



**The Impact Of Forced Displacement On Women And Girls  
The Psychological, Social, Health, And Economic  
Conditions Of Women And Girls**

**MINISTRY OF WOMEN'S AFFAIRS  
2024 OCTOBER**

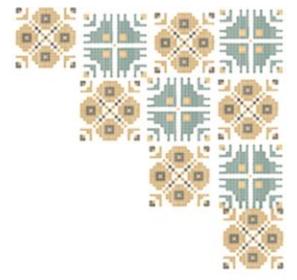
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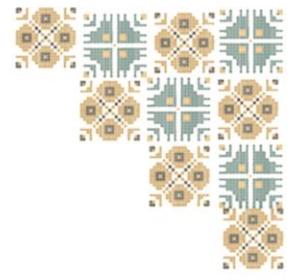
## Introduction by H.E Mona AlKhalili

The genocide war in the Gaza Strip and the large-scale military attacks in the West Bank, including Jerusalem, accompanied by the use of lethal force, have caused the largest number of forced displacements under Israeli fire. More than one million women and girls have been forcibly displaced from their homes in successive waves of displacement that appear unlikely to stop anytime soon.

This report, launched by the Ministry of Women's Affairs in conjunction with the global campaign to combat violence against women, explores the impact of forced displacement on women and girls, its repercussions on their lives, rights, and futures, and highlights areas of focus to address data and knowledge gaps. These gaps are essential for developing immediate and effective solutions to mitigate the risks and effects of displacement, particularly on social structures and the fabric of society.

Women and girls bear the heaviest burden as a result of continuous displacement. Their suffering is compounded, affecting social, health, economic, legal, and cultural aspects of their lives. They face multidimensional violence, which intensifies due to the inadequacy of humanitarian aid and life-saving services in meeting their needs. The lack of privacy, the spread of infectious diseases, and the emergence of a prevailing culture and behavior that threatens the physical and sexual safety of displaced women are exacerbated by the trauma and chaos caused by war. This is further aggravated by the unprecedented overcrowding in displacement shelters, posing a serious challenge as we enter the winter season.

Restoring balance for women and girls in light of the outcomes and repercussions of displacement, and improving the quality of comprehensive humanitarian responses for them, undoubtedly places us at the Ministry of Women's Affairs before our responsibilities. These responsibilities involve sharing unified and updated information, data, and facts with all stakeholders, partner countries, international organizations, and human rights and women's organizations. We recognize that the essence of designing life-saving relief and recovery programs for over one million women and girls begins with analyzing the current situation.

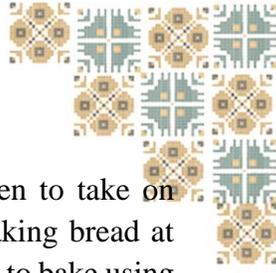
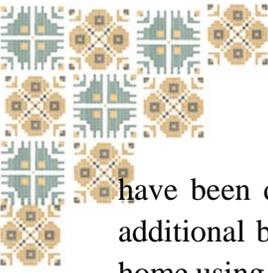


## Executive Summary

**This report discusses the impact of displacement on Palestinian women and girls following the events of October 7**, as well as the resulting health, psychological, and economic conditions they face. The brutal and bloody war waged by the Israeli occupation on the Palestinian health sector in Gaza has caused severe losses. The report highlights the scale of damage, with 34 hospitals—both governmental and private—rendered non-operational, along with 80 health centers and 134 ambulances. Medical teams working on the ground were also targeted, leading to the death of 1,047 individuals and the arrest of over 310 healthcare workers. In addition to the ongoing siege on the remaining operational hospitals, the blockade prevents the entry of medicines and medical supplies, as well as the fuel necessary to operate medical equipment, resulting in the total collapse of the health system in the Gaza Strip. Consequently, the entire population of the Strip faces the constant threat of death due to the unavailability of essential medical supplies needed to save lives. Women, in particular, are the most affected by the collapse of the health system due to the specific needs associated with pregnancy, childbirth, and breastfeeding. Approximately 155,000 pregnant and breastfeeding women are affected, including 60,000 pregnant women who lack access to basic healthcare, with 15,000 of them facing the threat of starvation. Additionally, 68% of these women suffer from illnesses caused by malnutrition.

**On the psychological level, the war has left deep scars on women in the Gaza Strip**, who suffer from trauma and mental health disorders such as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Symptoms include severe anxiety and flashbacks. Moreover, there is a complete lack of access to necessary psychological treatment or support services.

**On the economic level, the report highlights the significant deterioration of the economic situation and living conditions of Palestinians in both the West Bank and Gaza Strip.** This decline is attributed to the continuous incursions by the Israeli occupation forces and the persistent closure of city entrances, which restricts freedom of movement and trade between Palestinian cities. Furthermore, the prohibition of Palestinian workers from employment within the Green Line has deprived thousands of families of a vital source of income. Additionally, the Israeli authorities' seizure of clearance revenues, funds that are part of the state's budget, has further exacerbated the economic crisis. In Gaza, women face extremely difficult economic conditions in shelters, with no income or source of livelihood. Around 12,000 women have lost their family breadwinners, further increasing the economic burden placed on them. Many have resorted to basic, manual labor to provide for their families' essential needs. The destruction of infrastructure, roads, communication networks, water facilities, electricity, and sewage systems, has further exacerbated the economic strain on women. Public life in Gaza is paralyzed, with bakeries, health facilities, and housing units destroyed. Over 159,000 housing units have been completely demolished, and approximately 193,000 have been partially damaged. Additionally, nearly 3 million meters of roads and streets



have been destroyed, and more than 11 bakeries bombed. This has forced women to take on additional burdens, such as sourcing and preparing flour, kneading dough, and baking bread at home using primitive tools. Due to fuel and electricity shortages, they are compelled to bake using firewood, contributing to an already severe environmental catastrophe in an area unfit for living. Not to mention the destruction of agricultural infrastructure, which was a primary source of livelihood for the majority of the population and accounted for 67.6% of the total destroyed lands. In addition, the livestock sector and fishing industry have been severely affected. Acute shortages of feed and water have led to the death of approximately 15,000 livestock, equivalent to 95% of the total. Furthermore, the closure of crossings and restrictions on the entry of commercial trucks have further compounded the crisis.

**The weapon that the Palestinian people possess in their lives is the weapon of resistance and resilience, alongside the weapon of knowledge and education, which is considered the only path to salvation from their current plight.** Recognizing the importance of this "weapon," the Israeli occupation has sought to destroy it. The war machinery has completely destroyed approximately 77 public schools, severely damaged over 300 others, and bombed 65 UNRWA schools. Additionally, more than 12,000 school students have been killed, alongside over 700 university students. More than 18,000 school and university students have been injured, and an unknown number have been arbitrarily arrested under mysterious circumstances. Moreover, over 400 schoolteachers have been killed out of a total of 22,000 teachers across public, private, and UNRWA schools.

**The main support for Palestinian refugees in the West Bank and Gaza Strip is provided by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA),** which was established by a decision of the UN General Assembly in 1949. UNRWA has been the primary provider of essential services, including health and education, to refugees. However, these services have come to a halt due to the Israeli government's decision to terminate the agreement that allowed UNRWA to provide services to refugees. This decision will lead to a real catastrophe, particularly in Gaza, given its unique and dire situation, which requires these essential services. Furthermore, many employees are reliant on UNRWA for their livelihoods, meaning an increase in unemployment. The agency currently employs around 4,851 individuals, including 1,015 women (representing 21% of the workforce in the health sector). This situation exacerbates unemployment and poverty among Gazans. Regarding the education sector, UNRWA operates 706 schools, serving 543,075 students. In the health sector, UNRWA runs 140 health facilities, with each patient averaging seven visits per year. The health budget for 2022 was allocated at \$1.17 billion. These indicators signal the potential collapse of the health and education infrastructure in Gaza, especially considering the absence of alternative means to access these services, given the destruction of the current infrastructure by the Israeli occupation forces.

# 1. The Escalating Violence of the Israeli Occupation against Palestinian Women

## 1.1 The genocide in the Gaza Strip, with the majority of its victims being women and children

For decades, Palestinian women have been subjected to various forms of discrimination and systematic violence, with the primary cause being the Israeli occupation. However, the intensity of these violations escalated significantly since October 7, 2023, when the Israeli occupying power deliberately targeted Palestinian women and girls for killing, inflicting physical and psychological harm, and subjecting them to conditions of life aimed at their destruction. This constitutes a severe violation of international human rights law, international humanitarian law, particularly the Geneva Conventions and their protocols, the Hague Convention, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, General Recommendation No. 30 issued by its Committee, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, along with a series of Security Council resolutions on women, peace, and security, notably Resolution No. 1325 and Resolution No. 1820. These actions also represent a blatant violation of Security Council Resolutions No. 2728, 2712, 2720, and 2334.

More than 2.7 million Palestinian women have become victims of war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide. The women in this war come from all walks of life, including journalists, medical personnel, UN employees, and members of civil society organizations. The situation faced by women and girls caught in this war goes beyond catastrophe, as they lack basic necessities of life while enduring ongoing military operations that constantly threaten their lives. This is a painful aspect of the reality suffered by the Palestinian people, particularly women and children, amid the ongoing genocide in the Gaza Strip and the continuous violations in the West Bank and Jerusalem that persist to this day.



Since October 7, 2023, the Israeli occupation has committed over 3,600 massacres, resulting in more than 44,000 deaths<sup>1</sup>. More than 1,367 families have been wiped out and erased from the civil registry<sup>2</sup>, including over 11,891 women and 17,385 children, representing 70% of the victims. Additionally, 2,421 elderly individuals, including women, were killed. More than 10,000 Palestinians have been forcibly disappeared, with 50% of them being women and children. There are over 109,197 injured, many of

<sup>1</sup> The data on the number of martyrs and injured individuals is updated as of November 14, 2024, according to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics

<sup>2</sup> Government Media Office, November 9, 2024

whom have suffered severe injuries leading to permanent disabilities, altering their lives and leaving them in constant danger due to the collapse of the healthcare system. Approximately 35,055 children have lost one or both parents. In the West Bank, around 780 people have lost their lives, including 18 women and 167 children, while 6,642 people have been injured<sup>3</sup>.

According to an analysis conducted by Oxfam, the Israeli military killed more women and children in the Gaza Strip last year than in all other wars over the past two decades within the same period. Every three hours, Israeli explosive weapons target infrastructure in Gaza, including schools, hospitals, and aid distribution points. Since the beginning of the aggression, more than 86,000 tons of explosives have been dropped on Gaza, which is equivalent to five times the power of the Hiroshima atomic bomb, according to international estimates.

✚ **In a massacre known as the "Flour Massacre," more than 112 Palestinians were martyred, and nearly 800 others were injured while they were lined up to receive aid, during which Israeli forces opened fire on them.**

✚ **The Israeli occupying forces also bulldozed the tents of displaced people at the Kamel Adwan Hospital before withdrawing, burying dozens of displaced individuals, patients, and injured people alive within the hospital and its surroundings.**

✚ **In the Baptist Hospital massacre, 500 Palestinians were martyred, along with massacres in Jabalia, Al-Maghazi, Al-Rasheed Street, Rafah, the Gaza Strip's corners, and the Prayer Massacre, among thousands of other massacres in which the Israeli army targeted thousands of unarmed civilians**

<sup>3</sup> The data on the number of martyrs and injured individuals is updated as of November 14, 2024, according to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics

## 2 The occupation persists in its policy of forced displacement in the Gaza Strip



The widespread demolition and destruction of all aspects of life in Gaza, including homes and infrastructure, has reached over 70%. This destruction is part of a deliberate policy aimed at forcibly evacuating the Gaza Strip of its population through systematic displacement.

Since October 13, 2023, the search for survival from Israeli airstrikes and forced displacement in the Gaza Strip began, following an Israeli warning to evacuate the northern areas and move to the south. Over 1.9 million people were displaced, with women comprising 49.3% of

**Official data indicates that there are more than 159,000 housing units completely destroyed, and about 193,000 housing units partially destroyed.**

Gaza's population, including about 546,000 women of reproductive age (15-49 years). More than 90% of these women were forcibly displaced from their homes and residential areas, living in inhumane conditions with no access to basic necessities. Women and children have been particularly affected by the consequences of forced displacement, as they were separated from their families, moving from northern and central Gaza to the south. However, the southern areas were not spared from brutal massacres, which increased in intensity, especially in densely populated regions within just 63 square kilometers, with a population density of about 17,500 people per square kilometer<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> The official page of the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics regarding the statistics of the genocidal war

## ٣.١ The destruction of infrastructure has led to the complete loss of basic living conditions

Not a single inch of the Gaza Strip has been spared from destruction and death, which have taken various forms through Israeli war machinery, including airstrikes, artillery bombardments, ground incursions, sniper fire targeting civilians, and the seizure of homes as military outposts. This also includes the destruction of roads and vital infrastructure such as water and sewage networks, rainwater drainage systems, and municipal services. Furthermore, a compounded crime occurred with the severing of electricity lines supplying Gaza, and the destruction of communication infrastructure, including landlines, mobile networks, and the internet. This has deprived the residents of the ability to communicate or report the massacres taking place in various scattered locations, isolating the population from the outside world. Its impact has been particularly severe on women, placing them in a state of constant worry and fear due to the breakdown of communication with their families and the uncertainty about their loved ones' survival.

The demolition and destruction of residential units and buildings have led to the displacement of approximately 2 million people, including 1 million women and girls who were forcibly displaced from their homes and places of residence. They sought refuge in hospital corridors, courtyards, and school rooms, believing these spaces would provide safety and shelter. However, the brutality with which Israel treats unarmed civilians is unprecedented. Schools and hospitals were surrounded by tanks, and those inside were terrorized, subjected to airstrikes, arrested, tortured, and interrogated. This has resulted in inhuman and harsh living conditions for these women, with a complete lack of basic living necessities.

The suffering of the displaced people did not stop after they were forcibly displaced from their areas in the north and center of the Gaza Strip, heading towards the south, which the Israeli army claimed was safer. However, the brutality of the bombardment, massacres, and destruction intensified in the south, especially with its high population density. The southern area, particularly Rafah Governorate, which is now overcrowded with displaced people, has undergone significant structural changes in its population distribution. As of April 22, 2024, the population of Rafah was estimated at around 1.1 million people living in an area of 63.1 square kilometers. Before the aggression, the population density in Rafah was 4,360 people per square kilometer, but it has now reached about 17,500 people per square kilometer<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>5</sup> PCBS

## ١,٣,١ Water crisis

The percentage of water supply from water sources decreased by 90%, and thus the percentage of water consumption decreased by 92% compared to what it was before the aggression, after the disastrous effects left by the war on water networks and water supply sources in general. About 55% of the water supply infrastructure needs repair or rehabilitation in the Gaza Strip.

Approximately 700 water wells have been destroyed, and 65 sewage pumps have stopped working, in addition to 6 stations and systems for wastewater treatment that have completely stopped due to power outages and fuel shortages. This has led to a decrease in the daily water consumption rate per person to 1.5 liters, while the World Health Organization recommends a minimum of 15 liters. The severity of this crisis is exacerbated by the flow of around 130,000 cubic meters of untreated sewage into the Mediterranean Sea daily<sup>6</sup>, alongside the destruction of more than 655,000 meters of sewage network infrastructure.

The water pollution crisis deepens with the intensive use of banned weapons such as white phosphorus, which has led to severe contamination of soil and groundwater, the primary source of drinking water and domestic use. As a result, 97% of the water in the Gaza Strip is deemed unsuitable for human consumption, with nitrate levels in the water rising to 10 times the internationally permissible limit. This poses serious health risks to the population, particularly pregnant women and children<sup>7</sup>.

## ١,٣,٢ Restrictions on personal hygiene

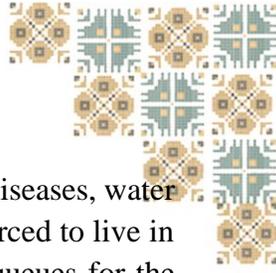
Women and girls in the Gaza Strip are living under dire conditions, facing increasing barriers to maintaining basic personal hygiene. The scarcity of hygiene products and their complete absence from the markets, coupled with the bombing of pharmacies, stores, and shopping centers, has exacerbated the situation. The only remaining supplies are through humanitarian aid, which Israel has imposed restrictions on entering the Gaza Strip. This has led to inflated prices for hygiene products, with soap now costing around \$7, seven times its price before the war. This cost is beyond the means of citizens, many of whom are impoverished to the point of hunger and unable to afford these essentials.

Many families are forced to resort to harsh substitutes for personal hygiene products, using locally-made floor cleaning materials in an attempt to cope with the acute crisis. This is despite the scarcity of raw materials and the skyrocketing prices of these alternatives in the current situation.

This crisis is further exacerbated by the lack of water and inadequate access to toilets and washrooms in displacement areas such as schools. Data shows that 2,000 people share a single toilet, with only one shower unit available for every 700 people. This intensifies the suffering,

<sup>6</sup> PCBS

<sup>7</sup> The impact of pollution on health will be discussed in another section.



especially for displaced women, particularly with the ongoing spread of infectious diseases, water contamination, and the absence of sanitation services in the shelters. Women are forced to live in unstable and unsuitable conditions, lacking privacy, and having to stand in long queues for the restrooms, which is particularly concerning for adolescent and young girls who feel unsafe in these areas.

The crisis surrounding cleaning supplies and personal hygiene materials deepens, affecting the most fundamental aspects of daily life for women in the Gaza Strip. In many instances, women are forced to resort to alternatives that further amplify their suffering and oppression, such as shaving their hair to avoid diseases and insects that thrive in the absence of sanitation. These conditions, especially in the tents, contribute to the spread of illnesses among women and children, intensifying their daily hardships.

**Approximately 690,000 women and girls of menstruating age are particularly affected, and many may resort to taking contraceptive pills to delay their menstrual cycle, despite the associated risks. This suffering is further exacerbated for displaced women, who face heightened difficulties due to the lack of basic necessities and the unstable living conditions.**

## 2. The Impact of Displacement on Women and Girls in the Gaza Strip

Women are the most affected by displacement and continuous movement. The reality of displacement has imposed difficult psychological and living conditions on women, starting with their forced removal from their natural surroundings where they grew up, with all its elements. They are then compelled to live in one or more new environments (due to repeated displacement), struggling with a new reality of insecurity, lack of privacy, restrictions on movement and sleep, and the worsening caregiving burdens, all while lacking basic life necessities and witnessing the destruction of infrastructure.

With the ongoing genocide, the Gaza Strip has been reduced to ashes, and nothing remains as it once was. This reality was imposed by Israel, the occupying power, through its military force, which has affected all aspects of life, turning the area into a disaster zone unfit for living. There is no safe place for women and their families, from the north to the south of Gaza. This has led to the displacement of around 2 million people, including 1 million women and girls who were forcibly displaced from their homes and places of residence to hospital halls and school classrooms, seeking refuge, believing these places would provide them with safety and shelter. However, the brutality with which Israel has treated defenseless civilians is unprecedented. Schools and hospitals were surrounded by tanks, and their inhabitants were terrorized, bombed by aircraft, arrested, tortured, and interrogated. There is no sanctuary for tents, mosques, churches, schools, or international

offices, where the most heinous massacres imaginable have been committed, constantly putting women's lives in imminent danger.

During the perilous journey of displacement, particularly through what the occupying power called "safe corridors," women faced constant threats, including bombing, mistreatment, humiliation, and being taken to detention camps. They were forced to separate from their families and children, depriving them of social and familial support. This lack of support made them vulnerable to exploitation and gender-based violence in the displacement sites. Women became more reliant on others for assistance with basic needs, which put them at further risk of exploitation and abuse in various forms. Adolescent girls, in particular, are the most targeted and affected by violence, which has severe consequences for their psychological and mental health in the future. The occupation's forced displacement and the constant threats to those who refused to comply have exacerbated the already dire humanitarian crisis they are enduring.



In displacement sites, displaced women suffer from a lack of safety and privacy. There is one bathroom for every 2,000 people, and the tents are insufficient for the displaced women and their families. These tents barely provide shelter, offering no protection from the summer heat or winter cold. It is noted that about 100,000 tents have become worn out due to weather conditions and the frequent relocation from one area to another. Many

Palestinian families face the challenge of acquiring new tents due to their scarcity in the region or their high prices. Women are living in harsh conditions without any basic necessities, trapped and enduring hunger and deprivation, with no access to essential needs such as food, clothing, medicine, or personal hygiene items.

The suffering of the displaced people did not stop after they were forcibly displaced from their areas in the north and center of the Gaza Strip, heading south after the Israeli army claimed that it was safer. However, the brutality of the bombardment, massacres, and destruction intensified, especially in the south, where the population density is high. The region has experienced structural changes in the distribution of the population, particularly in Rafah Governorate, which is now overcrowded with displaced persons. The population in Rafah was estimated to be around 1.1 million people as of April 22, 2024, living in an area of 63.1 square kilometers. The population density in Rafah before the aggression was 4,360 individuals per square kilometer, and it has now increased to about 17,500 individuals per square kilometer<sup>8</sup>.

<sup>8</sup> PCBS

### 3. The Different Forms of Forced Displacement in the West Bank

The occupation army expanded its operations in the West Bank, while settlers escalated their attacks, leading to a large wave of displacement for Palestinians. Various direct and indirect pressure tactics have been employed to push for displacement, according to monitoring by local human rights organizations, Palestinian official bodies, and international agencies. Including:

- Repeated attacks by settlers on isolated Palestinian communities in Area C, which is under Israeli control, pushing their residents to leave.
- Expanding the targeting of Palestinian construction in Area C.
- Destruction of homes during repeated incursions, particularly in the northern West Bank.

According to data from the United Nations, Israeli authorities have demolished, confiscated, or forced Palestinians to demolish 1,787 structures across the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. These demolitions led to the displacement of more than 4,498 Palestinians, including around 1,875 children<sup>9</sup>.

The Palestinian refugee camps have been part of Israel's policies aimed at displacing their residents and eradicating the Palestinian refugee issue. Israel, as the occupying power, has deliberately surrounded most of these camps, targeting them with drone strikes and demolishing infrastructure, making them uninhabitable. This has made life even more difficult for Palestinian families, especially women.

These continuous and almost daily violations and attacks have resulted in the destruction of more than 3,000 housing units, 164 of which are deemed uninhabitable. As a result, approximately 245 families, comprising 984 individuals, were forced to flee. Settler attacks, which have exceeded 1,392 incidents, led to the displacement of 277 families from their homes, leaving 1,628 individuals, including 794 children, without safe shelter. This has further intensified the sense of threat and insecurity among women.

The Israeli authorities have expanded their colonial plans in the Jordan Valley, which has been one of the most targeted areas for decades. With the support of settler gangs who have been provided with protection and weapons, these settlers have carried out repeated and escalating attacks, including physical assault, harassment, threats with weapons, home destruction, and livestock theft. As a result, 28 Palestinian Bedouin communities, comprising 292 families and 1,636 individuals, have been displaced from their homes. The most recent instance of displacement

<sup>9</sup> A report entitled "How the occupation used displacement as a weapon in the West Bank" - issued by Al Jazeera website

occurred in the Wadi al-Faw and Umm al-Jamal communities in the central Jordan Valley, where settlers took control of the area, depriving its residents of grazing lands and water sources<sup>10</sup>.

## 4. Health Conditions of Women and Girls in Palestine

### 4.1 Health conditions of women in the Gaza Strip



Amid the ongoing genocide and systematic destruction of the healthcare system in the Gaza Strip for more than a year, the health situation for Palestinians, especially women and children, has worsened significantly. The attacks carried out by Israel, the occupying power, through continuous bombing, a complete siege, and the destruction of healthcare institutions and medical teams, have led to the majority of hospitals being rendered non-functional, with some completely out of service. Around 34 hospitals and 80 medical centers have been destroyed, in addition to the targeted destruction of approximately 134 ambulances<sup>11</sup>. These actions constitute clear violations of international agreements, including the Fourth Geneva Convention.

It is important to note that the hospitals and centers still receiving patients, many of which have been out of service multiple times despite repeated attempts to resume operations, are no longer able to provide the necessary treatment for patients facing severe health conditions, particularly those in need of surgical procedures. The care provided is limited to basic first aid, which does not save lives, according to testimonies from doctors working in these facilities. This means that the lives of thousands of patients, including women and children, whether they are severely injured or suffering from chronic diseases, are in grave danger.

The attacks have not only targeted hospitals but also the medical teams working in them. Around 1,047 healthcare workers have been martyred, and dozens more have been arrested or forcibly disappeared, with 310 doctors and healthcare workers reported missing. Three doctors were assassinated, according to reports from the Government Media Office. The occupying forces also intentionally block ambulance crews from reaching the injured and providing medical treatment, forcing them to leave patients to bleed to death, and even targeting them with airstrikes. This systematic targeting of medical teams has severely hindered vaccination campaigns against polio

<sup>10</sup> Colonization & Wall Resistance Commission

<sup>11</sup> Government Media Office, November 4, 2024

in the Gaza Strip<sup>12</sup>, exacerbating the suffering of this vulnerable group and threatening their lives.

Recent reports from the Gaza Government Media Office confirmed that thousands of citizens, including women and children, lost their lives because emergency medical teams were unable to reach them due to Israeli forces preventing access to every part of the Gaza Strip.

The Israeli occupation has intentionally blocked the entry of essential medicines, medical supplies, sterilization materials, vaccines, and other medical necessities required by hospitals. This has led to a complete absence of healthcare services for the population, including women and children. Additionally, the Israeli authorities have prevented the evacuation of the wounded from the Gaza Strip to receive treatment abroad. Since October 7, 2023, only around 5,000 patients have been allowed to leave for medical care, while approximately 25,000 patients, including 12,000 who urgently need evacuation, are at immediate risk of death if not treated promptly. This data is based on reports from Gaza's Ministry of Health representatives and the World Health Organization<sup>13</sup>.

**Since October 7, 2023, Israel has deliberately targeted Palestinian women, killing them in blatant violation of international law, resulting in the martyrdom of over 11,815 women in Gaza. The Israeli occupation's destruction of hospitals and health facilities, as well as its blockade preventing the entry of medicines and medical equipment, has exacerbated the humanitarian and health crises in the region.**



All these circumstances have led to the deterioration of the health conditions for women and children, exacerbating the suffering of the injured and patients who are dealing with serious and chronic illnesses. A report issued by the United Nations (September 2024) indicates that more than 177,000 women in Gaza face life-threatening health risks. Over 162,000 women in Gaza are at risk of non-communicable diseases such as hypertension, diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, and cancer. More than 30,841 women are at risk of diabetes, 107,443 are at risk of hypertension,

<sup>12</sup> According to a report issued by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) dated November 5, 2024, the third phase of polio vaccination was launched on November 2, where 105,261 children under the age of ten were vaccinated. As of November 4, 83,867 children aged 2-10 years received vitamin A supplements.

<sup>13</sup> BBC speaks to wounded evacuated from Gaza - BBC News Arabic

18,583 face the risk of heart diseases, and approximately 5,000 cancer patients urgently need treatment. However, all related medical services have been suspended.

In the northern Gaza Strip, particularly, the suffering of women and their families is intensifying. Currently, no government-run hospitals are functioning in Gaza City, and there are only four private hospitals, namely Al-Ahli, Al-Razi, the Evangelical, but they do not offer all the necessary medical services, especially for complicated surgeries. The situation is not much better in the northern governorates. For example, there are only three doctors, one of whom is the only surgeon in the northern Gaza Strip, Dr. Bakr Abu Safiya, working at the besieged Al-Awda Hospital. During the siege, Israeli forces frequently raid and bomb hospital facilities, destroying medicines and supplies, and there are no surgical services available at this hospital.

Despite the vital role of field hospitals in supporting both public and private hospitals, most of them only provide primary healthcare services and lack advanced medical equipment needed for complex surgeries. Additionally, they are deprived of oxygen stations, as Israel has prevented these supplies from entering. Furthermore, foreign medical delegations have been blocked from reaching these hospitals to assist the overburdened local medical teams. Among the field hospitals targeted and forced to stop operating is the UAE Hospital in the southern Gaza Strip, which was the largest and best-equipped field hospital, with specialized staff and services.

Hospitals in Gaza are also facing a severe crisis due to the failure of generators, either from direct targeting or lack of fuel. Israel has refused to allow the entry of generators and spare parts needed for repairs in any of the Ministry of Health's hospitals. The generators currently in operation are only able to provide basic functions, such as lighting, and do not meet the necessary demands for medical procedures. Additionally, the lack of oxygen stations is another critical challenge. These difficulties are pushing Gaza's healthcare system toward a health catastrophe, severely hindering the ability to provide adequate medical services.

## ٤,٢ Pregnant women in the Gaza Strip suffer the most and their lives are at risk



In these circumstances, the suffering of pregnant women is intensifying. Approximately 155,000 pregnant and breastfeeding women are lacking healthcare services and face obstacles in accessing prenatal and postnatal care. Around 60,000 pregnant women are at risk due to the lack of healthcare (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, October 2024)<sup>14</sup>, with most of these pregnancies classified as high-risk. More than 15,000 pregnant women are on the

brink of starvation. In the absence of necessary anesthesia for surgical operations, cesarean sections are being performed without anesthesia. Additionally, many women are giving birth in hospital corridors or makeshift shelters like tents, destroyed homes, and schools, all while lacking basic necessities, including blankets. They suffer from the winter cold and limited access to personal hygiene supplies for themselves and their children.

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The Israeli occupation's imposition of a complete blockade on hospitals, preventing the entry of medicines, medical supplies, fuel, and cutting off electricity, has led to a deterioration in the health situation for pregnant women, depriving them of essential healthcare services. This has threatened the lives of newborns, with dozens martyred due to these conditions. The difficulty in accessing

<sup>14</sup> Press release issued by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (October 7, 2024): One year after the Israeli occupation's aggression on the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics reviews the social, economic and environmental conditions one full year after the Israeli occupation's aggression on the Gaza Strip and the West Bank.

healthcare facilities, combined with the anxiety, stress, and fear experienced by pregnant women, has resulted in an alarming 300% increase in miscarriage rates, as well as a rise in maternal mortality rates to 25 per 100,000 cases. Additionally, infant mortality rates have increased, with reports indicating that 710 children under the age of one have been martyred during the war<sup>15</sup>.

**It is also necessary to point out what the Israeli occupation did in April 2024, when it destroyed the Al-Basma Medical Center, which is a fertility center, which led to the elimination of more than 5,000 embryos, thus depriving hundreds of Palestinian couples who face fertility problems of their dream of having children.**

✚ More than 162,000 pregnant and breastfeeding women are suffering from chronic non-communicable diseases or are at risk of developing them.

✚ 155,000 pregnant and breastfeeding women lack access to healthcare services and face obstacles in obtaining prenatal and postnatal care.

✚ 15,000 pregnant women are on the brink of famine, and 3,000 of them have reached the catastrophic hunger stage (Phase 5).

The survey conducted by UN Women, eleven months after the genocide, reveals significant aspects of the suffering experienced by pregnant women. 68% of pregnant women are suffering from complications such as preterm labor, urinary tract infections, anemia, high blood pressure disorders, and vaginal bleeding. In addition to the absence of safe delivery services, food insecurity, malnutrition, and the consumption of contaminated water have a serious impact on the health of pregnant and breastfeeding mothers, as well as the health of newborns.

Malnutrition signs have resulted from a lack of protein, iron, and other nutrients. A report

published by OCHA in October 2024 on food security and markets monitoring indicates that vegetable consumption has decreased from six days a week before the conflict to almost zero, while egg and meat consumption has dropped from three days a week to zero. According to a UNICEF survey conducted between October 18-24, 2024, there was a significant decrease in dietary diversity, with 95% of households with children aged 1 to 23 months reporting that their children had consumed only two or fewer types of food. These conditions make women and newborns more vulnerable to conditions and diseases such as anemia, preeclampsia, and bleeding, which increases the risk of death among them. Additionally, the likelihood of infants contracting infectious diseases, including pneumonia, increases, particularly with the approach of winter. According to a report from OCHA (November 12, 2024), 42,000 pregnant women have reached the third stage of the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC), or worse levels of food insecurity across Gaza. Of these, 15,000 women are classified as being in an emergency phase

<sup>15</sup> Government Media Office in Gaza

(Phase 4), and 3,000 face catastrophic hunger (Phase 5). The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) warns that this number could rise to 8,000 women with the arrival of winter. The lack of childhood immunizations for newborns puts the lives of thousands of them at risk.

### ٤,٣ The impact of overcrowding in displacement sites on women's health

The overcrowding in shelters and displacement areas, with a large number of displaced persons, also signals a grave health disaster, particularly affecting the population and women. The Ministry of Health in Gaza has warned about this issue, which is caused by the lack of basic health facilities such as bathrooms and toilets, as previously mentioned, along with the lack of sanitation, depletion of personal hygiene supplies, and materials necessary for cleaning the areas they are staying in. This has led to the spread of infectious diseases, particularly diarrhea, intestinal diseases, hepatitis A, smallpox, lice, and influenza. According to the latest reports from the Government Media Office, dated November 9, 2024, the number of people infected with these diseases has exceeded 1.7 million, including women, children, and girls. The number of cases of hepatitis due to displacement has reached approximately 71,338, while a previous report indicated about 600,000 cases of upper respiratory tract infections<sup>16</sup>.

The accumulation of millions of tons of waste in overcrowded shelters, streets, and surrounding areas, along with the destruction of sewage networks and their contamination with drinking water, has led to the spread of insects and foul odors. This situation is severely worsening the health conditions, especially for women and their families. The ongoing Israeli aggression and the prevention of residents and municipal workers from removing the waste and repairing the sewage networks are exacerbating the situation, threatening further health crises among the population.

**Women and children in displacement centers suffer from poor health conditions in displacement centers, where they are exposed to increased risk of contracting infectious diseases due to poor hygiene, lack of health care, accumulation of waste and destruction of sewage networks.**

<sup>16</sup> Report issued by Al Jazeera entitled: Diseases and epidemics sweep Gaza, 8-4-2024

#### 4.4 Health conditions of women in the West Bank

In the West Bank, the World Health Organization documented attacks on healthcare facilities from October 7, 2023, to May 2024, resulting in the loss of 16 lives and injuries to 95 others. These incursions caused damage to 54 healthcare facilities, 20 mobile clinics, and 319 ambulances. 59% of these attacks occurred in the cities of Tulkarem, Jenin, and Nablus<sup>17</sup>. The attacks targeted healthcare infrastructure, ambulances, and involved searches of ambulances and personnel, including the detention of medical teams. This has severely hindered patients' access to healthcare facilities and impacted the health services provided to citizens.

The Israeli occupation has also intensified checkpoints, closed entrances to Palestinian cities, refugee camps, and towns, and imposed curfews, which hindered the movement of ambulances and medical teams and obstructed patients' access to healthcare centers and hospitals for necessary treatment. Additionally, the destruction of infrastructure and homes has further impaired the work of ambulance teams. It is also important to note the impact of the financial crisis faced by the Palestinian Authority due to the withholding of tax revenues by Israel, which has affected the payment of salaries to healthcare workers. This has impacted their ability to provide regular health services. According to a World Health Organization report, 45% of essential medicines were depleted from stock (as of May 2024). In most areas of the West Bank, primary care clinics, outpatient clinics, and specialized clinics operate only two days a week, while hospitals are functioning at about 70% of their capacity.

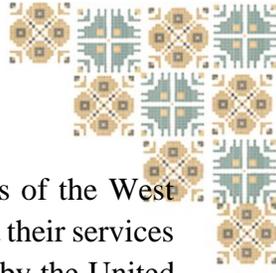
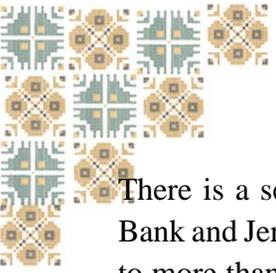
**Since October 2023, Israel has targeted healthcare facilities in the West Bank, resulting in the death and injury of dozens, as well as the destruction of health centers and ambulances. The restrictions placed on medical teams and the denial of treatment permits threaten the lives of patients and endanger the services provided by mobile clinics.**

The report also highlights an increase in the rejection of treatment permits, which threatens the lives of patients needing treatment outside the West Bank. Between October 2023 and May 2024, 44% of treatment permit applications, totaling around 28,292 requests, were either rejected or delayed. Additionally, 48% of companion permit requests were denied during the same period<sup>18</sup>.

These measures and restrictions taken by the Israeli occupation against the health sector, in addition to the curfew and the destruction of infrastructure, make it difficult for citizens to receive the health services and urgent care they need and put their lives in danger.

<sup>17</sup> World Health Organization: West Bank Health Access (Oct-May 2024)

<sup>18</sup> WHO Report: "WHO Concerned Over Worsening Health Crisis in the West Bank" June 14, 2024



There is a serious issue facing the mobile health clinics operating in various areas of the West Bank and Jerusalem, stemming from a severe funding shortage. This threatens to halt their services to more than 96 Palestinian communities in Area C by 2025, according to a report by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) issued on October 7, 2024. This exacerbates the health challenges, especially for women, the elderly, and those with chronic diseases.

#### **4.5 The effects of the war on women's mental health**

Wars typically leave deep and painful psychological scars on all groups, but the ongoing genocide in the Gaza Strip stands apart from any other war in modern history, at least in the past two centuries, due to the horrors and crimes committed against all sectors of society, particularly women and children. The intensity of the bombing, its continuity, and the scale of the projectiles used, launched from all directions, land, sea, and air, without mercy, with the use of the harshest and most destructive weapons, and the indiscriminate nature of these attacks, targeting everyone and everywhere, is unparalleled. Additionally, Israel has used starvation as a means of pressuring and punishing the population, forcing them into collective punishment and forcing them to migrate. Humanitarian aid has been blocked from most parts of the Gaza Strip, especially the northern region. Women are living in constant fear and anxiety, not only for their own lives but also for the lives of their children. A mother watches her child die from hunger, literally, not figuratively, helplessly, gripped by pain and despair. Women are seen being taken to detention camps, where their dignity and humanity are violated. They are stripped of their clothes, and some have been subjected to rape or sexual harassment, while others have received threats of such abuse. Some women watch their newborns, born prematurely, as they struggle for life. They watch helplessly as their child fades, knowing that the oxygen supply could run out at any moment and the power station could shut down at any time, and with it, their child's heartbeat may stop.

There are those who watch the deep wounds of their husbands or children, some of whom have lost a leg, others who have lost an eye, and other painful cases. Each of them is bleeding, with no medication or even painkillers available. Most hospitals and health centers have stopped functioning, many of their staff have been killed, their stores have been destroyed, and no aid has been allowed to enter. Patients have not been allowed to leave. Either you die from the bombing, die from starvation, or die from your injuries. There is no other choice!

**This is a poignant testimony from one of the women who survived the bombing in Gaza: "During the intense bombardment by the Israeli occupation, my young son was screaming in fear and didn't know how to escape. In those moments, I felt like our entire lives were in danger. I can't forget the look in his eyes as he ran, searching for safety. Since then, I haven't been able to sleep at night. Every time I hear the sound of a plane or an explosion, the fear rushes back. I can no longer focus on anything, there's always a sense of anxiety inside me, as if we're under threat at every moment."**

There are those who carry a black bag, gathering the remains of their children's scattered body parts. Just hours ago, they were bombed by planes full of malice and hatred, and their dreams, like their bodies, vanished into thin air. Perhaps they get a moment to bid farewell to what remains of them, and with them, they also bid farewell to their dreams and hopes forever. All of this is the consequence of this ongoing war, which will undoubtedly leave deep, long-lasting psychological scars.

**The stories of suffering and pain are countless, unimaginable, and beyond the capacity of any normal human mind to endure. The common thread running through all of them is the woman. Whether targeted directly or through her family and children, she carries this**

**burden and pain for the rest of her life. It leaves deep psychological scars that time cannot erase, and no treatment can ease.**

According to a report by the World Health Organization (2023) on the psychological impact of wars on individuals, the repeated exposure of women and children in Gaza to these aggressions and wars, with the ongoing destruction and bombardment of populated areas, creates a state of chronic stress and psychological pressure. The repeated experience of traumatic events has led to the development of chronic psychological disorders such as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), which manifests in symptoms like intense anxiety, intrusive memories, and avoidance of areas affected by recurring conflicts<sup>19</sup>.

The psychological pressures on women in Gaza are further exacerbated by the absence of men or breadwinners due to martyrdom, injury, or imprisonment. Thousands of women in Gaza have lost their primary caregivers, which increases the emotional and psychological burden on these women. They are left to make crucial decisions, care for their children, and work to provide for their families. The overwhelming sense of helplessness and inability to meet their families' needs only heightens the psychological strain on them.

<sup>19</sup> A report issued by the World Health Organization entitled: The World Mental Health Report: Transforming Mental Health for All (2023)

According to a recent study published by the United Nations in September 2024 on the psychological effects of war on women, the study revealed that 62% of women surveyed often struggle with sleep, and 65% of them frequently feel stressed and suffer from depression.

In addition to the aforementioned effects, war also leaves a significant impact on family and community relationships. The increased psychological pressures lead to heightened stress within families, resulting in strained relationships due to mental stress and the pressures of life. Consequently, it is expected that rates of domestic violence will rise. These tensions also severely affect the mental health of children, who live in an environment devastated by war, where their families, loved ones, and friends have been affected. This makes it difficult for them to receive the necessary psychological and emotional support.

**Women in Gaza also suffer from the lack of available psychological treatment or support services. Although some organizations and agencies have provided certain forms of psychological support and debriefing for women and their children, these efforts are insufficient in the face of the growing crises they endure. There is a pressing need for long-term support programs that can help women cope with the psychological effects and adapt to life after the conflict.**

#### ٤,٦ The repercussions of the Israeli government's decision to ban the UNRWA from providing health services in the West Bank, Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip

On November 4, 2024, the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs officially notified the United Nations that it would terminate the agreement with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), which has been in place since 1967. This agreement allowed UNRWA to operate and provide support in Palestine<sup>20</sup>. The decision to end the agreement was endorsed by the Israeli Knesset with a large majority (92 votes in favor, 10 against) on October 28, 2024. This action represents a clear violation of international laws, treaties, and United Nations resolutions, especially considering that the establishment of UNRWA was based on a UN General Assembly resolution in 1949. The termination of this agreement will lead to the collapse of the international

<sup>20</sup> The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) is a United Nations agency whose mission is to provide humanitarian assistance to refugees in addition to providing health, education and social services. It provides its services to about 5.9 million Palestinian refugees inside and outside Palestine. It has 706 schools with 543,075 students, and 144 facilities operating in the health sector with a budget of \$1.17 billion in 2022. (Al Jazeera, 4-11-2024 What does Israel's decision to stop dealing with UNRWA mean? | Politics | Al Jazeera Net)

humanitarian operation, particularly in Gaza, which heavily relies on the services provided by the agency. The situation is already dire in Gaza, where people are enduring severe conditions due to the ongoing genocide and mass atrocities. The risk is not only the cessation of direct humanitarian aid but also the complete paralysis of the health system in the region, as no alternative agency is in place to take over UNRWA's critical work.

The expected cessation of UNRWA's operations, which provides healthcare services at 140 centers across Gaza, the West Bank, and Jerusalem, will have severe health consequences for 2 million Palestinians. It will put the lives of those suffering from chronic illnesses such as diabetes, hypertension, cancer, as well as pregnant women and infants, at risk. Palestinian refugees will also lose access to essential mental health services. Furthermore, the suspension of UNRWA's activities will increase the incidence of infectious diseases due to the halt in vaccinations for critical diseases like measles and polio. Thousands of pregnant women will also lose access to prenatal care. In 2022, approximately 31,441 women in Gaza and 10,130 women in the West Bank received these essential services (UNRWA official website).

The suspension of UNRWA's activities will further strain local hospitals and centers, which are already under extreme pressure due to resource shortages, lack of medications, and attacks on their staff through killings and arrests. This will negatively impact the quality of healthcare services provided to the population, including women and children. The already overburdened health system will struggle to meet the growing demands, exacerbating the dire situation and increasing health risks for vulnerable groups.

**The decision to ban the operations of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) poses a serious threat to the lives of nearly 2 million Palestinians, half of whom are women and girls, especially in Gaza. The region is already suffering from the collapse of its healthcare system amid ongoing genocide. This decision also threatens to erase the Palestinian refugee issue and strip them of their right to return.**

## 5. Food Insecurity

The Israeli occupying authority has imposed a comprehensive siege on the Gaza Strip, preventing water, electricity, food, and fuel, leading to a worsening humanitarian crisis. As a result, cries of hunger and pain have risen from the besieged city, where there is no escape from these attacks and violations of human rights. These violations have affected all aspects of life, including the bombing of bakeries. The few that are still operating face severe challenges due to shortages of essentials like flour and fuel. The only functioning mill in Gaza is unable to grind wheat due to a lack of electricity and fuel. In addition to bombing food stores, industrial and commercial facilities, and destroying the agricultural sector, 68% of its area has been destroyed. The land area allocated for vegetable farming has shrunk from 85,000 dunams to 7,000 dunams, and the region was previously fully dependent on local food supplies, such as vegetable crops, at reasonable prices before the aggression<sup>21</sup>. This has affected Gaza's agricultural crop supply, which accounted for 44% of its needs. Furthermore, 33% of greenhouses have been destroyed, with significant losses in wells and solar panels<sup>22</sup>. Additionally, the supply centers of humanitarian organizations have been bombed, particularly those of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA).

The livestock and fishing sectors have also been disrupted, as the severe shortage of feed and water has led to the death of about 70% of livestock since October 2023. According to recent rapid assessments conducted by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), nearly 15,000 head of cattle have perished, which accounts for 95% of the total livestock. Almost all calves have been slaughtered, while less than 25,000 sheep (about 43%) remain alive, around 3,000 goats (about 37%), and 34,000 birds (1% of the poultry sector), in addition to the destruction of approximately 70% of the fishing fleet<sup>23</sup>.

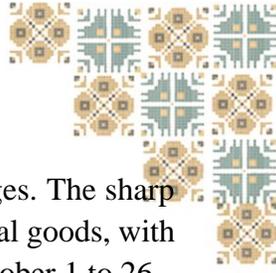
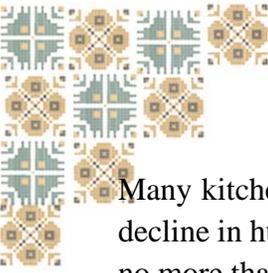
These combined factors represent critical obstacles to the rehabilitation of local food systems, leading to the continued reliance of people on increasingly diminishing humanitarian aid. As winter approaches, food shortages and other vital humanitarian supplies entering the Gaza Strip may worsen into famine, as warned by the World Food Program. In October, about 1.7 million people, or 80% of the population, did not receive their monthly food rations across Gaza, and the number of cooked meals distributed daily dropped to 450,000 meals, a 25% decrease compared to late September<sup>24</sup>.

<sup>21</sup> Government Media Office in Gaza

<sup>22</sup> Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

<sup>23</sup> Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

<sup>24</sup> Report titled "More than 90% of Gaza's population suffers from worse levels of food insecurity" – issued by the Palestinian Press Network



Many kitchens had to close, and those that remain open suffer from supply shortages. The sharp decline in humanitarian aid is further exacerbated by a severe shortage of commercial goods, with no more than 100 trucks carrying commercial supplies entering the region from October 1 to 26.

For months, all attempts by humanitarian organizations to access and deliver food aid to the population in northern Gaza were blocked. The eight kitchens that were operating in the governorate have either become inoperable or inaccessible due to ongoing Israeli military attacks. Additionally, delays at checkpoints and multiple inspection processes have limited the amount of aid entering the region. Supplies that were able to cross into northern Gaza could only reach Gaza City, rather than being directed to the besieged areas in northern Gaza governorate.

**More than 96% of Gaza's population is suffering from levels worse than food insecurity**

As a result of the halt in commercial and humanitarian flows into Gaza, the destruction of infrastructure and health facilities, and the challenging situation related to the operations of UNRWA, most of Gaza's population is now suffering from unprecedented famine.

The restrictions on aid entry are exacerbating food insecurity, with the average aid entering the region being 30 trucks per day, representing only about 6% of daily needs<sup>25</sup>. The effects of food insecurity are particularly severe in northern Gaza, where the occupation has prevented the entry of any aid or goods for over 50 days, leaving hundreds of trapped residents in the north, who are facing the harshest genocide campaign<sup>26</sup>. Consequently, the reduced aid flows have led to a tenfold increase in food prices in northern Gaza in recent weeks, which are now "ten times higher than they were before the conflict erupted." This warning serves as a reminder that "the world's attention must be on Gaza, and action is needed now.

**The United Nations described the food insecurity situation in Gaza as catastrophic, with 96% of the population, or 2.15 million people, facing severe food insecurity, and half a million people (22% of the population) experiencing catastrophic levels of food insecurity.**

Women spend most of their time in displacement camps searching for food to feed their children. Getting bread or a meal from donors means waiting in long queues for hours, and sometimes this journey ends without any result. The same applies to water and all other necessities. The

<sup>25</sup> UNRWA Commissioner

<sup>26</sup> Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Monitor



Occupation has destroyed every aspect of life, leaving nothing untouched. As a result, the biggest concern for women is providing at least one meal a day, especially with many bakeries and markets shut down, and the targeting of aid trucks, preventing them from reaching the northern part of the Gaza Strip in particular. This is all happening amid a severe food shortage<sup>27</sup>.

The residents of the Gaza Strip are suffering from extremely poor levels of dietary diversity, to the point of alarming concern across Gaza. The consumption of bread, legumes, and staple foods like vegetables has dropped from six days a week before the escalation of hostilities to nearly zero. Similarly, the consumption of meat and eggs has fallen from three days a week to practically none at present. Furthermore, dietary diversity has completely disappeared among children, pregnant women, and nursing mothers due to the blockade on humanitarian aid and the decline in the supply of commercial food items<sup>28</sup>.

The impact of food insecurity is especially severe for women, given the caregiving burden that primarily falls on them, particularly in overcrowded shelters and tents. This includes providing nutrition and prioritizing their children's needs over their own.

## 6. The War is Creating a New Generation of People with Disabilities

Thousands in Gaza are suffering from permanent disabilities due to a variety of Israeli weapons. The injured often face a harsh reality where the treating doctor is forced to amputate a limb due to the lack of other treatment options. The patient is then left to share the same fate as all residents of Gaza, amidst hunger and thirst. According to the Health Group in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, women and girls make up about 45% of people with disabilities in the Gaza Strip.

More than 100,000 injuries have been recorded in Gaza, including 12,500 injuries that required surgical intervention. Thousands of people have undergone amputations. UNICEF estimates that at least 1,000 children have lost one or both of their legs. These amputations were carried out under extremely dangerous conditions and are likely to require further surgery, as well as rehabilitation, assistive devices, psychological and social support, and other services that are severely lacking.

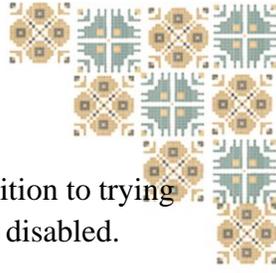
### ٦.١ The long-term psychological impact of disability

The suffering of people with disabilities has doubled as they have lost many of their basic needs, which has increased their hardship. It was noted that they are currently focusing on providing basic

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<sup>27</sup> Issued by the Palestinian Press Network, a report entitled “More than 90% of Gaza’s population suffers from worse levels of food insecurity.”

<sup>28</sup> OCHA



needs for people with disabilities such as 'water, food, medicine, and shelter,' in addition to trying to prevent the further deterioration of the health of those who have recently become disabled.

Displacement areas, water, sanitation, and hygiene facilities are not equipped for people with disabilities and lack basic life essentials, leading to other medical complications that cannot be treated in unsanitary environments. Women and girls are often expected to act as primary caregivers for their family members with disabilities. The impact extends beyond physical injuries, with serious emotional and psychological trauma, as well as wider effects on the social fabric and the needs of families and communities.

This can exacerbate the pressures they feel and the feelings of anxiety or guilt, particularly for family members who have been injured or disabled during the war. In this caregiving role, women and girls often become the source of psychological and social support, even though they are suffering from the same needs, limiting their ability to support others<sup>29</sup>.

The multiple evacuation orders completely ignored people with disabilities, who often face significant difficulties in following or understanding instructions. They are in a catastrophic situation, as they are forced to either leave their homes and the assistive devices they need to survive, or remain without their families and caregivers, facing an increased risk of death. During evacuation attempts, women and girls with disabilities, in particular, face heightened risks and additional psychological trauma. Many people with disabilities have been subjected to repeated violations, with some being attacked by police dogs used by occupation forces, while many others have been subjected to mistreatment and torture by the occupying soldiers.

## 7. Cognitive Genocide within the Framework of Genocide

The education sector was not spared from the destruction targeted by the occupation, which deliberately and directly aimed to obliterate its foundations during the brutal genocide. In fact, the destruction of educational pillars and the targeting of the cultural, intellectual, and scientific scene is not a new policy for the Israeli occupier, and it did not begin after October 7, 2023. The policy of systematic ignorance to hinder the Palestinian from progressing intellectually and scientifically to keep up with civilizations is an ongoing crime that dates back to the Nakba of 1948. It is rooted in a Zionist mentality that seeks to erase the Palestinian other, in a relentless attempt to obliterate Palestinian identity, existence, memory, facts, and the deeply rooted Palestinian narrative with its historical evidence.

Since the first day of the barbaric war, which coincided with the beginning of the 2023-2024 academic year, the educational process in all schools, universities, and other educational

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<sup>29</sup> Gender Issues Bulletin: Gender Impact in the Gaza Strip / September 2024

institutions in the Gaza Strip came to a halt. This situation has left students from all educational stages, both basic and higher education, facing an uncertain future. No one could have imagined that the course of this aggression would last more than a year. The issue is not limited to missing the current academic year, but extends to creating a blurry image about the fate of these students and the possibility of their return to school even after the war ends, due to the systematic and extensive destruction of educational infrastructure. This has resulted in devastation that has affected all components of education, including students, teachers, educational staff, buildings, and educational institutions.

**About 620,000 students in the Gaza Strip were deprived of going to their schools, including 39,000 students who were prevented from taking their high school exams, and 85,000 children who were unable to enroll in the first grade. Additionally, 88,000 students were unable to attend their universities, and 19,000 students were forced to leave the Gaza Strip.**

### 7.1 The consequences of the genocidal war on the educational sector

Speaking about the destruction of educational infrastructure, although the statistics are not final yet due to the ongoing war, in terms of material losses, the war machine has completely destroyed 285 schools out of 550, including government, private, and UNRWA schools<sup>30</sup>. Additionally, all 12 universities have been subjected to complete destruction or significant damage, including the destruction of the main campus of Al-Azhar University in Gaza City, which led to the destruction of higher education infrastructure. The estimated cost of damages to the education sector in Gaza is \$341 million, according to the preliminary damage assessment for Gaza in March 2024 issued by the World Bank, UNRWA, and the European Union.

These violations were not limited to educational buildings alone but also included human losses among students, teachers, and academics. Approximately 11,119 school students and 689 university students were martyred, and more than 18,000 school and university students were injured, in addition to the unknown number of arrests that occurred under mysterious circumstances<sup>31</sup>.

Furthermore, academics and scholars were targeted. According to the statistics, 17 professors, 59 holders of PhDs, and 18 individuals with master's degrees were martyred, in an incomplete toll, with estimates suggesting that other academics were also targeted across various scientific fields.

<sup>30</sup> Report of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education

<sup>31</sup> Report of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education

Additionally, 441 teachers out of 22,000 teachers from government, private, and UNRWA schools were martyred<sup>32</sup>.

Regarding the attacks on education in the West Bank, since the start of the aggression, 84 schools have been damaged, and 7 universities have been subjected to repeated incursions, destruction, and tampering with their contents. More than 120 students have been martyred, more than 600 have been injured, and over 400 students from schools and universities have been arrested.

When discussing the damages, they cannot be limited to the direct destructive effects on the components of education, such as human resources, buildings, and educational institutions. The scope extends to include the indirect damages represented by the human, social, and economic costs in both the short and long term, as education is a comprehensive developmental process. Given its role as a key factor in increasing an individual's chances of obtaining work and a sufficient income, the primary cost of this will be borne by the children and girls of Gaza, as poverty expands. Child labor and early marriage are likely outcomes of the violations against the education sector.

According to a report by ESCWA, the war is expected to push Palestine's human development levels backward by between 11 and 16 years due to the decline in educational attainment, a decrease in life expectancy, a reduction in per capita income, and poor nutrition.

**In the Gaza Strip, the war machine completely destroyed 285 schools out of 550, which include government, private, and UNRWA schools, in addition to 12 universities that were either completely destroyed or severely damaged.**

**In the West Bank, 84 schools were vandalized, and 7 universities were subjected to repeated incursions, destruction, and tampering with their contents.**

<sup>32</sup> Report of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education

## ٧,٣ The consequences of displacement on girls' education

In addition to the immense destruction that has affected the education sector, with both human and material damages accumulating in a still incomplete toll, the displacement crisis caused by the war, with all its painful details and harsh reality, has become an additional obstacle to psychological, emotional, and spatial stability. This adds to the already existing barriers and challenges facing efforts to salvage what can be salvaged from the academic year.

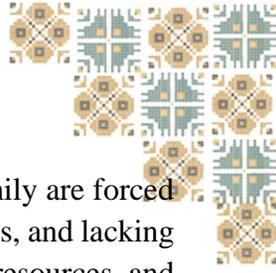
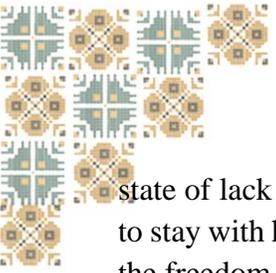
Despite the scarcity of necessary resources, the destruction of infrastructure, and the disruption of communication and internet networks in most areas of the sector, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education has made efforts to provide virtual education through an electronic platform. Furthermore, individual initiatives launched by the youth and girls of Gaza to create learning spaces, whether in some tents or amid the ruins of destruction, have been made in a desperate attempt to make up for the lost time and ensure that the current academic year will not be like the last one. This is a clear indication that the determination of this promising generation cannot be threatened by any form of killing and destruction.

**The war has reshuffled priorities for young girls and adolescent girls of school age. The girl is often forced to stand in queues to secure a meal for her family and younger siblings in the event of losing her parents. Some girls are compelled to go to internet distribution points to access the lessons provided by the Ministry of Education through the virtual platform, which exposes them to the risk of bombardment due to the gatherings.**

However, the continuity of receiving educational services is not limited to the availability of resources, whether in terms of material aspects like buildings and classrooms, or human resources such as teaching staff. It also extends to creating a conducive surrounding environment in which students can engage and receive education effectively. This requires a comprehensive system of psychological conditions that are conducive to this, including safety, security, and emotional, psychological, and physical stability.

The displacement crisis, however, has had the opposite effect on these conditions, and its impact, linked to the difficult living and psychological circumstances, is particularly evident on women and girls due to biological differences and their specific needs.

Moreover, the war and the displacement crisis have reshuffled priorities for young girls and adolescent girls of school age. While any girl in the world enjoys a level of privacy and security needed at her age, a girl in the Gaza Strip is deprived of this urgent need. She lives in a catastrophic



state of lack of privacy due to overcrowding in displacement areas. She and her family are forced to stay with hundreds of families in one place, sharing bathrooms and sleeping spaces, and lacking the freedom to make decisions, such as choosing a meal. This is amid a scarcity of resources, and they often share a single meal with a group of no less than 40 people.

On one hand, they experience the loss of shelter, safety, and privacy, which are urgent needs for girls of their age. On the other hand, they face the tragedy of losing their parents and the fragmentation of the social fabric, especially for girls who have lost both parents. This signals a dangerous rise in the number of orphaned children, which before the war had already exceeded 35,000 boys and girls<sup>33</sup>. This increasing number imposes a growing demand for services, especially psychological support and access to social services such as shelter, trauma treatment, and education. This is especially concerning given that there are only four orphanages in the Gaza Strip<sup>34</sup>, which have either been destroyed or turned into shelters for displaced families.

In addition to the difficult psychological impact on these girls who have lost their families and the emotional deprivation they feel, they are compelled to take on the role of both mother and father in an attempt to fill the emotional void for their siblings. They may be forced to beg or walk long distances in an effort to secure a meal. Alongside this, they provide support to their families by ensuring access to water and food, and bear the daily caregiving burdens such as cleaning, cooking, and collecting firewood in the absence of easy means for survival.

The suffering of displaced girls who have sustained severe injuries due to the war cannot be overlooked. The displacement crisis has exacerbated their suffering due to continuous movement and lack of stability as they move from one environment to another, often carrying infectious diseases that worsen their injuries, making their situation even more dangerous.

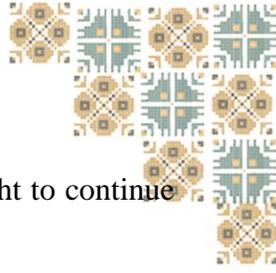
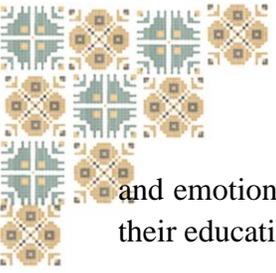
In these difficult circumstances, with the deterioration of the concepts of human rights for girls and the loss of a sense of identity due to displacement, education may not appear as a priority in the new list of urgent needs imposed by the consequences of the war. Despite the motivation and desire to receive education, in some cases where a girl manages to find a moment of respite from the bombing, destruction, and lack of resources, she is forced to go to internet distribution points to access the lessons offered by the Ministry of Education through the virtual platform. This exposes her to the risk of bombing due to the gatherings.

Girls are naturally more affected because they are the most vulnerable link, whether we like it or not. They need to have their specific needs addressed separately from the broader picture of destruction. While experiencing devastation, siege, hunger, genocide, displacement, homelessness, and the loss of family and caregivers, they also face deprivation of psychological

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<sup>33</sup> Latest statistics for SKT Welfare Islamic Charity Foundation

<sup>34</sup> Report issued by the National Child Protection and Alternative Care System Program



and emotional stability. They are left facing an uncertain future regarding their right to continue their education.

## 8. The Economic Conditions of Women in Palestine during the Genocidal War

The economic reality for women in Palestine is closely linked to the general economic and political context affected by the Israeli occupation and the policies and measures it imposes, which hinder sustainable development and burden the Palestinian economy. These policies have complicated the lives of Palestinians, especially women, who face dual challenges stemming from the economic blockade and Israeli policies on one hand, and structural inequality within society on the other.

The Palestinian economy is under the weight of occupation policies, including control over natural resources such as land and water, the establishment of military checkpoints and roadblocks (which have increased to over 872, including 196 iron gates), and the closure of crossings, all of which impede the movement of people and goods. This has prevented working women from reaching their workplaces, blocked business owners from marketing their products and obtaining production resources, and restricted farmers from accessing their fields and farms. All of this has led to economic deterioration, further weakening opportunities for development.

Additionally, the dependence of the Palestinian economy on the Israeli economy has deepened, as Palestinian markets are flooded with Israeli goods, limiting local production opportunities. This situation has worsened after October 7, 2023, and has particularly impacted women who rely on agricultural and craft activities to support their families. Furthermore, the closure of the labor market to about 200,000 workers who were employed within the Green Line has resulted in increased unemployment and poverty rates, as the local market is unable to absorb them.

Women have been significantly impacted by these circumstances, whether they were employed or unemployed. The impact was especially severe on female heads of household, who have to bear additional burdens due to the loss of their breadwinner, whether through martyrdom, illness, injury, or imprisonment. The number of female-headed households in the West Bank exceeded 83,000 (12.3% of the total number of women in the West Bank in 2023), and in Gaza, it exceeded 44,000 (11.8% of all households in the Gaza Strip). These numbers were recorded by the third quarter of 2023, before the escalation of the conflict, and they are expected to rise under the current conditions.

## ٨,١ The economic conditions of women in the Gaza Strip

The economic situation of women in the Gaza Strip is part of the broader crisis facing the Palestinian economy, where women face complex challenges that have worsened with the continuation of the Israeli aggression that began on October 7, 2023. Even before the recent aggression, women in the Gaza Strip were suffering from the repercussions of the ongoing siege that has lasted for 17 years, which has severely impacted the economic structure and increased its fragility. Statistics showed a decrease in the participation of women in the labor market, which stood at 16.5% before the aggression in October 2023, marking a decline from the previous year when the rate was 19%, representing a drop of 2.5% (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, Q3 2023).

The unemployment rate among women in Gaza is considered one of the highest in the region, due to the siege and unstable economic conditions. The unemployment rate among women reached about 67.7%, compared to 39.2% among men, and it peaked in the third quarter of 2022 at 72.2%. With the continuation of the aggression, experts expect the unemployment rate among women to exceed 95%.

Before the start of the aggression, the number of working women was around 35,200, of whom 80.2% were wage workers, only 2% were entrepreneurs, and 11.6% were self-employed. Due to the destruction of infrastructure and the economic sector, approximately 28,524 women lost their wage-based jobs, in addition to 4,213 women who were self-employed, meaning that 32,737 women have become unemployed since the start of the aggression.

**The genocide in Gaza has destroyed the economic infrastructure, causing 32,737 women to lose their jobs and pushing the unemployment rate to exceed 95%. This destruction has greatly impacted their lives, as they have been forced to bear additional burdens as primary breadwinners, working in primitive conditions to secure food and water amid extreme poverty and soaring prices, especially with the loss of thousands of their breadwinners.**

Of course, the worsening economic crisis has economic and social repercussions on women, as it has led to the deterioration of living standards and an increase in poverty rates. International reports indicate that the residents of Gaza are now living below the poverty line in its entirety.

The suffering of women has increased particularly with the escalation of attacks on civilians, as more than 12,000 women have lost their lives since the beginning of the war, representing about

28% of the total martyrs, while thousands of women are suffering from serious injuries, hindering their ability to support their families.

Additionally, the loss of many women's male breadwinners has increased the burdens they bear, leading to a shift in gender roles. Women have taken on greater responsibilities toward their families in light of the difficult economic conditions, especially with the continued challenges of

**The suspension of UNRWA's activities threatens the loss of thousands of women's jobs in Gaza, exacerbating unemployment and poverty, and leaving women and families facing difficult living conditions that impact their economic and social stability.**

securing basic necessities and the unprecedented rise in prices. As a result, women are now working in many jobs imposed by these circumstances, such as collecting firewood and water, gathering plants to prepare meals for their children, repairing torn clothes for displaced people, and providing mobile phone charging services. Many women are also engaged in other tasks that have reverted the population to simple, primitive lifestyles, all in an effort to provide for their families' basic needs.

Furthermore, the Israeli occupation's decision, which was previously mentioned, to suspend the activities of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) in Palestinian territories will deprive hundreds of women working in the institutions supervised by the agency of their jobs. In UNRWA's educational institutions, around 19,877 employees work, including 9,443 in the Gaza Strip and 2,215 in the West Bank. In the health sector, about 4,851 employees work, of whom 1,015 are women<sup>35</sup> (21% of the health sector workforce). With the suspension of UNRWA, this does not include women working in other relief and advisory institutions overseen by the agency. The cessation of the agency's work will result in these women losing their jobs, further increasing unemployment and poverty levels among Palestinian families. Moreover, the loss of jobs for men working in these institutions will directly affect women and children in their households. These negative effects on the women workers and the dependents of male employees in these institutions will deepen the already difficult economic conditions in Palestine, particularly in the Gaza Strip, where most institutions operating in the sector have collapsed either partially or completely, with only a few international institutions remaining, including UNRWA.

<sup>35</sup> The official website of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA)

## ٨,٢ Economic conditions of women in the West Bank

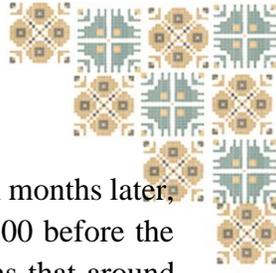
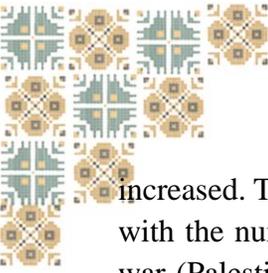
Palestinian women in the West Bank, like other Palestinian women, face the consequences of the recent war on Gaza, as the West Bank is subjected to direct attacks by Israeli occupation forces. These attacks include field executions, arrests, the demolition of homes and economic facilities, as well as economic restrictions on the movement of people and goods. In light of the ongoing Israeli siege on the cities, camps, and villages of the West Bank and Jerusalem, it has become increasingly difficult to reach workplaces due to the spread of Israeli military checkpoints. Data indicates that 44.5% of economic establishments in the West Bank have been affected by the worsening spatial restrictions on workers (Ministry of National Economy, January 2024). These violations have caused a significant deterioration in the performance of businesses owned and/or managed by women, with 30.6% of these businesses closing completely or partially due to a decrease in demand for their products. Women business owners face additional challenges, including severe restrictions on mobility due to checkpoints and closures, which hinder the ability

**The agricultural sector is one of the most affected by the occupation's measures, as it works diligently to control the largest possible area of land and other resources, as part of its policy of land confiscation, settlement construction, the wall, and the establishment of buffer zones.**

of these businesses to deliver their products to markets outside the governorates, especially in light of repeated settler attacks that disrupt operations in areas near settlements. Furthermore, business owners experience severe difficulties in obtaining basic raw materials needed for production, particularly for handcrafted and food products.

It is important to highlight the agricultural sector, which has been one of the most affected by the measures and practices of the Israeli occupation. This is evident through its control over agricultural lands, especially in the Jordan Valley, where it controls 60% of the land. Through the establishment of settlements and outposts, Israel controls about 85% of the West Bank's land, in addition to the land annexed and the apartheid wall. Since October 7, 2023, until October 2024, it is estimated that more than 52,000 dunums have been taken over, according to reports from the Wall and Settlement Resistance Commission. Attacks carried out by settlers and the army on farmers, especially during the olive harvest season, continue, posing a danger to their lives. Additionally, many Palestinians suffer losses due to being deprived of a vital source of food and livelihood—olive oil. Furthermore, Israel imposes restrictions on the import of essential agricultural materials, among other measures, which have created obstacles for family businesses, most of which employ women.

These circumstances have forced many women to either give up their jobs or adjust to part-time work. As a result of these measures, unemployment rates among women in the West Bank have



increased. The unemployment rate rose from 24.9% before the war to 33.5% just six months later, with the number of unemployed women reaching 60,800, compared to about 45,700 before the war (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, Labor Force – Q1 2024). This means that around 15,000 women lost their jobs, mostly due to the economic crisis caused by the war. The deterioration in the economic situation has forced many institutions to reduce their workforce and lay off a significant portion of female employees.

The pressures on Palestinian families have increased due to the rise in unemployment rates among men as well, with the male unemployment rate doubling from 10.2% before the war to 35.6% in early 2024, as many workers lost their jobs, both in the Israeli and local economies. This sharp increase in unemployment has created a severe financial crisis for Palestinian families and negatively impacted women's ability to cover daily living expenses and meet their families' needs, leading to increased psychological and social pressures.

As is the case in the Gaza Strip, the Israeli government's decision to halt the activities of UNRWA (United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees) in the Palestinian territories will result in the loss of jobs for thousands of women and men working in its institutions, further increasing the economic pressure on women and their families.

#### **^, † Increase in women's shift towards informal work**

With the increase in economic pressure during the war period and the resulting consequences, such as rising unemployment rates, a decline in the local labor market's ability to absorb the surplus of labor, and the increased circulation of the shekel in Palestinian banks due to Israel's refusal to accept the accumulated shekels, all these factors contribute to a greater shift toward informal work, especially among women. Before the outbreak of the war, it was estimated that the proportion of informal labor was around 54% of the total Palestinian workforce (excluding the agricultural sector, where 95% of workers are informal labor). The number of people classified as informal workers reached 102,000, 14% of whom were women. The number of projects in this sector exceeded 100,000, with one-fifth of these projects being owned and managed by women, approximately 23,000 projects, employing around 25,000 women. According to Palestinian statistics (2022), 90% of these family-owned businesses do not provide wages for those working in them.

**More than half of the workforce in the Palestinian economy is informal labor, with 37% of it being women.**

By the end of 2023, the proportion of informal labor remained the same as in 2022, reaching 56%, with 61% for males and 37% for females. This percentage includes those working in the informal

sector, as well as wage earners who do not receive any rights in the labor market, such as end-of-service benefits, pensions, paid annual leave, or paid sick leave (Palestinian Statistics - 2023)<sup>36</sup>. Additionally, they earn 30%-40% less than workers in the formal sector, according to UNCTAD, which also predicted that the informal sector would expand due to the surplus of shekels in the economy, reaching 50% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP)<sup>37</sup>.

#### 8.4 The economic impact of the deterioration of health and psychological conditions

The worsening of health and psychological conditions among Palestinians due to the political circumstances and the ongoing Israeli aggression, including the massacres and genocide being committed against Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, has serious effects on the Palestinian economy. The rising poverty rates in Gaza, where more than 90% of the population is suffering from poverty and food insecurity, amid the worsening famine and the Israeli occupation's prevention of aid and its severe restrictions on the delivery of assistance, will have dangerous consequences for the children who are suffering from famine and will survive this war. In the long term, a generation will emerge that suffers from the health repercussions of this war, which will impact their lives, their ability to complete their education, and their ability to lead a normal life.

Moreover, the majority of martyrs, the injured, and those suffering from injuries that cause permanent disabilities, preventing them from working, are people of working age (around 60%), which means that the Palestinian economy has lost part of its human capital, which is one of the

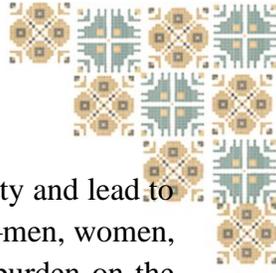
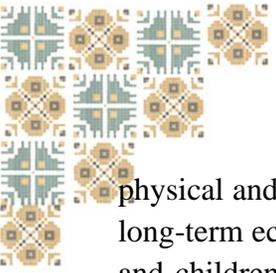
**In light of the ongoing assaults and the blockade imposed on the Gaza Strip, Palestinians, including women and girls, are suffering from unprecedented health and psychological deterioration, which threatens the emergence of a long-term economic and social crisis due to the loss of human capital and the increasing burdens of poverty and food insecurity.**

most important components of any economy. This is in the context of the limited ability of Palestinians to control their natural resources, as they are under the control and manipulation of the Israeli occupation. Women are an important part of this factor, as the rate of educated women is higher than that of men (67% of those enrolled in local higher education institutions are female).

The suffering endured by Palestinians, including the loss of family members and children, and injuries that change the course of life, along with the consequences of food insecurity on the

<sup>36</sup> Press release issued by the President of the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, reviewing the labor situation in Palestine for the year 2023 on the occasion of International Workers' Day (May 1)

<sup>37</sup> Report entitled: "Developments in the Economy of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Note by the UNCTAD Secretariat, Trade and Development Board, September 2024.



physical and mental health of the next generation of children, will affect productivity and lead to long-term economic losses. In addition, the war has created thousands of citizens—men, women, and children—who have become people with disabilities. This will increase the burden on the government to provide the necessary services and support, exacerbating the financial crisis faced by the Palestinian Authority.

Women will be among the groups most burdened by the health crisis affecting the population in Palestine during this war, as they are the primary caregivers for family members, including children, the elderly, the injured, and those who have become disabled. This will worsen the psychological suffering of women and affect their ability to participate in the labor market due to these responsibilities. The problem becomes more complicated if the woman herself is among the injured.

In this context, it is important to note the findings of a report from the World Health Organization, which indicates that deteriorating health conditions, particularly mental health, play a significant role in causing substantial economic impacts. The World Economic Forum estimates that the global cost of mental health disorders reached approximately 2.5 trillion dollars in 2010, with projections for this cost to rise to 6 trillion dollars by 2023. This cost includes productivity losses amounting to 1.7 trillion dollars, in addition to 0.8 trillion dollars in direct healthcare costs. It is expected that low- and middle-income countries, including Palestine, will bear around 35% of the total cost (World Health Organization, 2023)<sup>38</sup>.

### **٤.٥ The impact of the economic decline on levels of violence in Palestinian society**

Economic pressures are among the most significant challenges facing families, affecting their cohesion and stability. Many studies that have examined the relationship between rising rates of poverty, unemployment, and gender-based violence have found a direct correlation between them. In two recent studies (Kaushik, 2024; EROL & Özdemir, 2023) on the feminization of poverty and its implications for women, it was noted that the phenomenon of the feminization of poverty is a result of structural gender discrimination that negatively impacts women, particularly in regions with low human development, such as South Asia and the Arabian Peninsula. In these areas, women face significant restrictions on opportunities for education and employment. Therefore, based on these studies, women are the first to suffer from economic crises, and the deterioration of women's financial conditions makes them more vulnerable to violence in its various forms.

When women lack financial independence, they are more vulnerable to violence from their husbands or families. They find themselves compelled to stay in harmful relationships due to their inability to independently secure their own needs and those of their children, which makes them

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<sup>38</sup> World Mental Health Report: Transforming mental health for all, World Health Organization, 2023



more susceptible to abuse and exploitation. As economic pressures worsen, and with rising rates of unemployment and poverty, tensions increase within families and society, leading to a rise in violence, including gender-based violence. Studies have shown that rates of domestic violence against women increase during times of severe poverty and unemployment.

One of the dangerous repercussions of economic crises is that women are deprived of access to social support services, such as shelters and legal and psychological counseling services, making it difficult for them to escape cycles of violence or obtain social protection. The problem becomes more complicated in areas that lack sufficient infrastructure to support women.

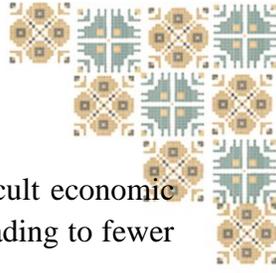
**Economic pressures contribute to the exacerbation of violence against women in Palestinian society, as poverty and unemployment increase, leading to greater tension within families. Women are deprived of access to protection services, social support, and legal and psychological counseling services. Therefore, it is essential to adopt policies that promote the empowerment of women and provide the necessary support to help them face these challenges.**

It is important to note what those studies have pointed out, that the single mother faces greater challenges due to being deprived of opportunities for work, appropriate wages, or may work in inappropriate jobs that do not meet the minimum of her rights. In this case, employers exploit the single mother's need for any job opportunity that provides her with an income, even if it is minimal.

**We must also not forget the repercussions of all this on the woman's mental health, as these pressures make her vulnerable to anxiety, depression, and related illnesses. Worse still, in many societies, it is considered shameful for a woman to seek mental health services for treatment or necessary medical counseling!**

In Palestine, the relationship between violence and economic pressures is a two-way one. The political and military violence resulting from the Israeli occupation has exacerbated the problem of poverty and unemployment among both men and women, with the situation in Gaza being more severe than in the West Bank, where Israel, as the occupying power, continues its policy of extermination and forced displacement. These economic pressures have serious social repercussions, one of the most prominent being the rise in violence against women.

Palestinian women face increasing economic and social challenges, which exacerbate the phenomenon of "feminization of poverty" that we have previously mentioned. Palestinian women suffer from structural discrimination, manifested in difficulties accessing education, job



opportunities, and basic services. The Israeli occupation further worsens the difficult economic conditions through restrictions on movement and access to economic resources, leading to fewer job opportunities for women, particularly in rural and remote areas.

Additionally, a large number of Palestinian women face unemployment, and many of them work in the informal sector (around 25,000 women) or in low-wage jobs, increasing their vulnerability to poverty. Palestinian women also bear additional livelihood responsibilities, as they are often responsible for supporting their families (whether they are working or not), which further amplifies the burden of poverty and contributes to their social marginalization.

According to many studies, domestic violence is one of the direct consequences of worsening poverty. Many women find themselves trapped in cycles of violence due to financial dependency on their husbands or other family members, which exacerbates their problems. At the same time, women's difficulty in accessing institutions and services that provide protection or counseling, whether due to financial or social reasons, further worsens their situation and increases their suffering.

Accordingly, it is essential to adopt policies that combat gender discrimination and promote the economic and social empowerment of women, ensuring access to education and employment opportunities, improving access to social and health services, and providing protection services. It is also important to raise societal awareness about the importance of supporting women in facing these challenges. Efforts should be made to provide programs targeted at women victims of violence, enabling them to break free from the cycles of poverty and violence.

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