

IV. Physical harm against Palestinian children by Israel

“You will die, your children will die, your grandchildren will die – there won’t be a Palestinian state, there won’t be - Hanoch Milwidsky, Member of the Knesset (Likud) on 21 February 2024.

A. Child casualties due to Israel’s use of explosive weapons in populated areas

26.

Until 7 October 2023, roughly half of the population of the Gaza Strip was under the age of 18. These children had already lived their entire lives under the Israeli blockade and occupation, experiencing multiple rounds of hostilities and trauma. Between 7 October 2023 and 7 October 2025, at least 20,179 children were killed and 44,143 children were injured as a direct result of the hostilities in Gaza, constituting 30 percent of those killed and 26 percent of those injured during this period. The Commission notes the increase in the proportion of children killed in comparison to previous escalations of hostilities wherein children made up approximately 24 percent of the conflict-related fatalities in the escalations of hostilities of 2008-2009 and 2014.

28.

Additionally, unknown numbers of children are buried in unmarked graves without their deaths being recorded or are simply missing. Over the two-year period, child casualties in Gaza have varied significantly across different phases of the hostilities, reflecting shifts in the intensity, geographic spread, and the Israeli military tactics and operations – timeline of key events is noted in Annex I at the end of this report.





29.

The Commission has previously noted that the increase in child casualties absolutely and proportionally in comparison with previous escalations of hostilities is due to Israeli security forces' use of explosive weapons with wide-area effects (see paras. 30- 33) and an expansion of its targeting criteria, without taking adequate precautions, resulting in high child casualties among family members, neighbours and displaced communities at large.



30.

“ On 25 December 2023, Israeli security forces issued a statement about its targeting approach in Gaza: “Whereas in past operations or wars, Israel has been more selective or “accurate” with regards to the exact types of Hamas targets struck, given that Israel’s overall objective was limited to diminishing Hamas’s capabilities, Israel is now focused on dismantling Hamas’s capabilities

altogether, i.e. causing “maximum damage” to Hamas’ military capabilities in their entirety.” The Commission found that statements by the Israeli security forces, in conjunction with its practice on the ground, indicate a de facto blanket permission to target civilian locations widely in Gaza.

33.

The killing and injuring of children continued through temporary pauses in fighting, revealing that each pause in fighting has repeatedly failed to protect the most vulnerable. In one example, on 18 March 2025, the pause was ended by Israel by launching waves of airstrikes across Gaza without prior warning, killing at least 170 children by mid-day. Between 18 and 31 March 2025, airstrikes, bombardments and ground operations by the Israeli security forces killed at least 322 children and injured 609 children, amounting to killing or injuring at least 100 Palestinian children per day in a span of two weeks alone.

35.

“The overwhelming scale and rate of children killed and injured in Gaza have been unparalleled across modern conflicts globally. Israel’s conduct in Gaza since 7 October 2023 and its harmful consequences on children have led UNICEF to rank the Gaza Strip as “the most dangerous place in the world to be a child”.

1. Continued killing and maiming of children since the October 2025 ceasefire agreement

38.

On 29 November 2025, two brothers, aged 10 and nine, were killed in an Israeli drone strike near Bani Suheila, east of Khan Younis in southern Gaza. The boys were gathering firewood for their wheelchair-bound father when the strike occurred. Israeli security forces stated that soldiers spotted two “suspects” crossing the ‘yellow line’, acting suspiciously and approaching their forces, so a drone eliminated the “immediate threat”. At the outset, the Commission notes that the boys were located more than 300 meters from the Israeli soldiers’ rifles, meaning that they could not have posed any immediate threat from such a distance. The soldiers should not have classified the boys as “suspects” in the first place since they were clearly involved only in collecting firewood. The soldiers failed to adequately assess the ages of boys, their intentions and capabilities as a ‘threat’. The Commission finds that Israeli security forces’ Kfir Brigade were operating in the area.

39.

“The Commission is not aware of any formal investigation initiated by the Israeli security forces against those responsible, similar to other attacks which have not been investigated to date, underscoring a systemic impunity relating to the killing of Palestinians including children. By maintaining that the children killed

were “suspects”, the Israeli security forces have deflected responsibility to Palestinian children, portraying them as “terrorists” rather than casualties.

“ Such tactics by the Israeli security forces serve to distort the factual narrative and further marginalize affected children and their families.

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