

*Survey shows death feels
imminent for 96 percent of
Gaza's vulnerable children*

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Gaza City, December 13 (RHC)-- Death feels imminent to most children in Gaza, according to a shocking new survey which details the psychological impact of Israel's ongoing and relentless war on Gaza.

The survey, carried out by the Community Training Centre for Crisis Management, based in Gaza and supported by the UK-based War Child Alliance, found that 96 percent of Gaza's children surveyed felt that death is imminent and 92 percent of children surveyed were "not accepting reality".

The survey interviewed over 500 children, parents and caregivers from families where at least one child is disabled, wounded or unaccompanied. The study also surveyed a significant portion of households where children under the age of 17 headed the family.

"In my 23 years or so working in the system, I have never seen a statistic that bleak that 96% of children feel death is imminent," Helen Pattinson, CEO of War Child UK told The New Arab. "It's a very, very sad reality indeed" she added.

The CEO says in a conflict typically 22 percent of a child population would need psychological support and recovery, but in Gaza, that number is 100 percent. "What we really wanted to highlight with this particular report is psychological distress, and to say that is significant, and it is protracted, and it will have consequences," Pattinson explained. "Children are having to endure a war that they didn't start."

While Pattinson agrees the report's findings are shocking, she said she was not surprised given Israel's now 15-month bombardment of the enclave. However, she noted the report still shows just how challenging children are finding their life right now in Gaza.

Fear, anxiety, nightmares

The mental toll the war has had on the children was "severe", with children showing symptoms of high levels of stress through fear, anxiety, sleep disturbances, nightmares, nail-biting, difficulty concentrating and social withdrawal.

Because of the war, 49 percent also wished to die, and the same number believed they would die.

The report also signified how many families have been repeatedly displaced and forced to live in camps with no access to clean water or electricity. Many families suffer from poverty and limited resources, with 86 percent accounting for unemployment.

Pattinson urged for an immediate ceasefire, not only to stop children from suffering due to the war but to allow organisations such as War Child to launch a large-scale recovery plan to provide psychological aid and treatment to the children of Gaza.

"My experience working with children in war zones is they can be incredibly resilient, they can adapt with the right specialist care and treatment, they can recover. And so, I think we just need to pull all of our energy into making that a possibility," Pattinson said.

Most of the 44,835 Palestinians killed and 106,356 wounded in Gaza are either children or women. The United Nations has previously spoken of the impact the war is having on children, with civilians under the age of 18 making up nearly 50 percent of Gaza's population.

The war has also led to an unprecedented amputee crisis. The UN children's fund, UNICEF, estimated in January that almost a thousand children had lost one or both legs – equating to 10 children losing a limb every day.

At the same time, the lack of medical aid and care not only adds to their suffering but also prevents them from fleeing Israeli assaults.

<https://www.radiohc.cu/index.php/en/noticias/internacionales/371915-survey-shows-death-feels-imminent-for-96-percent-of-gazas-vulnerable-children>



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