilian population of Gaza and the children have been subject to heavy unabated bombardments, as well as collective punishment, war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide.

The colossal children death toll made the 2023-24 Gaza war to be considered as a "war against children". As one of the most densely populated areas of the world came under the unprecedented Israel bombardments, Gaza turned into a "graveyard for children", who are comprising a significant portion of the lost lives. According to the Ministry of Health, about 70 per cent of those killed are reported to be women and children.

According to the Palestine News and Info Agency (WAFA), between 7 October, 2023 and late July 2024, 39,600 Palestinians have been killed and an additional 90,996 have been injured in Gaza predominantly women and children.

Tens of thousands of children have become orphans. Many have sustained life-changing injuries. There are reports indicating that thousands of children have simply disappeared, likely lost under the rubble of destroyed homes and shelters.

The Situation of Living Children

The internally displaced children who are still alive in Gaza, are living under horrible conditions, for months. They are exposed to conditions of life that threaten their very existence, including serious violation of the right to access: clean water; sufficient food; adequate and timely medical care; safe shelter and education, a combination of which threaten the right to life and to physical and mental health for children.

Right to Food and Water

In July 2024, for over 300 days, the serious lack of access to clean water and sufficient food in the enclave continues as a violation of international law. Israel's intentional denial of Gaza people's access to drinking water and food as a method of war, has been widely condemned, especially through the hot and dry summer days.

Under Article 7 of the Rome Statute, intentionally depriving the civilian population of conditions of life, calculated to bring about their destruction, is an act of extermination and classified as a "crime against humanity". While limitation of access to water, forced many people and children to drink "salinized and contaminated water" (2) leading to spread of waterborne diseases and limitation of access to food starved Gaza children to death.

In April, 2024, there were reports of 32 Gaza civilians including 28 children dying of malnutrition and dehydration, while the recorded deaths due to lack of water and food is not limited to the mentioned 32 cases.

On 9 July 2024, a group of UN experts announced that "recent deaths of more Palestinian children due to hunger and malnutrition leaves no doubt that famine has spread across the entire Gaza strip" (4), they confirmed the death of children aged, six months, nine years and thirteen years, in June 2024 because of malnutrition.

They declared that "Israel's intentional and targeted starvation campaign against the Palestinian people is a form of genocidal violence and has resulted in famine across all of Gaza."

Right to Health

In May 2024, WHO reported that 84% of health facilities are damaged or destroyed in Gaza (5). Most of hospitals stopped working due to the shortages of electricity, fuel and medicine. The hospitals are confronting complications such as medical staff shortages of specialized surgeons, neurosurgeons, and intensive care staff in addition to lack of medicines such as anesthesia, antibiotics, pain relief medicines, seriously affecting their functionality.

While thousands of children have been injured and killed, in July 2024, Israeli Prime Minister rejected the establishment of a field hospital to treat Palestinian children injured in Israel's ongoing offensive on the Gaza Strip (6). The hospital was intended to serve as a short-term solution to address immediate humanitarian needs following the extended closure of Rafah Crossing.

We are alarmed that in addition to limitation of access to food, water and medical care, the Gaza children are deprived of school, safe shelter and the necessary means of existence.

Recommendations:

We echo the call of the UN Experts in June 2024 and urge the international community to:

- "Prioritize the delivery of humanitarian aid by land by any means necessary, end Israel's siege, and establish a ceasefire", in order to save the lives of the civilians and children who are still living in Gaza under horrible living conditions which is associated to "hell on earth" for children by the UN Chief (7).
- Require Israel to remove all obstacles on delivery of humanitarian aid including food to the enclave, as vital first steps to eliminate the existing famine.
- Highlight the prominence of protection of health structures in armed conflicts in the review of Israel and condemn the deadly impact of depriving hospitals of necessary and vital items, including the electricity, medicine and medical supplies.

2- <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2023/11/israel-must-stop-using-water-weapon-war-un-expert>

4- <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/07/un-experts-declare-famine-has-spread-throughout-gaza-strip>

5- <https://www.npr.org/2024/06/01/g-s1-1780/gaza-israel-infrastructure-water-schools-hospitals>

6- <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/netanyahu-blocks-field-hospital-for-gaza-children-amid-israeli-war/3278938>

7- <https://operationalsupport.un.org/en/gaza-children-living-hell-earth-un-chief-says-urging-immediate-end-to-fighting>