

From The Palestinian Association for Human Rights (Witness)

A non-profit independent human rights organization based in Beirut, Lebanon.

To The Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict

United Nations Secretariat, New York

March 22nd, 2024

Dear Ms. Gamba,

No child could live through the horrors that are implicated on the children of Gaza. Amidst the ongoing conflict, children pay the highest debt. The Gaza strip has become a massive graveyard for children and the causality rate is increasing.

Despite the overlapping crisis, no adequate measures have been in place to ensure the fundamental rights of children are respected and protected. The dire conditions and protracted crisis could be perceived in the following aspects:

Mass killing of children

By now more than 13,750 children have been killed according to Gaza's health authorities since October 7th.

Children all across the Gaza strip have been subjected to some of the most severe humanitarian conditions ever. According to James Elder, the spokesperson of UNICEF in early January, the casualty rate of children in Gaza has reached 40 percent, twice the lethal to children as conflicts we've seen in the last 20 years.

Access to healthcare is severely impeded

The healthcare system in Gaza is merely functional. The health sector has been targeted by 417 reported attacks, 100 health facilities have been affected, including 30 damage; and 104 ambulances affected. The loss and degradation in the health facilities has led to a bed occupancy rate of 323% in functional hospitals. Children facing life-threatening illnesses find little to no access to healthcare support with the ongoing outbreaks of infectious diseases, including diarrheal illness and hepatitis A.

Malnutrition

Based on the latest emergency update by WHO, as of March 25th, 12.4-16.5% of children aged 6-59 months old suffer from acute malnutrition in Northern Gaza, 3% of which suffer from severe acute malnutrition. In Southern Gaza, 2-6% of children suffer from acute malnutrition. The food and water resources if available are un-edible and constitute severe health hazards.

No education has been happening in Gaza for nearly six months

Out of the 563 school buildings in Gaza, 212 were directly hit by the Israeli military. In the governorate of southern Khan Younis, 62 schools were directly targeted, 14 in the Middle Area governorate, 94 in Gaza governorate, and 42 in North Gaza governorate- which is the most severely affected area to date, with 86.2 percent of school buildings either directly hit or damaged. United Nations findings based on satellite imagery, indicates the military use of schools by Israeli Security Forces since the beginning of the land evasion.

This counts to 62,500 students and 22,00 teachers out of schools. In the aftermath of the war 67 percent of schools in Gaza will neither need full reconstruction or major rehabilitation to restore its functionality.

Outcomes

We, at the Palestinian Association for Human Rights (Witness), call for urgent actions by the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary General to address the current crisis.

We strongly urge the Special Representative to act upon his mandate for the protection of children affected by armed conflict.

April 2nd 2024, Beirut, Lebanon

The Palestinian Association for Human Rights (Witness)

