



**WOMEN'S INTERNATIONAL LEAGUE FOR PEACE AND FREEDOM**  
 WILPF Fresno, P.O. Box 5114, Fresno, CA 93755

Graphic by Lincoln Cushing

**IMPACT ON PALESTINIAN WOMEN**

A section from the recent report of the UN Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories:

40. Since 7 October, United Nations entities and experts have consistently warned that women, children and newborns have disproportionately borne the brunt of the war in Gaza as victims of military operations, severely diminished access to healthcare, and food shortages. As experts have highlighted, the assault on Palestinian women's dignity and rights has escalated to new and terrifying dimensions.

41. During the reporting period, a large majority of recorded deaths were women and children, with up to two mothers killed per hour. Israel's widespread bombardment, including on health facilities, prolonged border closures, extended cuts to Gazans' main source of clean water, and restrictions on essential items and humanitarian aid have also critically impacted women and girls' access to essential health services. Pregnant women, in particular, have been prevented from obtaining necessary nutrition, care and emergency obstetric services. With an estimated 180 women giving birth every day in Gaza, many face childbirth under horrific and unsanitary conditions, increasing medical complications and maternal deaths. The war's psychological impact has also caused a rise in stress-induced miscarriages, stillbirths, and premature births. In addition, pre-existing malnutrition among pregnant women significantly worsened due to catastrophic levels of food insecurity, heightening the risks of disease and death.

42. On 20 November, the Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls, its causes and consequences warned of Israel's relentless and grave assault on the reproductive rights, physical integrity and dignity of Palestinian women and their children and newborns, noting that it could constitute genocidal measures intended to prevent births within a group. Throughout the reporting period, Israel conducted extensive attacks on healthcare facilities and ambulances, with 200 documented by 30 October, 318 by 18 January, 410 by 12 March and 500 by 30 July. By February 2024, less than a third of Gaza's hospitals were partially operational, with caesarean sections and amputations on children being performed without anaesthesia.

In May, United Nations experts again highlighted the appalling treatment and dreadful conditions of pregnant and lactating women, noting that bombings of hospitals, deliberate denial of healthcare access by Israeli snipers, and shortages of beds and medical supplies, put around 50,000 pregnant women and 20,000 newborn babies at unimaginable risk. Miscarriages also increased by 300 per cent, and nearly all pregnant and breastfeeding women faced severe food poverty.

By July 2024, the healthcare sector was beyond crisis levels and doctors reported alarming trends of rising cases of pre-term and low-birth weight babies and developmental delays in children, common signs of severe malnourishment in pregnant women, worsened by stress, fear and exhaustion.

43. During the reporting period, Israeli military and security forces also subjected hundreds of Palestinian women and girls to sexual and gender-based violence, according to numerous reports and/or allegations received by the Special Committee and other United Nations entities and experts, including OHCHR, United Nations experts and the Commission of Inquiry. The reports included cases of being targeted, arbitrarily detained and subjected to forced nudity; inappropriate touching; sexual violence, including rape; sexualized torture; threats of rape; psychological violence; and online sexual harassment, including through the posting of degrading photos on social media platforms. The Commission of Inquiry stressed that cultural sensitivities related to privacy and the significance of the veil worsened the impact of the gender-based crimes, leading to severe and long-term social repercussions for victims due to the pervasive and lasting presence of online content. It further concluded that Israeli military personnel either ordered or condoned the abuses, which were intended to humiliate and degrade the victims and the Palestinian community, reinforcing gender stereotypes and contributing to broader violence and ill-treatment of Palestinians.

44. United Nations experts have also documented credible allegations of deliberate targeting and extrajudicial executions of women and children in places of refuge or while fleeing. In February, alarms were also raised about the enforced disappearance of Palestinian women and children by the Israeli military, including children separated from their parents and at least one female infant forcibly transferred to Israel. On 6 May, several

experts warned again of the continued and systematic onslaught of violence, noting that most victims had been women and children. They reported new findings of mass graves at hospitals, including women and children showing signs of torture and summary executions. The experts also highlighted the destruction by Israel of the largest fertility clinic in Gaza, which reportedly stored 3,000 embryos.

45. In the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, UNFPA, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict and United Nations experts repeatedly warned that since 7 October, women and girls have experienced intense fear and insecurity owing to Israel's lethal open-fire policy and increased discrimination, harassment, sexual assault and attacks by Israeli authorities and settlers. Movement restrictions, closures and attacks on healthcare, also obstructed mobile clinics, health facilities, ambulance services and humanitarian aid delivery, severely limiting women and girls' access to essential services and increasing the risk of gender-based violence. Furthermore, women in remote areas had little to no access to essential healthcare services, with pregnant women facing a higher risk of giving birth at home or at checkpoints. The visit by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General also revealed allegations of cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment and sexual violence by Israeli security forces during detention and reports of sexual harassment and rape threats during house raids and at checkpoints.

46. The Special Committee is deeply concerned that Israel has not provided the special protection to women and children required by international humanitarian and human rights law. Furthermore, the Special Committee is deeply concerned that the systematic targeting of women and children and measures imposed are effectively preventing births among Palestinian women in Gaza; causing serious bodily and mental harm to Palestinian women and children; and inflicting conditions of life inimical to bring about their physical destruction.

**REPORT FROM  
 PALESTINIAN  
 JOURNALIST HIND  
 KHOUDARY**



Hind Khoudary, a Palestinian journalist.  
 Photo courtesy of Middle East Eye

Meanwhile on the ground: We are facing starvation; children and women don't see food to eat or water to drink for days, as there is very little coming in. Women barely feed themselves, foraging for leaves and dead animals, which is so unsafe. We don't know what diseases could come from eating the carcasses.

Children are dying for lack of proper medical attention and care. I keep telling more everyday because my heart is broken knowing what we face every day, so I plead with the good people out there to come to the aid of the Palestinian people because we are in a time of critical condition without control.

**RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP NOW!  
 HERE'S HOW:**

Send dues to WILPF-Fresno, P.O. Box 5114, Fresno, CA 93755.

WILPF-US membership is \$35/year. WILPF-Fresno sponsors a low-income rate of \$20.

For questions and information updates, contact Nancy Hatcher at nhatcher46@gmail.com or Kyla Mitchell at kyla.noelle@gmail.com.

**WILPF MEETING**

Dec. 12 (second Thursday), 7 p.m., via Zoom and sometimes also at the Fresno Center for Nonviolence, 1584 N. Van Ness Ave. This meeting is open to all members. Watch your e-mail for an announcement. For info on the in-person option, contact Teresa at taca\_03@gmail.com.

**STIR IT UP-WILPF  
 KFCF 88.1 FM**

Dec. 25 (fourth Wednesday), 3 p.m. Jean Hays highlights people and events important to our WILPF community. Probably The Raging Grannies will sing outrageous holiday songs!

**WOMEN IN BLACK**

Dec. 4 (first Wednesday), noon, together with Raza for Gaza in front of the Federal Building, 2500 Tulare St. Check first with Sue Kern at skern@netptc.net or 559-349-3777.

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