

# *Report says Gaza faces largest orphan crisis in modern history*

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Ramallah, April 4 (RHC)-- Tens of thousands of Palestinian children have lost their parents since the start of Israel's genocidal war on the besieged Gaza Strip, the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics says.

In a statement on Thursday, the eve of Palestinian Children's Day, the agency said 39,384 children in Gaza have lost one or both parents after 534 days of Israel's assault, which has ravaged the tiny enclave and displaced most of its 2.3 million strong population.

The bureau said among them are about 17,000 children who have been deprived of both parents since October 2023, when Israel launched its genocidal offensive. "These children are living in tragic conditions, with many forced to take refuge in torn tents or destroyed homes, in a near-total absence of social care and psychological support," the statement by the bureau said. "The Gaza Strip is suffering from the largest orphan crisis in modern history."

According to the statement, at least 17,954 children have been killed in Israeli attacks in Gaza, including 274 newborn babies and 876 infants below the age of one year.

"Seventeen children also froze to death in the tents sheltering displaced people, and 52 others died of starvation and systematic malnutrition," it added.

Since resuming its offensive in Gaza after a fragile ceasefire brought a few weeks of respite, Israel has sealed vital border crossings – prohibiting the entry of much-needed humanitarian aid, including flour, fuel, and medical supplies into the Strip.

Even before the last ceasefire came into effect in January, lasting for just about two months, Israeli forces kept the border crossings largely shut, turning away thousands of convoys carrying aid supplies.

Gaza’s Government Media Office has decried the move, saying earlier this week the Israeli government is applying a policy of “systematic starvation” by halting the entry of aid and flour for an entire month, forcing bakeries to shut down.

Children and minors, those below the age of 18, make up about 43 percent of the combined Palestinian population of 5.5 million in Gaza and the occupied West Bank, the bureau said.

Since resuming its deadly campaign on March 18, the Israeli army has killed more than 1,160 Palestinians in Gaza.

At least 50,523 Palestinians have been killed since October 2023, most of them women and children, according to Gaza’s Ministry of Health.

The report said that since October 7, Israeli forces detained more than 1,055 children, mostly in the West Bank, in what it said was an “unprecedented” escalation against Palestinian children. More than 350 remain held in Israeli prison facilities.

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