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**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development**

**Joint written statement* submitted by Organization for
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organizations in special consultative status**

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

[4 February 2024]

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

The Situation of Gaza; Children Needs Immediate Attention

United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres, Jan. 2024:

"The nightmare in Gaza is more than a humanitarian crisis, it is a crisis of humanity."

For over 100 days, the Gaza children's share of life has been death, despair, hunger, thirst, disease, trauma, loss of loved ones, family, home, school, body organs and precious lives.

The continuous colossal children death toll is a growing stain on the conscience of humanity. The staggering child casualty figures have made the recent Gaza war to be considered as "a war against children" and the region to be called a "graveyard for children".

A heavy bombardment campaign, unprecedented in modern history led to death and injuries of thousands of Gazan children. The evidence, including satellite imagery, shows that Gaza has been destroyed at a pace and level that exceeds any recent conflict. In about 3 months, the buildings, including hospitals, schools and mosques were destroyed in a scale equal to the destruction of Aleppo in 3 years (1) (from 2013 to 2016).

Between 7 Oct. 2023 – 7 Jan. 2024, at least 23,084 Palestinians were killed and another 58,926 (2) were injured in the Gaza Strip, according to the Ministry of Health. About 70 percent of those killed are reported to be women and children.

On 19 Jan. 2024, the Commissioner-General of the UN Agency for Palestinian Refugees (UNRWA) Philippe Lazzarini, warned: "I'm afraid that we're running the risk of losing a generation of children. Virtually all infrastructure including water & electricity have been badly damaged, so basic public services in Gaza are not available anymore."(3)

The whole nightmare is taking place in Gaza, while numerous international instruments have emphasized on children's rights, protection of children in armed conflicts and prohibition of violence toward children.

Protection of Children in International Law

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) guarantees the protection of children in armed conflicts and ensures their safety and well-being. The Convention is a legally binding international agreement which Israel is a state party to it and has an obligation to uphold its commitments to the human rights of children.

The global community condemns impunity for crimes against children in armed conflicts and perpetrators of such crimes including the military commanders, political leaders of states and non-state armed groups must be held accountable for their criminal actions against children under international law.

In addition, the United Nations has identified six grave violations against children during armed conflict three of which have extensively taken place in Gaza: 1) killing or maiming, 2) attacks against schools or hospitals, and 3) denial of humanitarian access . (4)

Mother and Child Casualties

Children's right to life has been alarmingly violated. As of Jan. 14th 2024, children's catastrophic death toll have been announced to pass 10,000. (5)

On 19 January 2024, the Ministry of Health in Gaza announced the colossal death toll to be, at least 24,762 Palestinians since 7 October, with 70 percent of those killed being women and children. The same Ministry announced the number of children, killed by Israeli airstrikes and ground operations, to surpass the staggering figure of 10,000 in nearly 100 days of since the beginning of violence in Gaza, with thousands more missing, presumed to be buried under rubble. Another 62,108 Palestinians were reported to have been injured as of 19 January.

According to Sima Sami Bahous, Executive Director of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), between 7 Oct and 22 Nov, the recorded death toll for Gaza women and mothers, has been “two mothers killed every hour and seven women every two hours.” “Women in Gaza have told us that they pray for peace, but that if peace does not come, they pray for a quick death, in their sleep, with their children in their arms,” she warned. “It should shame us all that any mother, anywhere, has such a prayer.”(6)

In November and December about 200 women per day would give birth, amidst the chaos created without water, painkillers, medical supplies, anesthesia for Caesarean sections or electricity for incubators. The mothers had limited access to water and food.

On 19 January, a UNICEF Communication Specialist stated: “In the 105 days of this escalation in the Gaza Strip, nearly 20,000 babies have been born into war. That’s a baby born into this horrendous war every 10 minutes. Mothers face unimaginable challenges in accessing adequate medical care, nutrition, and protection before, during and after giving birth. Becoming a mother should be a time for celebration. In Gaza, it’s another child delivered into hell. Humanity cannot allow this warped version of normal to persist any longer. Mothers and newborns need a humanitarian ceasefire.” (7)

The Situation of Living Children

The living Gaza children were spending traumatic times during the unending conflict: no food, no water, no school, nothing but the terrifying sound of war.

On 13 January 2024, visiting the Gaza Strip, the head of the UN agency for Palestinian refugees, Philippe Lazzarini, warned that an entire generation of children in Gaza is being “traumatized”, diseases were spreading, and the clock is “ticking fast towards famine”. His statement considered the “plight of children in Gaza ... heartbreaking”, and estimated that the trauma that an entire generation of Gaza children is suffering “will take years to heal”. “Thousands [of Gaza children] have been killed, maimed, and orphaned. Hundreds of thousands are deprived of education. Their future is in jeopardy, with far-reaching and long-lasting consequences.” He warned. (8)

Over 2 months after the beginning of the War, a report published by Euro-Med Monitor, estimated that “between 24,000 and 25,000 children in the Gaza Strip have lost one or both parents, and approximately 640,000 have had their homes destroyed or damaged, leaving them without a place to live”. The most serious life issue for the orphan children is that many of whom have lost all close relatives leading to feelings of sadness, insecurity, vulnerability, loneliness and missing their families.

Between 7 Oct 2023 and 7 Jan 2024, more than 1,000 children have had one or both legs amputated (9), which amounts to the alarming figure of 12 children per day.

The horrible and devastating impacts of the ongoing cycles of armed conflict was reflected on the desperate lives of Gazan children, who were experiencing and witnessing massive death, destruction, displacement, hunger, loss, and grief for months, while the repeated calls by the United Nations and the General assembly for a ceasefire was confronted with the US veto leading to continuation of atrocities and humanitarian blockade for over 100 days; displacement of almost all Gaza people into overcrowded UNRWA shelters and the continuation of hardship for the people of Gaza. By the end of January 2024, the only solution at sight is an immediate cease fire.

Recommendations:

Considering the unbearable human tragedy unfolding in Gaza, we call on the Special Representative of the Secretary General on Children and Armed Conflict to:

- Use all capacities at hand to strengthen international support for Gazan children.
- Lobby with the UN Member States to urge Israel to allow unimpeded humanitarian access to the Gaza strip to end children's hunger, thirst and infectious disease.
- Support a humanitarian sustainable ceasefire in the enclave to prevent the loss of more human lives and terminate this "Crisis of Humanity". (10)
- Join the plea of the Committee on the Rights of the Child for entry of all humanitarian convoys to the Gaza Strip and providing all children with needed humanitarian aid, as required by international law.
- Use all available capacities to seriously strengthen the existing mechanisms of protecting children during armed conflicts, considering the ineffectiveness of the mechanisms to prevent wide –scoped international crimes against children.

International Movement for a Just World, NGO(s) without consultative status, also share the views expressed in this statement.

1- <https://www.washingtonpost.com/investigations/interactive/2023/israel-war-destruction-gaza-record-pace/>

2- <https://www.unrwa.org/resources/reports/unrwa-situation-report-62-situation-gaza-strip-and-west-bank-including-east-Jerusalem>

3- The message posted on the X account of @UN Lazzarini, on Jan. 24th.

4- <https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/publications/SixgraveviolationsBooklet.pdf>

5- Ministry of Health, Jan. 11th <https://www.savethechildren.net/news/gaza-10000-children-killed-nearly-100-days-war#:~:text=>

[The%20latest%20data%20from%20the%20Ministry%20of%20Health,and%20the%20assault%20on%20Gaza%20that%20has%20followed](https://www.savethechildren.net/news/gaza-10000-children-killed-nearly-100-days-war#:~:text=The%20latest%20data%20from%20the%20Ministry%20of%20Health,and%20the%20assault%20on%20Gaza%20that%20has%20followed).

6- <https://press.un.org/en/2023/sc15503.doc.htm>

7- <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/born-hell>

8- <https://www.unrwa.org/newsroom/official-statements/gaza-strip-100-days-death-destruction-and-displacement>

9- <https://news.un.org/en/story/2023/12/1144927>

10- Secretary-General António Guterres, press conference, Nov. 6th, 2023.