



# Palestine: gendered impacts of violence in times of genocide

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## Executive summary

Since October 2023, the Palestinian population has been subjected to extraordinary levels of violence by Israel. In a context of an increasingly documented and condemned genocide and persisting violence, oppression, colonisation and discrimination imposed by the Israeli apartheid regime, it seems relevant to address, document and give visibility to the impacts from a gender perspective. Whilst this report focuses on how the violence perpetrated during the genocide has affected the Palestinian population, it pays special attention to its consequences for the lives and bodies of women and girls, and less comprehensively, to its repercussions for men and boys. The analysis is structured around four thematic areas: 1) the violation of the right to Palestinian lives, highlighting the unprecedented deadliness of Israeli attacks, particularly against women, girls and boys; 2) the consequences of these conditions for the physical and mental health of Palestinian women and girls, with special attention paid to Israel's use of reproductive violence; 3) the consequences arising from Israel's use of sexual and gender-based violence as a mechanism of torture and intimidation against prisoners and the Palestinian population more broadly; and 4) the repercussions of other invisibilised forms of violence during the genocide, such as those related to forced displacement, movement restrictions, the severe deterioration of the economic situation and gender-based violence in the domestic/family sphere. The research focuses on Gaza and the West Bank, and reaffirms the arguments of the many people warning about the genocide against the Palestinian population and the risks of its normalisation. The persistence of Israeli policies and practices as part of its settler colonial project does not merely threaten the survival and rights of the Palestinian population, as impunity for genocide, apartheid and occupation also pose a risk and set a dangerous precedent for all humanity.

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## Introduction

Since October 2023, the Palestinian population has been subjected to extraordinarily high levels of violence. Israel used the attacks by Hamas and other Palestinian groups to justify an unprecedented military offensive—a form of collective punishment that quickly took on the characteristics of genocide. By late 2023, some were warning that the ‘crime of crimes’ was being committed against the Palestinian population of the Gaza Strip and about the need to take urgent action to prevent it.<sup>1</sup> This assessment has become more widespread in light of the overwhelming evidence, and Israel has persisted with its policies despite growing alarm. At the time this report was finalised (December 2025), more than two years later, an increasing number of actors in academic, legal and political spheres recognised and openly condemned Israel’s acts and policies as genocide.<sup>2</sup>

UN experts have documented and certified that Israel has committed at least four of the five acts set out in the Genocide Convention: 1) killing members of a group, 2) causing them serious physical and mental harm, 3) deliberately inflicting conditions of life calculated to bring about the group’s physical destruction in whole or in part and 4) imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group. These acts have been carried out with the intention of destroying the Palestinian people in whole or in part—not through negligence, accident or collateral damage, but with deliberate intent. This intent is considered ‘evident’ both from the statements and the patterns of conduct of Israeli political and military leaders involved in inciting and committing genocide.<sup>3</sup> Among other things, these pronouncements make explicit the intention to destroy the Palestinian population of Gaza as a group, exhibit a constant dehumanisation of Palestinians and call for their destruction and annihilation. Added to this are the videos

and social media messages of officials and members of the Israeli military forces involved in the offensive.

This episode cannot (and should not) be understood as an isolated incident. The genocide was ‘preceded by decades of unlawful occupation and unlawful settlement, with racial segregation or apartheid, under an ideology requiring the removal of the Palestinian population from their lands and their replacement’.<sup>4</sup> In this sense, the genocide has exposed the need to address the Palestinian question as a colonial matter, and more specifically as a case of settler colonialism.<sup>5</sup> This analytical framework lays Zionist colonial domination policies bare, as well as all the (particularly Western) structures and complicities that have enabled and perpetuated policies of dispossession and violence against the Palestinian population, as forcefully and meticulously detailed in successive reports by Francesca Albanese, the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967.<sup>6</sup>

The genocide has aggravated a scenario already characterised by fragmentation and multiple forms of violence against Palestinians. The West Bank, has witnessed an exponential upsurge of violence by Israeli settlers and military forces enjoying total impunity and the intensified implementation of policies of appropriation, control, expansion and multiplication of settlements, thereby accelerating the de facto annexation of the Occupied Palestinian Territory.<sup>7</sup> At the same time, the Palestinian population of East Jerusalem continues to be expelled and suffer the consequences of the Judaisation of the city. The Palestinians of 1948 (those with Israeli citizenship) have continually faced chronic and structural discrimination and the Palestinian refugee population has had no prospects of exercising their right of return. Meanwhile, the genocide

1. In December 2023, South Africa filed a [case against Israel before the International Court of Justice \(ICJ\)](#), the UN’s highest judicial body, accusing it of violating its obligations as a state party to the Genocide Convention so that the ICJ may assess the facts and order provisional measures to halt the Israeli offensive. The ICJ issued its first provisional measures in January 2024.
2. Notable reports condemning Israel’s genocide include those issued by Francesca Albanese, the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, [Anatomy of a Genocide](#) (March 2024), [Genocide as Colonial Erasure](#) (October 2024), [From Economy of Occupation to Economy of Genocide](#) (July 2025) and [Gaza Genocide: A Collective Crime](#) (October 2025); Amnesty International’s report, [‘You Feel Like You Are Subhuman’: Israel’s Genocide Against Palestinians in Gaza](#) (December 2024); Human Rights Watch’s report, [Extermination and Acts of Genocide](#) (December 2024); and the report of the UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel, [Legal analysis of the conduct of Israel in Gaza pursuant to the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide](#) (September 2025).
3. Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel, [Legal analysis of the conduct of Israel in Gaza pursuant to the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide](#), UN Human Rights Council, A/HRC/60/CRP.3, 16 September 2025. The report, particularly in section IV, analyses patterns of conduct and statements by various Israeli officials, including Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, former Defence Minister Yoav Gallant, President Isaac Herzog and senior military officers, some of whom have already been cited in the case filed by South Africa, as well as social media posts by Israeli soldiers. Some of this evidence is being used to file complaints against specific individuals. For example, one of the [videos](#) shows the commander of the Golani Brigade instructing his soldiers: ‘Everyone you encounter is an enemy. If you see someone, open fire, neutralise the threat and move on. Do not hesitate, do not hesitate’. For more information, see Al Jazeera, [Genocide in Gaza through the eyes of Israeli soldiers](#), The Listening Post, 3 March 2024.
4. Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel (September 2025), *op. cit.*, p. 54, paragraph 178.
5. For more information, see Francesca Albanese, [Genocide as Colonial Erasure](#), the report of the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, A/79/384, 1 October 2024; Jorge Ramos Tolosa, ‘Colonialismo de asentamiento sionista, Nakba palestina y genocidio de Gaza: ¿El principio del fin del régimen israelí?’, [Al-Andalus Magreb](#), vol. 32, no. 32 (2025).
6. See footnote 2.
7. International Crisis Group, [Sovereignty in All but Name: Israel’s Quickening Annexation of the West Bank](#), Report 252/Middle East & North Africa, ICG, 9 October 2025.

in Gaza has worsened the suffering of a Palestinian population that had already been facing a critical situation after 17 years of blockade and successive Israeli attacks well before 7 October 2023.<sup>8</sup> In fact, as early as 2012, UN reports warned that the Gaza Strip would become uninhabitable.<sup>9</sup>

From a gender perspective, the policies of exclusion, siege and subordination imposed by Israel for decades have continued to have multifaceted effects on the lives of Palestinian women and girls, the vast majority of whom have lived their entire lives under colonisation and occupation. Their experiences have been shaped by overlapping burdens of violence and discrimination. Israel's structures of domination and dispossession interact with the reality of a largely traditional and patriarchal Palestinian society, creating specific vulnerabilities and limitations for women and girls to exercise their rights and freedoms. Many have documented, condemned and underlined the gender-specific impacts of the different structures of oppression, most notably Palestinian feminist organisations. As such, attention has been drawn, for example, to how the dynamics of Israeli militarisation and occupation reinforce gender inequalities, influence domestic violence and distort the social construction of Palestinian masculinities; to the disproportionate and specific ways that mobility restrictions affect women and girls; to the burden of care that falls on women due to their socially assigned role and the deterioration of material conditions; and to the specific vulnerabilities of certain groups, including widows, women survivors of traumatic bereavement, women with disabilities and people with non-heteronormative sexual and gender identities.

Against this backdrop, what have been the impacts of the genocide in Palestine from a gender perspective? How has the violence committed against the Palestinian population during this genocide affected the lives and bodies of women and girls in particular? This report is a modest attempt to answer these questions based on the analysis of four thematic areas. The first is the violation of the right to Palestinian lives, meaning the deadly repercussions of the Israeli offensive. The second deals with the consequences for the physical and mental health of Palestinian women and girls, with special attention paid to Israel's use of reproductive violence. The third examines the impacts arising from Israel's use of sexual and gender-based violence. Finally, some invisibilised forms of gender-based violence are also addressed, linked to forced displacement and movement

restrictions, the deterioration of the economic situation, domestic/family gender-based violence and other issues. The final considerations synthesise some of the report's main conclusions. The research focuses on both the situation in Gaza and the West Bank, and is the result of a qualitative research methodology that has combined desk research, interviews with members of Palestinian feminist organisations and information gathered from in-person and online seminars and conferences with broad Palestinian participation.

***The violence waged against the Palestinians has reached unprecedented levels, whether compared to previous Israeli military offensives or to armed conflicts elsewhere***

## **1. The violation of the right to Palestinian lives**

Despite the continuity with the violence inherent in Israel's policies of colonisation, occupation and apartheid, the genocide has marked a turning point. The violence waged against the Palestinian population since October 2023 has been extraordinary. Various indicators have found that it has reached unprecedented levels, whether compared to previous Israeli military offensives or to armed conflicts elsewhere. The deadly consequences have been of an extreme magnitude in Gaza, not only due to the use of weaponry with enormous destructive potential in a territory of just 365 square kilometres (one of the most densely populated in the world), but also owing to its intensity, with a significantly higher frequency of attacks than is observed in other conflicts. For example, the number of Israeli airstrikes on Gaza at times far exceeded the daily average of bombings recorded at the peak of the recent armed conflicts in Ukraine, Afghanistan and the campaign of the US-led international coalition against the group Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (see Graph 1).<sup>10</sup> Thus, in early 2024, it was reported that the daily death rate in Gaza was higher than in any other armed conflict in the 21st century.<sup>11</sup> According to data collected by Escola de Cultura de Pau, in 2023 and 2024 Palestine shared the title of the world's deadliest armed conflict along with Ukraine, a country with a much larger population and territory. The lethality of the Israeli military campaign has been associated with the indiscriminate and deliberate use of violence against civilian targets and infrastructure, as well as with the use of sophisticated weaponry and artificial intelligence programs to multiply its impacts.

The levels of violence associated with the genocide in Gaza have also been extraordinary when compared to previous Israeli military operations in the territory and to the overall number of Palestinians killed in recent

8. Previous Israeli offensives include those in 2008-2009 (23 days), 2012 (eight days), 2014 (50 days) and 2021 (11 days).

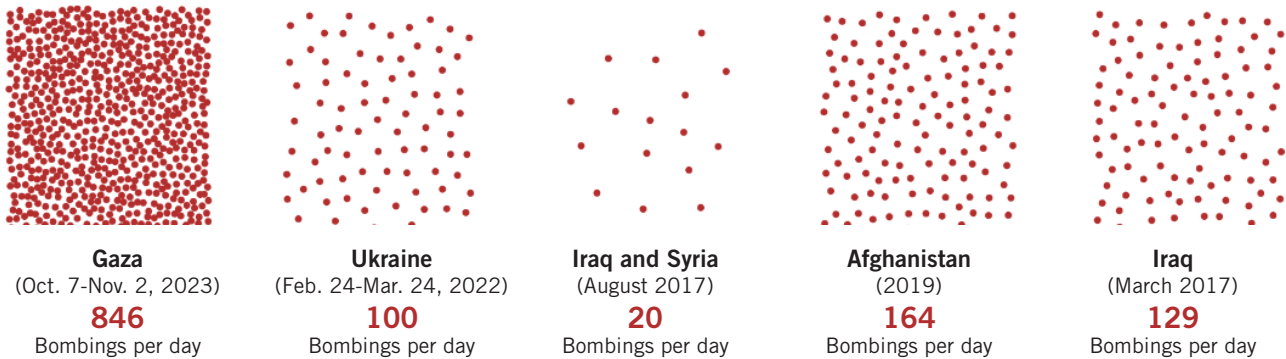
9. UN Country Team, *Gaza in 2020. A liveable place?*, August 2012.

10. Daniele Grasso and Yolanda Clemente, 'Datos. Los efectos de un año de guerra en Gaza: bombardeos, muertes y destrucción sin precedentes', *El País*, 7 October 2024.

11. Servimedia, 'En Gaza mueren más personas al día que en cualquier conflicto armado del siglo XXI, según Oxfam Intermón', *La Vanguardia*, 11 January 2024.

**Graph 1: Intensity of the Israeli offensive in Gaza**

Number of airstrikes at the worst moment of each conflict (daily average)

Source: *El País* (October 2024)

decades. According to the historian Rashid Khalidi, this is the bloodiest period in the ‘hundred years’ war’ against Palestine, with levels of lethality far exceeding those recorded in periods such as 1947-1948 or during the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982.<sup>12</sup> According to data systematically collected by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) since 2008, by September 2023, which was just before the events of 7 October, episodes of violence had claimed 6,326 Palestinian lives in Gaza and the West Bank.<sup>13</sup> These accumulated fatalities over 15 years were surpassed in less than a month after the start of the Israeli military offensive against Gaza in October 2023. By the end of October, Palestinian deaths had reached 8,000, and that figure has multiplied more than tenfold over a two-year period. In the first year of the Israeli campaign in the Gaza Strip, life expectancy in Gaza had dropped by 40 years.<sup>14</sup>

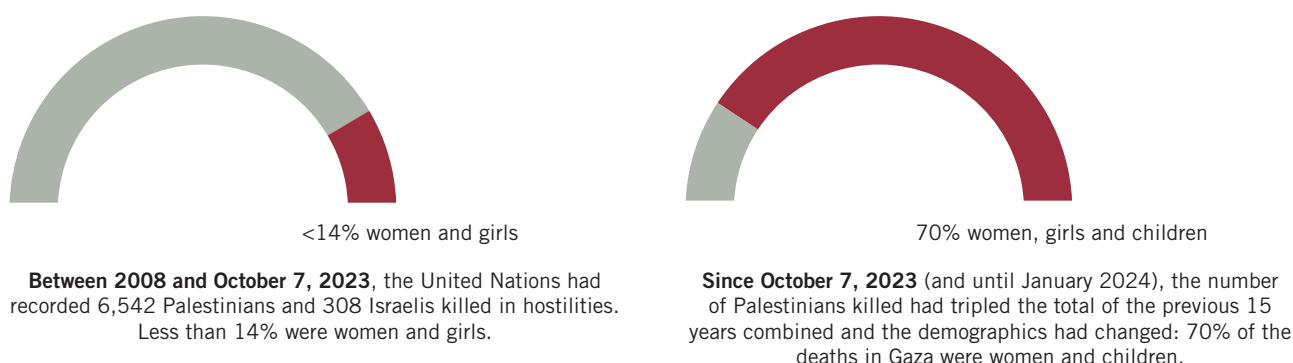
When this report was finalised (December 2025), data collected by OCHA based on the official body count of government bodies in the Gaza Strip indicated that over 70,000 Palestinians had died as a result of Israeli attacks there.<sup>15</sup> Although some have questioned this toll, various investigations have concluded that the official figures should be considered

**The official fatality figures for Gaza should be regarded as a minimum estimate. Several analyses suggest substantially higher numbers**

a minimum estimate, given the limitations on data collection amid the devastation. This calculation does not include people killed and buried under rubble whose bodies have not yet been recovered, nor does it account for deaths associated with the impact of other Israeli policies such as the ironclad blockade, the use of starvation as a weapon of war and the destruction of the healthcare system. Some academic research has concluded that the actual death toll may be much higher.

A study published in *The Lancet* in early 2025 concluded that the figures from the Gaza Ministry of Health are probably underestimated by 41%.<sup>16</sup> Research incorporating other variables, such as an estimate of indirect deaths, offers much higher tallies that are between three and fifteen times higher than direct deaths.<sup>17</sup> Citing this research, and given the impossibility of conducting independent investigations due to the Israeli blockade, UN Special Rapporteur Francesca Albanese suggested considering a figure closer to 680,000 Palestinian deaths.<sup>18</sup> In the West Bank, meanwhile, since 7 October 2023, Israeli military forces and settler attacks had caused the deaths of more than 1,000 people. This accumulated figure represents 43% of all people killed in violent incidents in the West Bank over 20 years.<sup>19</sup> Death tolls disaggregated by sex are partial and there

- Rashid Khalidi, “‘A new abyss’: Gaza and the hundred years’ war on Palestine”, *The Guardian*, 11 April 2024.
- OCHA, *Data on casualties: Palestinian fatalities* (figures corresponding to the period from 1 January 2008 to 16 September 2023). Viewed on 19 November 2025.
- Human Rights Council, *Legal Analysis of the conduct of Israel in Gaza pursuant to the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide*, A/HRC/60/CRP.3, paragraph 20, 16 September 2025.
- OCHA, *Reported impact snapshot/Gaza Strip*, 10 December 2025.
- Zeina Jamaluddine et al., ‘Traumatic injury mortality in the Gaza Strip from Oct 7, 2023, to June 30, 2024: a capture–recapture analysis’, *The Lancet*, Volume 405, Issue 10477, pp. 469-477, 8 February 2025; The Guardian, ‘Gaza death toll 40% higher than official number, Lancet study finds’, *The Guardian*, 10 January 2025.
- Rasha Khatib, Martin McKee and Salim Yusuf, ‘Counting the dead in Gaza: difficult but essential’, *The Lancet*, Volume 404, Issue 10449, pp. 237-238, 20 July 2024; Al Jazeera, ‘Gaza toll could exceed 186,000, Lancet study says’, *Al Jazeera*, 8 July 2024.
- UN, *Gaza: ‘This is the Shame of Our Time’ – Press Briefing by Special Rapporteur Francesca Albanese*, 15 September 2025.
- UN, *UN Human Rights in Occupied Palestinian Territory: 1001 Palestinians killed in West Bank since 7 October 2023 – one in five are children*, 17 October 2025.

**Graph 2: Changing demographics of Palestinian deaths**

Source: UN Women, *Gender Alert: The Gendered Impact of the Crisis in Gaza* (January 2024)

is no breakdown for children and elderly people killed in Gaza, or for persons with disabilities in the West Bank. The challenge remains to step up information collection efforts that would provide a clearer picture of the devastating human impact of the genocide, give visibility to the many different experiences and take protective action. Despite these limitations, from a gender perspective the available data offer some findings and give rise to several considerations. One of these is the significant proportion of women, girls and boys who have died due to the genocide.

In early 2024, UN Women warned of a grim change in trend: whereas Palestinian women and girls had accounted for less than 14% of the fatalities in the previous 15 years, the proportion of women and children who died in the first 100 days of the Israeli offensive had soared to 70% (see Graph 2).<sup>20</sup> Since then, this percentage has fluctuated relatively downwards, though a new spike was observed in March 2025. Nevertheless, the trend indicating higher percentages of deaths among women and children compared to before the genocide continues to hold. According to OCHA, as of 7 October 2025, women and children accounted for nearly half of all deaths in Gaza (30,606). UN Women's estimates, which apply the *The Lancet* methodology,<sup>21</sup> are higher and indicated that 33,000 Palestinian women and girls had been killed after two years of genocide.<sup>22</sup> The proportion of women killed as a result of Israeli violence since October 2023 in the West Bank was significantly smaller than in the Gaza Strip, whilst children, the vast majority of which were boys, accounted for 20% of all deaths (see Graph 3).

**Particularly notable is the significant proportion of women, girls and boys among those killed in the context of the genocide**

The exceptional magnitude of the impacts of violence on Palestinian women, girls and boys has raised many alarms. In early 2024, UN Women warned that two Palestinian mothers were dying in Gaza every hour.<sup>23</sup> The UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls, its causes and consequences, Reem Alsalem, has insisted that what is happening to Palestinian women and girls is not collateral damage: 'It is the intentional destruction of their lives and their bodies for being Palestinian and for being women'.<sup>24</sup> UNICEF warned as early as December 2023 that Gaza had become the most dangerous place in the world for a child.<sup>25</sup> In five months of Israeli attacks, more children had been killed in the Gaza Strip than in all armed conflicts worldwide in four years<sup>26</sup> (see Box 1: Genocide and Palestinian childhood).

References to the number of women and children killed as a result of the Israeli campaign have also been a recurring feature in media reports on Gaza, focusing primarily on the statistics (rather than on any individual experiences). However, the use of the category 'women and children' has often been questioned and problematised. From a general standpoint, some feminists have argued that the indistinguishable use of this term often implies an excessive emphasis on viewing women and children as vulnerable groups and on a female identity associated almost exclusively with their role as caregivers, thereby limiting or denying their agency. Cynthia Enloe coined the 'womenandchildren' to stress that the simplistic use of the term ignores the diversity of women's experiences in war. The term is

20. UN Women, *Statement on Gaza by UN Women Executive Director Sima Bahous*, 19 January 2024.

21. UN Women, *Invisible No More: Estimating the Death Toll of Women and Girls in Gaza and UN Women over 28,000 women and girls killed in Gaza since October 2023*, 19 May 2025.

22. UN Women, *Facts & Figures: Two Years of war on Gaza – the toll on women and girls*, 8 October 2025.

23. UN Women, *Press release: Two mothers are killed in Gaza every hour as fighting exceeds 100 days*, 19 January 2024.

24. UN OHCHR, *Gaza: UN expert denounces genocidal violence against women and girls*, Press Release – Special Procedures, 17 July 2025.

25. UNICEF, *Statement by UNICEF Executive Director Catherine Russell on the resumption of fighting in Gaza*, 1 December 2023.

26. United Nations, 'Más niños han muerto en Gaza en cinco meses que en los últimos cuatro años en todas las guerras', *Noticias ONU*, 13 March 2024.

**Graph 3: Palestinian deaths in Gaza and the West Bank from October 2023 to October 2025**

\* Disaggregated data by sex/gender not available.

Source: (Gaza) OCHA, data as of 7 October 2025; (West Bank) UN Human Rights Office in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, data as of 17 October 2025.

commonly used to underscore the horror of the crimes committed and to establish a kind of hierarchy of deaths.

Some, including Palestinian feminists such as Rafeef Ziadah and the writer Mohammed el-Kurd, have asserted that the use of the term ‘women and children’ often implicitly stigmatises, demonises and criminalises Palestinian men, who are presented as ‘unworthy of mourning’.<sup>27</sup> It is as if their deaths could not also be considered an atrocity, as if their lives, in the words of Judith Butler, were ‘ungrievable’. Palestinian men are considered dangerous, allegedly guilty and worthy of suspicion. ‘The status of male Palestinians [...] as “civilians” is always circumspect’.<sup>28</sup> Attention has thus been drawn to the construction of narratives that identify all Palestinian men as combatants by default, and to the impact of these narratives on collective perceptions. These consequences are also relevant from the perspective of international law, which requires a distinction between civilians and combatants. In her report *Anatomy of a Genocide*, Francesca Albanese underscores that at the end of 2023, Israel announced that it had killed ‘7,000’ terrorists at a stage of the military campaign in which fewer than 5,000 Palestinian men had been identified among the dead. As Albanese points out, this means that the Israeli government assumed that all Palestinian men killed as a result of its offensive were active combatants.<sup>29</sup> Following this same assumption, nearly a year later, in October 2024, Israeli forces claimed to have killed 17,000 operatives of Hamas and other

Palestinian armed groups. By then, 16,537 Palestinian men had been killed, meaning that Israel considered every adult Palestinian man to be a member of armed groups and therefore a legitimate target. This narrative promoted by the state of Israel does not hold up when one considers that classified assessments by Israeli military intelligence services indicate that 83% of all deaths in Gaza—five out of every six—have been civilians.<sup>30</sup>

The observation of patterns of violence has also exposed how thousands of Palestinian men have died whilst engaged in predominantly civilian activities, working as journalists, healthcare workers and rescuers. In many cases, they have been targeted specifically for doing these jobs. Women, men, boys and girls have been killed in Israeli attacks whilst in their homes, in shelters and in tents, as well as during attempts to stave off hunger by obtaining food for their families.<sup>31</sup> In the West Bank, where Palestinian men and boys account for the vast majority of deaths (97%), Israeli forces have been found to use deadly force systematically, unnecessarily and disproportionately, with clear disregard for the right to life of Palestinians, particularly children.<sup>32</sup> Once again, the data are illustrative: half the Palestinians killed by Israeli forces were unarmed and were not involved in acts of violence or confrontation with Israeli forces at the time of their death. A total of 174 Palestinians, including 71 children, lost their lives while throwing stones or Molotov cocktails, often against tanks and heavily equipped soldiers.<sup>33</sup>

27. In his book *Perfect Victims* (2025), Mohammed el-Kurd writes that for too long, Palestinians have been reduced to women and children. This robs women and children of their agency and their political and revolutionary contributions, whilst demonising Palestinian men as deserving of death and unworthy of mourning, exiled from the embrace of their loved ones.

28. Maya Mikdashi, ‘Can Palestinian Men Be Victims? Gendering Israel’s War on Gaza’, *Jadaliyya*, 23 July 2014.

29. Human Rights Council, *Anatomy of a Genocide. Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967*, Francesca Albanese, A/HRC/55/73, 25 March 2024, paragraph 25.

30. A joint investigation by *+972 Magazine*, *Local Call* and *The Guardian* revealed that, according to a classified Israeli military intelligence database to which they had access, a total of 8,900 alleged Hamas and Islamic Jihad combatants had been identified as dead or probably dead between October 2023 and May 2025. By then, the total number of Palestinian deaths in Israeli attacks stood at 53,000. The military intelligence’s body count of combatants therefore amounts to only 17%, which would indicate that the remaining fatalities (83%) were civilians. Emma Graham-Harrison and Yuval Abraham, ‘Revealed: Israeli military’s own data indicates civilian death rate of 83% in Gaza war’, *The Guardian*, 21 August 2025.

31. UN Women, *Facts & Figures: Two Years of war on Gaza – the toll on women and girls*, 8 October 2025.

32. UN Human Rights in Occupied Palestinian Territory, *1001 Palestinians killed in West Bank since 7 October 2023 – one in five are children*, 17 October 2021.

33. *Ibid.*

Beyond these figures, some have argued that it is not any distinction between ‘women and children’ and men, or between civilians and combatants, that determines that the Palestinian population is subjected to Israeli violence—it is simply the fact that they are Palestinians amid the Israeli settlers’ colonial project. ‘Palestinians are framed as having the ability to choose whether they are a threat to Israel, and thus deserving of death, or not, and thus deserving of continued colonization clothed in the rubric of “ceasefire” or, even more elusively, “peace”’, Maya Mikdashi wrote in 2014. ‘However, you do not have to pick up a gun in Palestine to be a revolutionary or an “enemy” of Israel. You do not have to protest or throw stones or fly flags [...]. To be a threat to Israel is easy: You just have to be

Palestinian’.<sup>35</sup> At the end of 2025, the UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel reached a similar conclusion and issued an unequivocal diagnosis: Israel is acting deliberately to kill Palestinian people on a large scale and over a prolonged period of time. ‘The victims of the bombing were not singled out or targeted as individual civilians. On the contrary, victims were targeted collectively due to their identity as Palestinians’.<sup>36</sup> Legally, death tolls do not determine whether or not certain acts constitute the crime of genocide, but as the UN Commission of Inquiry suggests, the magnitude of the deaths can be taken into account to demonstrate genocidal intent.

### BOX 1: Genocide and Palestinian childhood

Hind Rajab has become the most recognisable symbol of the impacts of Israel’s genocide on Palestinian children. On 29 January 2024, the five-year-old Palestinian girl survived for several hours, wounded and terrified, after Israeli soldiers attacked the car in which she was travelling with her uncles, three female cousins and one male cousin. The car was hit by 335 gunshots fired at medium range. Israeli forces did not allow an ambulance sent for them to approach and shot dead the two paramedics dispatched by the Red Crescent to assist the girl. Hind’s story is perhaps the only one that has achieved wide international recognition and is one of the few that has not been buried in anonymity amid the overwhelming figures indicating that more than 20,000 Palestinian children have been killed in Gaza since October 2023.

Palestinian children have died in mass attacks and from the intensive use of highly destructive weapons in densely populated areas, but also from sniper or quadcopter fire to the chest or head, some whilst trying to obtain food. Thousands have also died from starvation and the spread of preventable diseases due to the lack of water, food and medicines caused by Israel’s ironclad blockade of Gaza. The Gaza Strip has not only become the most dangerous place in the world for a child, as UNICEF warned, but it is also now the place with the highest number of child amputees per capita, with thousands having lost one or more limbs as a result of Israeli violence. Thousands more have been injured, many with burns from the use of explosive weapons and banned munitions in populated areas, such as white phosphorus. In the West Bank, one in five people who died as a result of violence committed by Israeli military forces or settlers was a Palestinian child.

The consequences of the genocide for Palestinian children are not merely physical. Many have raised alarms about the mental health consequences for an entire generation, given that thousands of children have traumatically become orphaned. Some children are now even the sole survivors of their families, and medical staff have coined a specific acronym to identify them in hospitals (WCNSF: Wounded Child, No Surviving Family) in a context in which entire families have been wiped out. Humanitarian agencies and NGOs estimate that virtually all children in Gaza (more than one million) need psychological support. Studies indicate that most children in Gaza feel or have felt that their death was imminent, with many even wishing to die.<sup>34</sup> Various analysts have also warned about the consequences for children of the massive destruction of educational infrastructure, which has meant that hundreds of thousands of students have no guarantee of their right to education. More than 90% of schools required rebuilding or substantial repairs, whilst universities in the Gaza Strip had been razed. The schools that have remained standing have been converted into shelters for displaced people and have nevertheless been attacked. It is estimated that around 625,000 children lack any guarantee of their right to education (for the third consecutive year). These impacts have motivated descriptions of the situation in Gaza as being tantamount to ‘scholasticide’—just one more detail confirming that Israel’s intention is not only to destroy the Palestine’s present, but also its future.

34. Julian Borger, ‘Death feels imminent for 96% of children in Gaza, study finds’, *The Guardian*, 11 December 2024.

35. Maya Mikdashi (2014), *op. cit.*

36. Human Rights Council (2025), *op. cit.*, paragraph 45.

## 2. Health impacts and reproductive violence

The impacts of the genocide on the physical and mental health of the Palestinian population have been extraordinary. From a gender perspective, the consequences for the sexual and reproductive health of women and girls are particularly relevant, as are the consequent violations of their related rights. The repercussions for men and boys tend to be less studied, though investigators have been urged to examine their dynamics in Palestine. In Gaza, the health effects have been starkly exposed in the critical situation faced by thousands upon thousands of pregnant Palestinian women: caesarean sections without anaesthesia; an increase in miscarriages of up to 300%; a rise in the maternal mortality rate during childbirth (and also of their babies) due to complications or treatable conditions such as preeclampsia and diabetes; women undergoing hysterectomies (surgical removal of the uterus) due to a lack of access to medicines; widespread levels of malnutrition,<sup>37</sup> dehydration and anaemia, which, together with the general situation of trauma and stress, prevent or hinder breastfeeding; and births amid the devastation with no options for pre- or post-natal medical care in a healthcare system that has been deliberately destroyed.

Also significant are the impacts on Palestinian women and girls' physical health, mental health and dignity, resulting from the lack of access to water and hygiene products, including the most basic menstrual hygiene products, due to the ironclad blockade imposed by Israel.<sup>38</sup> Forcibly displaced again and again, as most have had to flee at least four times since the start of the Israeli offensive,<sup>39</sup> they have faced extreme overcrowding and precariousness, with very limited or no access to showers and latrines. Many have been forced to seek solutions that expose them to the risk of serious long-term health problems, such as taking pills to stop their periods and using makeshift pads made from scraps

of cloth and even tent fabric. Thousands of girls have reached puberty amid the bombings, with no access to sanitary products or privacy. 'Sometimes I need sanitary pads and soap much more than I need food', admitted a young woman from Gaza'.<sup>40</sup> Many women have contracted vaginal and urinary tract infections leading to premature births, miscarriages or infertility, or which could lead to the same in the future (see Box 2).

These impacts have helped to bolster accusations against Israel for its use of 'reproductive violence', considered a specific form of gender-based violence that includes acts or omissions that cause harm by interfering with reproductive rights and autonomy, or violence directed at individuals because of their actual or perceived reproductive capacity.<sup>41</sup> It is therefore a form of violence that attacks the reproductive capacity of the Palestinian population. Specifically, it appears to specifically target women's ability to give and sustain life. 'There has been an relentless attack on women [...]. There is definitely a deliberate attack there [in Gaza] [...]. It's linked to the way in which Palestinian women and children have been deliberately dehumanized, not just by the Israeli government, but by many parts of Israeli society and actors with influence,' asserted Reem Alsalem, the UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls, its causes and consequences.<sup>42</sup>

Though its magnitude is unprecedented in the context of genocide, this form of violence is not new. The state of Israel's use of reproductive violence has precedents that have been exposed by many, and prominently so by Palestinian academic and feminist organisations. It has affected Palestinian women and girls for decades, whether they live in the Gaza Strip, the West Bank or East Jerusalem, or are Palestinians of 1948. The effects of the movement restrictions, curfews and checkpoints imposed by Israel in the West Bank on Palestinian reproductive health have been documented extensively. Moreover, the territorial fragmentation and system of controls particularly affect the physical and mental health of pregnant women, some of which are forced to give birth at military checkpoints on their way to

***Israel has used 'reproductive violence' in order to attack the reproductive capacity of the Palestinian population***

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37. According to UN Women, two years into the Israeli military offensive and the imposition of the ironclad blockade on Gaza, nearly 250,000 women and girls were living in 'catastrophic conditions' characterised by an extreme lack of food and depleted coping capacities. This entails starvation, a high risk of acute malnutrition and death. A further 500,000 Palestinian women and girls were at risk of experiencing these conditions. UN Women (2025), *op. cit.*
  38. In July 2025, UNFPA estimated that 10 million sanitary pads/towels per month were needed in Gaza and that less than a quarter of that amount was available. UNFPA, *From natural process to nightmare: How Gaza's women and girls cope with their periods in a war zone*, 2 June 2025.
  39. UN Women (2025), *op. cit.*
  40. UNFPA (2025), *op. cit.*
  41. UN Women, *Documenting reproductive violence: Unveiling opportunities, challenges, and legal pathways for UN investigative mechanisms*, September 2024.
  42. Merve Gül Aydoğan Ağlarci, *UN official warns about 'use of reproductive violence in unfolding genocide in Gaza'*, Anadolu Agency (AA), 8 October 2024.

hospital.<sup>43</sup> Authors such as Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian have also analysed the effects of the restrictions affecting Palestinian women living in East Jerusalem, where some have the legal status of ‘residents’, but not as citizens. Others have warned about the strategies of control and surveillance of reproductive health applied to the Palestinians of 1948, resulting from Israel’s concern to maintain Jewish demographic supremacy and the perception that Palestinian birth rates are a ‘ticking time bomb’.<sup>44</sup>

As Hala Shoman has written, ‘the incidents of reproductive violence unfolding in Gaza are not new; they are a continuation and exacerbation of the longstanding policies of Israeli settler colonialists in their demographic battle against Palestinians’.<sup>45</sup> In her research on this phenomenon, the Gazan academic recalled Israeli soldiers wearing T-shirts depicting a pregnant woman in a sniper’s crosshairs under the slogan ‘1 shot, 2 kills’ during the Israeli campaign in the Gaza Strip in 2008-2009.<sup>46</sup> The intensification of violence against the Palestinian population from October 2023 onwards has led Palestinian feminist NGOs and networks such as the Palestinian Feminist Collective to condemn the reproductive genocide to highlight the use of reproductive violence for genocidal purposes.<sup>47</sup> Analysts have connected the Palestinian experience with the use of reproductive violence in other contexts, as part of strategies used in episodes of genocide elsewhere (such as in Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia), and also as an instrument wielded by colonisers against native communities to expand their territorial control and achieve their ethnic cleansing objectives. Shoman, one of those who has reflected most on this issue, promotes the concept of ‘reproicide’ to stress the

systematic attack on the reproductive health of a community (here, the Palestinian one) as a deliberate strategy to eliminate its present and future through direct and structural violence with immediate and long-term effects. ‘Whereas genocide extinguishes those who exist, reproicide ensures that many potential lives will never exist’.<sup>48</sup> This strategy against the Palestinian population unfolds in parallel with Israeli policies that seek to promote the births that do matter to the settler colonial project—Israeli ones.<sup>49</sup>

The documentation of abuses committed by Israel as part of its genocidal endeavour and the reflections on reproductive violence, reproductive genocide and ‘reproicide’ have focused attention on Israeli actions that have caused the destruction of Gaza’s health infrastructure, the impacts on sexual and reproductive healthcare for more than half a million Palestinian women and girls of childbearing age, the attacks affecting maternal and child health centres,<sup>50</sup> the long-term physical and psychological effects of sexual violence,<sup>51</sup> the thousands upon thousands of Palestinian women who have lost their children or experienced the death of their babies before birth, the cases of post-mortem caesarean sections and the deaths of premature babies due to lack of electricity for incubators.

**Authors have opted for the concept of ‘reproicide’ to stress the systematic attack on the reproductive health of a community (here, the Palestinian one) as a deliberate strategy to eliminate its present and future**

One event that has captured particular attention was the strike that destroyed Gaza’s main fertility clinic. Despite being clearly identified as a health centre, the Al-Basma IVF clinic was bombed in December 2023, destroying around 4,000 embryos.<sup>52</sup> There is no evidence that the clinic was used for military purposes. On the contrary, the UN Commission of Inquiry found that the Israeli authorities attempted

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43. Many reports released by the United Nations, human rights organisations and Palestinian feminist organisations have documented cases of women forced to give birth at checkpoints, in ambulances or in taxis due to the Israel forces’ refusal or delay to authorise their transfer to hospitals. This situation entails high levels of anxiety and stress for pregnant women, which intensify as the due date approaches and particularly affect Palestinian women living in rural areas in the West Bank. For further information, see the section ‘Access to healthcare’ in Escola de Cultura de Pau and Hèlia, *Occupation, conflict and patriarchy: Impacts on Palestinian women*, September 2019; Amnesty International, *Israel: Conflict, occupation and patriarchy: Women carry the burden*, AI/Index:MDE 15/016/2005, March 2005.
44. Kanaaneh, cited in Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian, ‘The politics of birth and the Intimacies of violence against Palestinian women in Occupied East Jerusalem’, *The British Journal of Criminology*, Vol. 55, No. 6, Themed Issue: In the Aftermath of Violence: What Constitutes a Responsive Response? (November 2015), pp.1187-1206, Oxford University Press.
45. Hala Shoman, ‘Reproicide in Gaza: testimonies of the assault on Palestinian reproductive Health during Israel’s genocide’ in Nicola Pratt et al. ‘Why Palestine is a feminist issue: a reckoning with Western feminism in a time of genocide’, *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 27:1, p. 235.
46. CBS News, *Israeli T-Shirts Joke About Killing Arabs*, CBS, 23 March 2009.
47. Palestinian Feminist Collective, *The Palestinian Feminist Collective Condemns Reproductive Genocide in Gaza*, 10 February 2024.
48. Hala Shoman, ‘Reproicide in Gaza: The Gendered Strategy of Genocide Through Reproductive Violence’, *Policy Paper*, Institute for Palestine Studies, Issue:146, 19 August 2025, p. 3.
49. In her analysis, Hala Shoman recalls that after 7 October 2023, Israeli judicial authorities removed the obstacles to extracting and using the sperm of Israeli soldiers and civilians, allowing the parents of the deceased to give consent even if they had no partner at the time of death. *Ibid.*, pp. 2 and 10.
50. In its September 2025 report, the UN Commission of Inquiry found that Israeli attacks on health infrastructure in Gaza had affected nearly 545,000 women and girls of reproductive age. It also warned about the attacks against the maternity wards of the Shifa Hospital and the Nasser Medical Complex in Khan Younis, as well as the forced closure of other specialised sexual and reproductive health centres. Human Rights Council (2025), *op. cit.*, paragraph 150.
51. See the next section for further information.
52. During the attack, the embryology laboratory was directly bombed, destroying all reproductive material stored in the facility. *Ibid.*, paragraph 151.

to destroy it knowing full well that it was a fertility centre. 'A single attack and thousands of potential lives were annihilated. For at least half the clinic's patient couples, many of whom had saved for years to afford treatment, those embryos were their last chance to conceive', acknowledged the clinic's director. The Al-Basma case has thus become one of the arguments for charging Israel with 'imposing measures intended to prevent births' of the Palestinian population, one of the crimes set out in the Genocide Convention.<sup>53</sup>

From the perspective of 'reproductive justice',<sup>54</sup> Israeli policies have not only compromised the Palestinian population's ability to have children, but also their choice to decide not to have them, due to their lack of access to contraceptives,<sup>55</sup> and to raise them in a safe and dignified environment. As mentioned, the Israeli campaign has involved actions that cut off access to vital resources necessary to sustain life, such as water, electricity, fuel and food, as well as the use of starvation as a 'weapon of war'. In addition to deaths and physical injuries, there has therefore been massive suffering caused by the destruction of the means that enable social reproduction, which allow not only for the creation, but also for the sustenance of life, with particular effects on women.<sup>56</sup> Palestinian women in Gaza have testified to the difficulties of coping with day-to-day life in a context of deep suffering, including unresolved grief, daily uncertainty over whether they will be able to feed their children and feelings of powerlessness to protect them, console them, provide them with a space of minimal safety and calm, heal their wounds and offer them prospects of recovery and hope. The degradation of the health system also imposes a particular burden on women, given the traditional division of labour in Palestinian society and gender expectations regarding women's central role in caregiving. This situation, which already existed before the genocide, has been amplified to extraordinary levels given the massive destruction

***The attack on the Al-Basma fertility clinic has become one of the arguments to denounce Israel for "imposing measures aimed at preventing births" on the Palestinian population, one of the crimes contemplated in the Genocide Convention***

of hospital infrastructure in the Gaza Strip and the enormous number of injured people, reaching over 170,000 as of December 2025.<sup>57</sup> This figure includes thousands upon thousands of children who have lost arms and/or legs, making Gaza the place with the highest number of child amputees per capita in the world.<sup>58</sup>

Faced with this situation, some have also drawn attention to the widespread and severe impacts on the mental health of the Palestinian population, indicating enormous future needs for psychological support. Even

before the genocide, Palestinian experts had been warning about the collective trauma in Palestine, emphasising that concepts such as 'post-traumatic stress' do not seem appropriate for capturing the Palestinian experience. 'Because we are never in the "post" phase: the trauma is enduring, repetitive, collective, historical and transgenerational', explained the psychiatrist Samah Jabr.<sup>59</sup> More than a decade ago, the Palestinian psychologist Said Shehadeh described the scale of Palestinian psychological harm as 'the engineering of mass trauma'.<sup>60</sup> The scale of mental harm caused since October 2023 has been one of the reasons for

attributing the crime of genocide to Israel. As early as 2024, in her report *Anatomy of a Genocide*, UN Special Rapporteur Francesca Albanese warned about the psychological consequences of the Israeli offensive on the population of Gaza: 'The survivors will carry an indelible trauma, having witnessed so much death, and experienced destruction, homelessness, emotional and material loss, endless humiliation and fear. Such experiences include fleeing amidst the chaos of war without telecommunications or electricity; witnessing the systematic destruction of entire neighbourhoods, homes, universities, religious and cultural landmarks; digging through the rubble, often with bare hands, searching for loved ones; seeing bodies desecrated; being rounded up, stripped naked, blindfolded and subjected to torture and other cruel, inhuman or

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53. For further information, see the report of the UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel published in September 2025. Human Rights Council (2025), *op. cit.*, paragraphs 150 to 155.
54. The theoretical framework of reproductive justice was developed by black feminists and activists in the United States as a critique of analyses of reproduction in which individualistic and 'pro-choice' perspectives prevailed. It is structured around three principles: the right to have children, the right not to have children and the right to raise children in safe and dignified environments. For further information, see Cordelia Freeman and Hala Shoman, 'No justice in a genocide: sexual and reproductive health and rights in Gaza', *Sexual and Reproductive Health Matters*, 2025, 33(1), pp. 1-17.
55. Contraceptives were widely used to avoid or delay menstruation amid a lack of access to toilets and sanitary products. Emergency contraceptive pills are also unavailable, thereby limiting options for avoiding or dealing with unwanted pregnancies. Cordelia Freeman and Hala Shoman (2025), *op. cit.*, p. 3.
56. Jemima Repo, 'Genocide and the destruction of the means of social reproduction in Gaza', *European Journal of Politics and Gender*, 8(2), pp. 492, 2025.
57. OCHA, *Reported impact snapshot. Gaza Strip*, 10 December 2025.
58. Ahmed Moor, 'There are more child amputees in Gaza than anywhere else in the world. What can the future hold for them?', *The Guardian*, 27 March 2025; Al Jazeera, *Amputees from Israel's Gaza war use homemade prosthetics to re-enter life*, 14 November 2025.
59. Interview by Juan Duarte with Samah Jabr, 'Quiéren que los palestinos pierdan su subjetividad como seres humanos', *La Izquierda Diario*, 16 November 2023.
60. Said Shehadeh, 'The 2014 War on Gaza: engineering trauma and mass torture to break Palestinian resilience', *Applied Psychoanalytic Studies*, 12(3), pp. 278-294, 2015, cited in Jemima Repo (2025), *op. cit.*

degrading treatment or punishment; and, ultimately, being starved, adults and children alike'.<sup>61</sup>

The intensification of violence in the West Bank has also resulted in impacts on the mental health of the Palestinian population as a whole. The rise in violence, checkpoints and road closures, the difficulties in accessing basic services and the continuous incursions by Israeli military forces and settlers have intensified Palestinian fear, worry and anxiety. Psychologists have warned of a collective state of alert and growing sense that something terrible could happen and that what is occurring in Gaza will be replicated in the West Bank. Therefore, health centres have observed rising levels of anxiety and depression. Many men, particularly those who have lost their jobs, exhibit psychosomatic symptoms, whilst many women acknowledge their continuous worry about what might happen to their children and their fear of having to flee, of losing family members or of being arrested.<sup>62</sup>

The mental health of Palestinian women in Gaza has been severely damaged. Studies indicate that 75% of them suffer from depression, 62% have trouble sleeping and 65% experience constant nightmares and anxiety.<sup>63</sup> Women in the Gaza Strip admit to being exhausted and frightened, often forced to cope with feelings of distress by themselves. Emotional strain has been aggravated by constant exposure to violence and traumatic situations, by the increase in their caregiving responsibilities—even more so in cases where they have become the sole carers for their children—and by the conditions arising from forced displacement and overcrowding in congested sites with no room for privacy. As mentioned earlier, menstruation has become a source of anxiety and isolation. Palestinian women and young girls admit to feeling shame, constant anxiety and deep frustration. 'Every time my period comes, I wish I weren't a girl'<sup>64</sup> (see Box 1: Genocide and Palestinian childhood).

Despite these circumstances, support and assistance mechanisms have been activated. Even amid the devastation of Gaza, some women have attempted to cope by drawing on community networks. Several

reports have documented the experiences of women organising educational activities for their children and activating psychological support networks to create safe spaces and share their fears and anxieties.<sup>65</sup>

## BOX 2: Testimonies

“**‘My period came whilst I was in a crowded shelter.** I only had one sanitary pad, so I wrapped it in toilet paper to make it last. I couldn't wash and the pain was terrible. I sat there crying silently until the end of the day' (young woman in Gaza).<sup>66</sup>

“**‘Every day I see women struggling with menstruation, pregnancy and childbirth in degrading conditions.** As a woman, I feel it deeply. These should be natural experiences, not sources of distress and pain. I see strength in women's eyes, but I also see deep pain and the loss of their dignity' (Palestinian doctor in Gaza).<sup>67</sup>

“**‘I have not prioritised my own health because I am the primary carer for my children;** I am taking on the role of both mother and father. I have not gone for any medical check-ups. I am nine months pregnant and I have had no tests to find out if my baby is all right' (27-year-old woman in Khan Younis, Gaza).<sup>68</sup>

“**‘I have children who have needed medical treatment and I have been unable to provide it.** My 11-month-old grandson died because we could not get the treatment he needed. My children have fevers and it is very difficult to find pharmacies open with the danger of bombings and aircraft overhead' (42-year-old woman, displaced in northern Gaza).<sup>69</sup>

“**‘The bombings are what frighten us most.** We are constantly worried because we never know when they will happen or whether we will die. The Israelis are bombing indiscriminately, and that is terrifying' (16-year-old girl in Rafah, Gaza).<sup>70</sup>

61. Human Rights Council (2024), *op. cit.*, p. 8.

62. Médecins Sans Frontières, *A Mental Health Perspective from the West Bank: 'Palestinians are preparing themselves for loss'*, 10 December 2025.

63. UN Women, *Inside the crisis you don't see: How war impacts women's mental health*, 7 April 2025; UN Women, *Gender Alert: Gaza, a War on Women's Health*, September 2024.

64. UNFPA (2025), *op. cit.*

65. Arab Renaissance for Democracy and Development, *Gazan Women's Mental Health in the Shadow of a Genocide*, 21 October 2025.

66. UNFPA (2025), *op. cit.*

67. UNFPA (2025), *op. cit.*

68. UN Women, *Gender Alert: Gaza, a War on Women's Health*, September 2024, p. 10.

69. *Ibid.*

70. *Ibid.*

### 3. Sexual and gender-based violence

The use of sexual and gender-based violence has also been widely documented as part of the Israeli genocidal endeavour. The UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry has found a ‘deplorable increase’ in this type of violence, which was already part of the repertoire of practices of the Israeli occupation. ‘There is no escape from the conclusion that Israel has employed sexual and gender-based violence against Palestinians to terrorise them and perpetuate a system of oppression that undermines their right to self-determination’, it concluded in March 2025.<sup>71</sup> In a subsequent report focused on the crime of genocide, the diagnosis was unequivocal: this is not violence directed solely at individuals, but rather a form of collective punishment intended to break and subjugate the entire Palestinian population. Furthermore, it notes that ‘the widespread use of sexual and gender-based violence against Palestinians in Gaza indicates the intent to destroy them as a group’.<sup>72</sup> The frequency, prevalence and severity of sexual and gender-based violence against Palestinians by Israel have led experts to conclude that it is being used as a method of war.<sup>73</sup>

The Israeli Defence Forces have intensified the use of this violence since October 2023 as a form of revenge for the attacks by Hamas and other Palestinian groups. Allegations and evidence of acts of sexual violence committed against Israeli women on 7 October 2023 have been used by Israeli officials to mobilise support for the military offensive in Gaza, in what has been interpreted as an attempt to reconstruct Israeli national masculinity. An analysis of messages circulating among Israeli soldiers points to the idea of an affront to collective honour that must be restored within a narrative and gender framework that connects women’s bodies with the dignity of the nation.<sup>74</sup>

Sexual and gender-based violence has been used as a form of punishment and intimidation against Palestinian women and men, particularly against detainees, both in Gaza and the West Bank. The UN Commission of

Inquiry<sup>75</sup> and other Palestinian and international human rights bodies and organisations have gathered evidence and documented dozens of cases of sexual and gender-based violence against Palestinian prisoners, both at the time of their arrest and during detention. According to reports, men have been subjected to forced nudity, beatings and torture of their genitals, as well as sexual abuse and rape with objects and even with dogs.<sup>76</sup> In the case of women detainees, sexual harassment and assaults, groping and threats of rape have been reported. Detained Palestinian women have also reportedly been subjected to repeated invasive searches. In one case that has come to light, for example, a female prisoner was forced to strip completely despite being on her period. Some female detainees have been photographed in humiliating conditions, such as in their underwear in front of soldiers.<sup>77</sup> Videos and photographs of Palestinian prisoners in particularly degrading conditions, later shared on social media, have been a common piece of evidence of the intention to humiliate and intimidate. One paradigmatic example has been the sharing of a video showing the rape of a Palestinian prisoner by a group of Israeli soldiers at the Sde Teiman detention centre in the Negev desert, a facility that has prompted many complaints of human rights violations against the Palestinian population.<sup>78</sup>

Israeli forces have also used gender codes to publicly humiliate Palestinian women and girls during their raids and searches, mocking them, taking photographs of themselves with their lingerie and forcing them to remove their veils or to expose themselves in their underwear in front of their community, in a social and religious context where such practices are particularly degrading for women. Palestinian women’s rights organisations such as the Women’s Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling (WCLAC) have stressed that the language used by Israeli soldiers to threaten women with rape or other forms of sexual abuse reflects their knowledge of Palestinian culture, where sexual violence against women is considered a taboo. They take advantage of and exploit this situation, knowing that many Palestinian women would be reluctant to report

***The use of sexual and gender-based violence has also been widely documented and denounced as a form of individual and collective punishment***

71. UN OHCHR, *‘More than a human can bear’: Israel’s systematic use of sexual, reproductive and other forms of gender-based violence since October 2023*, Press Release, 13 March 2025.

72. UN OHCHR (September 2025), *op. cit.*, paragraph 213.

73. UN OHCHR (March 2025), *op. cit.*, paragraph 223.

74. *Ibid.*, paragraphs 78-80. Among other elements, in its March 2025 report, the UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel analyses graffiti in Hebrew that appeared in Gaza following the Israeli ground incursion, combining biblical references with vengeful messages alluding to a battalion’s intention to restore Israel’s honour: ‘Shall he make our sister into a whore? 92808 brings the honour back to the people of Israel’.

75. The UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel has also conducted investigations into abuses committed by Hamas and other Palestinian groups on 7 October 2023 and in the following days, and has concluded that multiple perpetrators committed acts of sexual and gender-based violence in several locations in Israel.

76. PCHR, *PCHR Documents Testimonies of Systematic Rape and Sexual Torture in Israeli Detention against Released Palestinian Detainees*, 10 November 2025.

77. UN OHCHR (September 2025), *op. cit.*, paragraphs 65 to 67.

78. Al Jazeera, *The Take: Inside the attempted cover-up of Israel’s Sde Teiman scandal*, 10 November 2025.

such incidents due to shame and the fear of negative repercussions or of being blamed.<sup>79</sup> This type of abuse overlaps with other examples of the use of violence with gendered intent that form part of the Israeli forces' regular practice, such as the humiliation of Palestinian men in front of their families, aimed at undermining their supposed role as 'protectors'.

Analyses of the evidence gathered since October 2023 has led to the conclusion that various forms of sexual and gender-based violence, including rape, have been committed under explicit orders or with the implicit encouragement of senior Israeli civilian officials and military officers.<sup>80</sup> Palestinian organisations have warned that women in Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza report similar methods of sexual torture, despite having been detained in different prisons and by different military units, and that the consistency of these practices against both women and men may suggest a broad directive to use sexual violence as a method of torture.<sup>81</sup> Added to this is the fact that general conditions for Palestinian prisoners in Israeli prisons have deteriorated significantly since October 2023, following instructions from the Israeli Minister of National Security, Itamar Ben Gvir, who is responsible for prisons and is one of the most ultra-conservative figures in Netanyahu's government.

In this context, attention has also been drawn to a climate of impunity for Israeli military forces regarding incidents of sexual and gender-based violence. In fact, some Israelis that have reported this type of abuse,<sup>82</sup> even from within the Israeli military, have been labelled as traitors,<sup>83</sup> whilst some Israelis are demanding that soldiers investigated for such actions be classified as 'heroes'.<sup>84</sup> The atmosphere of impunity also applies to Israeli settlers engaged in attacks involving the use of sexual and gender-based violence against Palestinians. Such cases have also increased in the West Bank, often in cooperation with Israeli military forces.<sup>85</sup>

***Various forms of sexual and gender-based violence, including rape, have been committed under explicit orders or with the implicit encouragement of senior Israeli civilian and military officials***

Finally, mention should also be made of Israel's longstanding attempts to make cynical use of the gender agenda, sometimes referred to as pinkwashing and purplewashing.<sup>86</sup> Such practices have also been observed in the context of the genocide in Gaza. Examples include the spread of images of soldiers waving rainbow flags amidst a devastated Gaza Strip, with slogans such as 'in the name of love', thereby arrogating to itself a supposed defence of the LGTBQ+ community,<sup>87</sup> as if it were possible to make progress in establishing any right through genocide.

#### **4. Other invisibilised forms of violence**

In this scenario of genocide, Palestinian feminist organisations, activists and academics have also warned about other less visible forms of violence and the particular ways in which they affect Palestinian women and girls. Research and data collection on these forms of violence are still in their early stages, but they point to significant patterns and are useful for drawing attention to their scale. One thing indicated by some of these studies is the need to incorporate intersectional perspectives that allow for an analysis of the different forms of violence experienced by Palestinian women, taking into account factors such as their age, any disability they may have, their marital status or their economic situation.<sup>88</sup> Though not aiming (or able) to be exhaustive, this section outlines some issues that feminist and human rights organisations have identified as matters of concern in relation to the situation in Gaza and in the West Bank alike. These include repercussions related to forced displacement and mobility restrictions, the effects on women's economic situation and on the right to education for girls and young women and the consequences of gender-based violence in the domestic/family sphere and in relation to child and adolescent marriage. As discussed below, the events since October 2023 have also impacted the Palestinian feminist organisations' work and agendas.

79. Notes from WCLAC webinar, 10 October 2024.

80. UN OHCHR (March 2025), paragraph 224.

81. Notes from WCLAC webinar, 10 October 2024.

82. *Haaretz*, 'Sde Teiman Doctor Who Saw Abused Gazan Detainee: "I Couldn't Believe an Israeli Prison Guard Could Do Such a Thing"' 30 July 2024.

83. Emma Graham-Harrison, 'Israel's top military lawyer arrested after she admitted leaking video of soldiers' abuse', *The Guardian*, 3 November 2025.

84. Emanuel Fabian, 'Military Police raid IDF detention facility, 9 held, over "serious abuse of a detainee"', *Times of Israel*, 29 July 2024.

85. The report of the UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel on sexual and gender-based violence includes a specific, detailed section about incidents involving Israeli settlers, UN OHCHR (March 2025), *op. cit.*, paragraphs 128-137.

86. In the Palestinian-Israeli context, pinkwashing is understood as a propaganda strategy used by the Israeli government to exploit support for LGTBQ+ rights to project a progressive image, whilst also implementing occupation and apartheid policies that oppress the Palestinian population. Similarly, purplewashing refers to the strategy that appeals to women's rights and feminist rhetoric to promote an image of Israel as a modern country, a defender of equality distinct from others in the Middle East, whilst attempting to divert attention from the real situations resulting from military occupation and discriminatory policies against the Palestinian population.

87. Emma Graham-Harrison, "'No pride in occupation": queer Palestinians on "pink-washing" in Gaza conflict', *The Guardian*, 16 June 2024.

88. Guido Veronese *et al.*, 'Intersectional violence against women in Gaza amidst genocide', *Women's Studies International Forum*, volume 110, May-June 2025.

As outlined above, the violence, blockade and successive forced displacements in Gaza have subjected the population to extreme insecurity. As Palestinian feminist groups have said, by 2025 practically the entire population of the Gaza Strip was living in poverty and facing multiple crises.<sup>89</sup> A quarter of households were surviving on barely one meal a day. Nearly 640,000 children had no access to formal education,<sup>90</sup> in addition to no or minimal access to other essential services such as water, latrines or healthcare, and they often had to cope with the loss of their customary family and support networks. In these survival circumstances, attention has been drawn to the burden shouldered by Palestinian women as primary caregivers, according to the gender codes of Palestinian society. These tasks have become exponentially more demanding and stressful for women and girls, and particularly for a new generation of widows (more than 16,000 since October 2023, according to UN Women).<sup>91</sup> These widows face the double burden of traumatic grief and the responsibility of caring for their children and making vital decisions for their families' future amid hunger, violence, devastation and heavily strained services.

***Palestinian feminist organizations have drawn attention to the repercussions related to forced displacement and mobility restrictions, effects on the economic situation of women and on the right to education of girls***

Furthermore, due to pre-existing inequalities and gender codes in Palestinian society, including the perception of female bodies as vessels of family honour, male family members have often tightened their control, restricting the freedom and agency of women and girls.<sup>92</sup> Situations of forced displacement and overcrowding have reduced the mobility of women and girls or have required them to wear the veil constantly due to the presence of other men and because of the constant prospect of having to flee in the face of a new Israeli offensive. Some of the testimonies collected by the UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry are illustrative: 'We had to be veiled 24 hours a day. We were 17 people in one room, including my male cousins, so my father told me and my sister to make sure we were always covered. Also, we never knew if we would need to leave the home suddenly due to an aerial strike. We were constantly prepared to run'. In some cases, the decision to wear the veil constantly was a conscious choice, given the likelihood of losing one's life. 'Women in Gaza have

lost everything. They lost their family members, their homes, their schools. At least they want to be able to control their bodies and keep their dignity in death'.<sup>93</sup> At the same time, feminist and human rights organisations have warned about the increased risks of gender-based violence in the domestic/family sphere, taking into account mobility restrictions and the depletion of resources for assistance, shelter and support for survivors.

In the West Bank, the proliferation of Israeli barriers and checkpoints around and within cities and towns (nearly 1,000 new barriers were erected between October 2023 and October 2025)<sup>94</sup> has created enormous impediments for people to move around. These obstacles have increased journey times and uncertainty in travel, as Israeli forces' checkpoints impose waits and road blockages that can last for hours at their discretion. These circumstances have particularly affected girls and young women, as they heighten families' fears that their daughters may be unable to return home or may be forced to spend long periods waiting in and/or out of vehicles, in unsafe conditions unacceptable to the more traditional and conservative members of the population.

Combined with the intensification of Israeli attacks at any time of day and reports of indiscriminate arrests and abusive practices by Israeli forces, including invasive searches and the requirement to undress or remove the hijab in public, these practices have led many families to restrict some of their daughters' travel, including to schools and universities.<sup>95</sup>

Palestinian organisations have expressed concern about the effects of these dynamics on the right to education for girls and young women, as well as the economic repercussions for Palestinian women given the rise in poverty since October 2023. Unemployment levels have risen in the West Bank as a result of mobility restrictions and due to the revocation of between 100,000 and 140,000 work permits for Palestinians, the vast majority of them men, who had been working in Israel and illegal settlements in the West Bank.<sup>96</sup> A study conducted by the Palestinian organisation MIFTAH examined the impact of mobility restrictions on

89. WCLAC and al-Muntada, *Facing the Double Jeopardy of Colonial Occupation and Patriarchy: Palestinian Women Striving for Justice, Liberation, and Freedom*, Platform for Action Beijing+30, NGO Parallel Report Palestine – 2025, February 2025, p. 32.

90. UN OCHA, *Reported impact snapshot: Gaza Strip*, 10 December 2025.

91. UN Women, *Facts & Figures: Two years of war on Gaza – the toll on women and girls*, 8 October 2025.

92. UN OHCHR (March 2025), *op. cit.*, paragraph 217.

93. *Ibid.*, paragraphs 145-146.

94. Sam Mednick and Jalal Bwaitel, 'Israel has erected nearly 1,000 barriers in the West Bank during the war in Gaza, group says', *AP*, 30 October 2025.

95. Interview with professionals from a Palestinian feminist organisation.

96. For more information, see Ihab Maharmeh, *Israel's Exploitation of Palestinian Labor: A Strategy of Erasure*, Al-Shabaka, 5 January 2025; Al-Haq, *Field Focus: Subjugating Livelihoods – The Targeting of Palestinian Workers*, Al-Haq Monitoring and Documentation, 1 May 2025; UN OHCHR, *Israel's financial stranglehold on the occupied Palestinian territory must end: UN experts*, Press Release, 15 September 2025; Isabelle Mandraud, 'The tragedy of Palestinian construction workers, banned from Israel', *Le Monde*, 24 October 2025.

Palestinian women's access to their workplaces, markets and essential services. Many women have been affected by increased transport costs, have seen their wages cut or have directly lost their jobs. The intensification of settler attacks, particularly in the agricultural sector, has also had disproportionate consequences for women. Palestinian women agricultural workers have reported attacks and multiple forms of violence, including physical assaults and the destruction and theft of equipment. These dynamics have led to growing poverty, unemployment, family tensions and greater obstacles to women's economic agency.<sup>97</sup> In response, many Palestinian women are exploring alternative ways to work from their homes.

In the first few months of the Israeli offensive in Gaza, Palestinian feminist NGOs observed a decrease in reports of gender-based violence in the domestic/family sphere in the West Bank. According to professionals working in the sector, many women compared their personal situation with the extreme violence in the Gaza Strip and played down their own suffering, such as by saying 'mine is nothing in comparison'. As the months passed, however, more reports have increasingly come to light.<sup>98</sup>

In a context marked by genocide, forced displacement, movement restrictions and a deteriorating economic situation threatening thousands upon thousands of families, child marriage of Palestinian girls has spread as a negative coping mechanism, both in Gaza and the West Bank. Various Palestinian feminist organisations have warned about the increase in early marriages of girls and adolescents, a pre-existing phenomenon in Palestinian society which has only increased since October 2023. Recent studies had indicated a relative reduction in child marriages in recent years, though it was more prevalent in Gaza than in the West Bank.<sup>99</sup>

***Child marriage of Palestinian girls has spread as a negative coping mechanism, both in Gaza and the West Bank***

In 2022, UNICEF estimated that 15% of Palestinian girls married before the age of 18.<sup>100</sup> The Palestinian feminist movement has been fighting for years to eradicate this practice, which is considered harmful to girls' rights as it compromises their right to health and education and exposes them to a higher prevalence of gender-based violence, among other threats. Some progress had been made as part of initiatives to amend discriminatory norms, such as the 2019 decree that raised the minimum age for marriage to 18 for both sexes.<sup>101</sup> However, the norm, which applies only in the West Bank due to the fragmentation of the legal frameworks applicable in Palestine,<sup>102</sup> has exceptions that have been used to continue conducting child marriages.<sup>103</sup> This had prompted feminist organisations to question official assessments of its impact, condemn the lack of criteria for applying exceptions and demand its complete elimination.<sup>104</sup>

Since October 2023, some studies have begun to outline how the dramatic scenario in Gaza exposes Palestinian girls and adolescents to greater vulnerabilities and have identified various factors that are driving child marriage. Destruction and forced displacement have brought thousands of people to live together in overcrowded conditions in shelters, relatives' homes and congested settlements. With young people of both sexes living together in tightly confined spaces, a highly sensitive issue in predominantly conservative Gazan society, many families are choosing to marry off their daughters for reasons of honour and to avoid 'shame' in the future. In some cases, marriage also provides access to financial support or a safer shelter, which can be decisive given the devastation, extreme insecurity, shattered prospects and lack of hope for the future. As daily life has been reduced to a struggle for survival, there is an observable rise in social pressure for Palestinian girls to marry before they turn 18. Though

97. Tamara Tamimi and Osama Risheq, *Analytical Report of the Impact on Women's Economic Status and Participation in the Labour Market in the West Bank: Restriction of Freedom of Movement and Economic Property*, MIFTAH, 2025, p. 3.

98. Interview with a professional from a Palestinian feminist organisation.

99. According to data collected by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 21% of girls under 18 were in registered marriages in Gaza and 19% in the West Bank in 2017. By 2020, this proportion had fallen to 19% in Gaza and 4.3% in the West Bank. This trend has been met with scepticism by some feminist organisations (see footnote 87). Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), *Child marriages (Percentage of female under the age of 18 registered marriages)*, PCBS, 4 April 2022.

100. UNICEF, *Child marriage in the Middle East and North Africa*, February 2022.

101. The norm (Decree Law 21) raised the minimum age from 15 for girls and 16 for boys to 18 for young people of both sexes.

102. Palestinian women and girls are subject to a varied set of regulations that, in some areas, perpetuate traditional and discriminatory practices as part of a fragmented legal system. Personal status laws (which regulate matters relating to personal and family life) differ between Gaza and the West Bank, compounded by the political rift between Hamas and the Palestinian Authority (PA) that causes them to govern these territories separately, applying norms in different ways. For further information, see Pamela Urrutia, *Challenges of feminist struggles in Palestine in a post-pandemic context*, Escola de Cultura de Pau and Associació Hèlia, July 2022.

103. Decree Law 21 stipulates that *sharia* (Islamic law) courts may grant exceptions to the minimum age requirement if the marriage is considered to be in the interest of both parties. Palestinian feminist groups have reported that this prerogative has become commonplace, warning that between 2020 and 2021 alone, more than 10,000 child marriages were registered in the West Bank. For a detailed analysis of this issue, see Ayesha AlRifai and Reem Abu Hweij, *Between the Law and Dominant Culture: Child Marriage Legitimizes Violations of Their Rights*, Women's Studies Centre, 2023.

104. Official data from the Palestinian Authority indicate a decline in child and adolescent marriage, which allegedly fell from 20% in 2019 to 11% in 2021 as a result of Decree Law 21. However, Palestinian feminist groups question this assessment, claiming that child marriages have continued at a worrying rate. Between 2020 and 2021, they assert, 32% of marriage contracts in the West Bank had appealed to the exception and involved legal minors. WCLAC and al-Muntada, *Facing the Double Jeopardy of Colonial Occupation and Patriarchy: Palestinian Women Striving for Justice, Liberation, and Freedom*, Platform for Action Beijing+30 - NGO-Parallel Report Palestine, 2025.

some may see it as an escape route, others are reluctant and express their fears, aware of the risks associated with early pregnancy and childbirth with no guarantees, given the situation in Gaza.<sup>105</sup> Another factor that seems to be encouraging the marriage of Palestinian girls is the drop in wedding costs. The impossibility of holding celebrations has lowered the economic bar for making marriage proposals, which appears to be accelerating the process and prompting the families of girls of ever younger ages to accept them.<sup>106</sup>

In the West Bank, Palestinian feminist groups have also reported that child and adolescent marriage is on the rise in traditional and conservative areas such as Nablus and Hebron as a result of movement restrictions, the growing confinement of girls and young women in their homes, the consequences of economic decline on their educational prospects and the reduction in wedding costs. As such, many families feel that ‘it is time to marry off their sons and daughters’.<sup>107</sup> This trend identified by Palestinian feminist groups (‘exceptions are becoming the rule’, they warn) is growing in a context in which their ability to educate and raise awareness about the negative consequences of child marriage has been limited, due to the termination of the agreement between the Palestinian Authority and civil society to work on the matter and partly as a result of pressure from ultra-conservative groups.<sup>108</sup> Yet despite the difficulties, Palestinian organisations working to defend women’s and girls’ rights have continued to conduct awareness-raising and advocacy activities on this issue.

The effects of the deteriorating situation in Gaza and the West Bank on the work of Palestinian feminist organisations are another less visible but significant consequence, given the repercussions this has for their staff, organisational dynamics, funding, priorities and agendas. It would not be possible to address all these impacts in this report, but some of them can be outlined to provide a rough idea. For example, the intensification of movement restrictions has forced many organisations operating in the West Bank to adapt their working dynamics. Many have increased online activities and meetings and are seeking ways to overcome the difficulties of conducting field visits. The situation also has consequences for adapting to the population’s most immediate and urgent needs. Following the Israeli

military ground incursion in early 2025, organisations operating in the northern West Bank have sought to find shelter and provide emergency assistance to the thousands of people displaced in Jenin and Tulkarem, most of whom come from the refugee camps in both towns. Organisations working in these areas have had to reallocate resources to help the people to meet their most basic daily needs, beyond their usual psychosocial support activities. Palestinian feminist organisations also acknowledge that they have been forced to modify their language in some contexts and to omit explicit references to gender issues, as the idea has taken hold in some places that, given the events in Gaza, ‘this is not the time’ to address them.<sup>109</sup>

Despite the enormous challenges, Palestinian feminist organisations have continued their work and have dedicated a significant part of their efforts to documenting and reporting the abuses committed by Israel in both Gaza and the West Bank, stressing the consequences from a gender perspective. These organisations have found ways to overcome the difficulties and have adapted some of their processes to continue their networking and advocacy activities. For example, Palestinian feminist organisations worked together to prepare the civil society shadow report on implementing the commitments of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.<sup>110</sup> Published in 2025, their report not only critically reviews the report submitted by the Palestinian Authority on compliance with its commitments, but it also exposes the serious consequences of Israeli violence for Palestinian women and girls in Gaza and the West Bank. Palestinian feminist organisations have persisted in calling on the international community to take action against the violence and impunity, have contributed with their reports to the fact-finding work of UN Special Rapporteurs and have brought their complaints and demands to international forums focused on issues such as the elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against women, including sexual and gender-based violence, and the international Women, Peace and Security agenda. Despite some Palestinian feminists’ criticism of this agenda, the commemoration of the 25th anniversary of its launch provided an opportunity for Noura Erakat to express the demands of Palestinian women. In her address, the Palestinian-American lawyer insisted that the end of the

***The coexistence of young people of both sexes in very small spaces, a very sensitive issue within the framework of a predominantly conservative Gazan society, is believed to be leading many families to choose to marry off their daughters for reasons of honor***

105. *Ibid.*

106. J. Vintges, B. Abu Hamad, N. Jones, *The gendered toll of armed conflict: how the genocide in Gaza is compounding girls’ risks of child marriage and gender-based violence*, Policy brief, Gender and Adolescence: Global Evidence (GAGE), July 2025.

107. Interview with a professional from a Palestinian feminist organisation.

108. For further information on the context here, see Pamela Urrutia, *Challenges of feminist struggles in Palestine in a post-pandemic context*, ECP - Associació Hèlia, July 2022.

109. Interview with professionals from Palestinian feminist organisations.

110. WCLAC and al-Muntada, *Facing the Double Jeopardy of Colonial Occupation and Patriarchy: Palestinian Women Striving for Justice, Liberation, and Freedom*, Platform for Action Beijing+30, NGO Parallel Report Palestine – 2025, February 2025.

genocide cannot come at the expense of accountability and justice for its survivors: 'Our survival cannot be conditioned on surrendering our right to build a collective future on this land, which makes life worth living'.<sup>111</sup>

## Final considerations

The data and reflections presented throughout this report demonstrate the continuity between the genocide and the violence inherent in Israel's policies of colonisation, occupation and apartheid imposed on the Palestinian population. Without aspiring to produce an exhaustive account, we have nevertheless attempted to systematise the repercussions from a gender perspective on the lives, bodies and experiences of Palestinians, illustrating the wide range of impacts and the need to address them. As analysed, the violation of the right to Palestinian lives has reached extraordinary levels, with an unprecedented proportion of Palestinian women, girls and boys among the dead. Palestinian men have been systematically labelled and annihilated as 'combatants by default', and many have died whilst engaged in predominantly civilian activities. The patterns of Israeli violence against the Palestinian population have confirmed that Palestinian victims have been identified and attacked primarily because of their identity as Palestinians.

***Impunity in the face of genocide, apartheid, and occupation threatens to establish a dangerous precedent not only for the Palestinian population, but for humanity as a whole***

The impacts on the physical and mental health of the Palestinian population have been extraordinary, with particularly severe consequences for women's and girl's sexual and reproductive health. The repercussions have been especially critical for pregnant women and those who have given birth amid the devastation, continuous attacks, constant displacement, hunger and lack of medical care. The blockade and deprivations deliberately imposed by Israel have also had specific and disproportionate effects on the health and dignity of Palestinian women, adolescents and girls, particularly with regard to menstrual hygiene. The dehumanising practices, policies and narratives towards the Palestinian population have converged in Israel's use of 'reproductive violence'. Though this form of violence is not new, it has intensified to the point of constituting what has been described as 'reproductive genocide' or 'reproicide', entailing the deliberate intention to harm the physical and social capacities of a group, in this case the Palestinian people. The consequences for the mental health of the entire Palestinian population are also immense due to repetitive, individual and collective and transgenerational trauma.

As outlined, Israel has also used sexual and gender-based violence as a mechanism of torture, humiliation

and intimidation against Palestinian prisoners and the population as a whole. Not only has this taken the form of violence directed at individuals, but it has also been used as a tool of collective punishment intended to break and subjugate the entire Palestinian people. Israel's exploitation of the gender codes dominant in Palestinian society, and particularly of the concept of honour associated with women's bodies, shows that this practice is not new. Moreover, it raises fears that such violations may be underreported by Palestinian victims, given the persistent impunity and Israel's cynical appeal to the gender agenda.

The genocide has also unleashed and entrenched other forms of violence and oppression that remain less visible, such as those related to the gender impacts of successive forced displacements in Gaza and movement restrictions in the West Bank. It has had repercussions on access to education and economic security for women and girls amid the marked impoverishment of the Palestinian population, led to an increase of gender-based violence in the domestic and family sphere, particularly regarding the growth of child marriage among Palestinian girls as a negative coping strategy, and dampened the activities and agenda of Palestinian feminist organisations, given the emergencies and shifting priorities imposed by the genocide. These and other issues, such as the specific impacts on the LGBTIQ+ community, persons with disabilities, the elderly and those who were already vulnerable before the conflict due to their economic situation or their status as refugees, will continue to require attention and further research from an intersectional perspective.

This report has sought to document, give visibility to and contribute to collective reflection on the urgency of mechanisms and policies to ensure accountability for the wide range of abuses and flagrantly serious crimes. The facts and dynamics analysed confirm their connection to the constituent crimes of genocide of which Israel is accused: killing members of a group, causing them serious physical and mental harm, deliberately inflicting conditions of life calculated to bring about the group's physical destruction in whole or in part and imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group. The persistence of Israeli policies and practices as part of its settler colonial project does not merely threaten the survival and rights of the Palestinian population, as impunity for genocide, apartheid and occupation also pose a risk and set a dangerous precedent for all humanity.

111. Noura Erakat, *Statement by Ms. Noura Erakat at the UN Security Council Open Debate on Women, Peace and Security*, 6 October 2025.