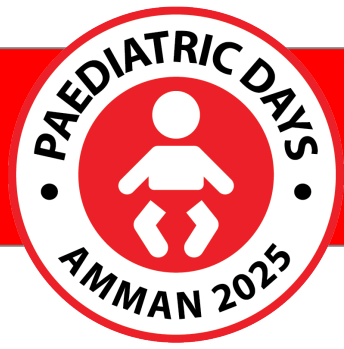


Understanding the psychosocial environment of children displaced from Gaza to Egypt: a qualitative parent perspective

Zeena Khazendar, Dr. Hala Abdo

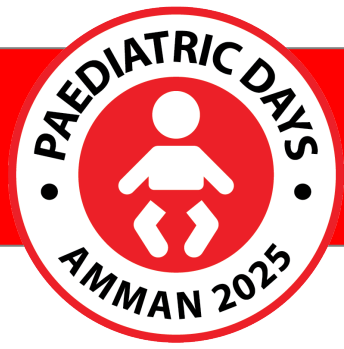
2025



Background: Intergenerational Trauma

- 1 — 1918-1948: British mandate
 - After WWI: Britain colonizes Palestine
 - Jewish populations immigrate from Europe to Palestine (Balfour Declaration)
- 2 — May 14th, 1948: Founding of Israel (Nakba)
 - 800,000 Palestinians displaced, 15,000 killed, 531 villages destroyed
 - 78% of historic Palestine colonized

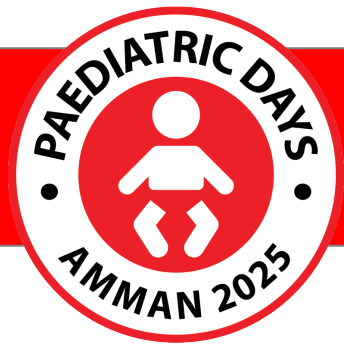




Background: Intergenerational Trauma

- 3 — 1949 – Present: Violence & Settler-colonialism
 - **Occupation:** Israel controls water, electricity, movement in Palestine
 - Expansion: illegal Israeli settlements & violence

- 4 — 2007 – Present: Bombing & Blockade on Gaza
 - **Blockade:** Israel prevents resources entering Gaza and people exiting Gaza
 - Bombing: 5 Israeli bombing campaigns. Since Oct 2023, 744+ days of bombing



Recent Impact on Children in Gaza

80,000

children killed in Gaza in 2 years

13% of all children in Gaza killed



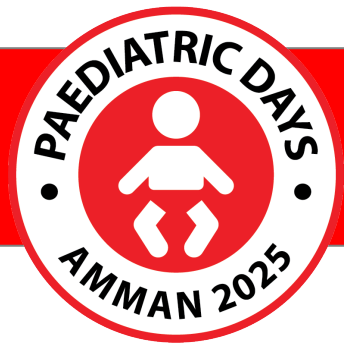
1 GBH. 2024



2 The Independent 2024



3 Aljazeera 2024



Recent Impact on Children in Gaza

80,000

children killed in Gaza in 2 years

13% of all children in Gaza killed

55,000

children reached severe malnutrition



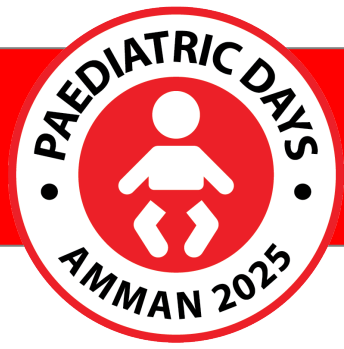
1 GBH. 2024



2 The Independent 2024



3 Aljazeera 2024



Recent Impact on Children in Gaza

80,000

children killed in Gaza in 2 years
13% of all children in Gaza killed

55,000

children reached severe malnutrition

17,000

children orphaned
within first 5 months of Israeli attacks



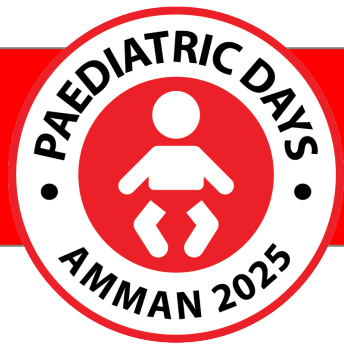
1 GBH. 2024



2 The Independent 2024



3 Aljazeera 2024

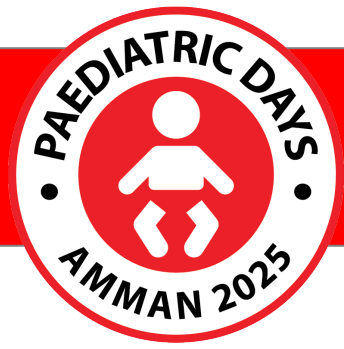


Research Question: Displacement to Egypt

~120,000 Palestinians have fled from Gaza to Egypt via Rafah border
border

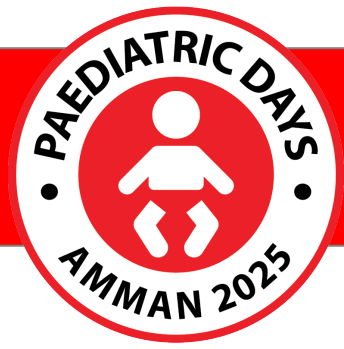
Research Question:

What is the psychosocial environment that shapes the experiences of Palestinian children displaced from Gaza after October 2023 currently living in Egypt?



Methods – Qualitative Approach

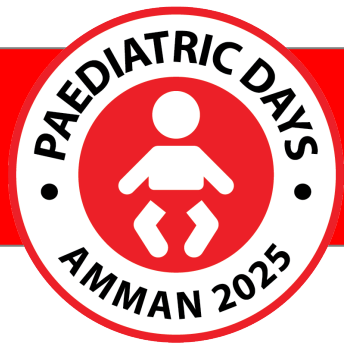
- 12 remote semi-structured interviews with Palestinian parents from parents from Gaza and experts in Egypt
- Recruitment through NGO in Egypt and snowball sampling
- Inductive thematic analysis via NVivo



Results – Types of Displacement

1. Medical Evacuation
2. Pay to Exit
3. Citizenship abroad



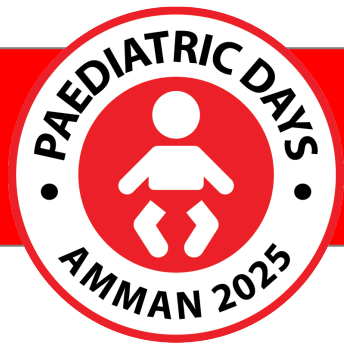


Results – Family Separation

Theme 1: Effect of family separation on children.

“I traveled alone—and I’m also pregnant... and I lost one daughter—she was martyred. The World Health Organization contacted us...they chose the two youngest kids in the family [to evacuate]. I told them, **How can I leave my daughters in Gaza and leave?**...One of my daughters is extremely attached to me...she was six years old...’ I had the flu. I told them, **‘I’m sick and pregnant—I can’t.’** They said, ‘Take two Panadol and you’ll be fine.’ I traveled at a very tragic time.”

“His dad talks to him on the phone and says...’Baba (Dad)— once I get my legs, I’ll come back. I’m coming back to you.’”

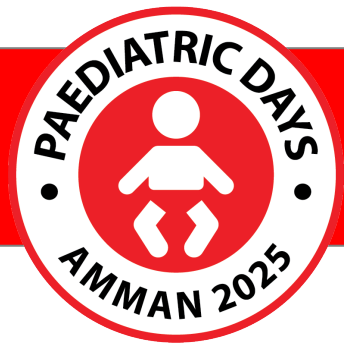


Results – Confined Living Conditions

Theme 2: Children in crowded living conditions marked by confinement and lack of space to play.

“I have small children who need to play...but the conditions are extremely, extremely harsh. I’m living in a room with 6 other women...If my son makes a noise, the other women complain.”

“The missile actually hit us—it landed right where we were. My son’s two legs—I saw with my own eyes, I was standing next to him—both were gone...But [my son]—mashallah, mashallah—he has unbelievable determination and willpower. My dear...he lifts himself up with his hands...[He] says, **“Mama, take me downstairs...Just for a bit, Mama, just a bit.”** And I end up suffering more than him.”

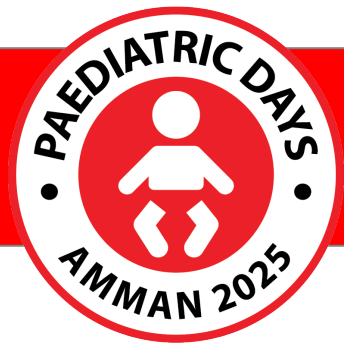


Results – Lack of Legal Status

Theme 3: Lack of legal status leading to resource insecurity and lack of access to education.

“I told them multiple times, like, I have four kids. I don’t need to eat — just bring another meal for the child.”

“The online system is just the teacher logging in and asking the students questions, not actually teaching...**how can a child that age [7,8,9] absorb like that?**”

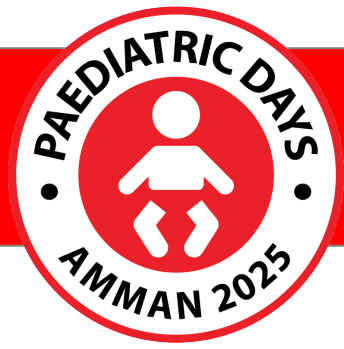


Results – Personality Changes

Theme 4: Children experiencing personality changes, fear, and violent behavior following trauma.

“[My triplets] became very irritable...They’re scared at night. They say they can’t sleep—I tell them to keep praying. When we first arrived, if they heard an airplane, they thought it was a bombing and would run and panic...[I’ve noticed] anger, hitting, they fight a lot. **They’ve become aggressive.**”

“They live with the worry [for their family in Gaza]. They lost their self-confidence, they have nightmares, they have very violent behavior, **they lost their focus and concentration.**”



Recommendations for Humanitarian Relief

1. Provide means for Palestinians in Egypt to earn income:

“We want jobs. We want to be self-reliant. The Palestinian people—we’re hard workers. I’m one of them...[If we earn a salary] we’d feel dignity...proud, capable.”

2. Provide housing or rent assistance.

3. Provide hot meals, transportation stipends, and in-person education.

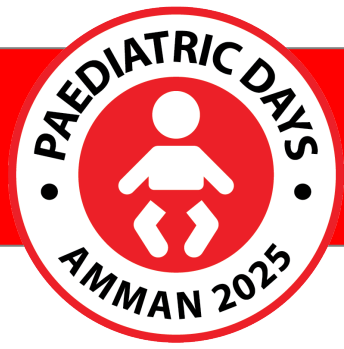


Conclusion

“The experience of displacement is, in all honesty, the destruction of everything meaningful.”

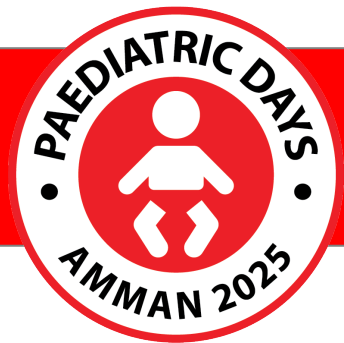
- 1. Israel must end the bombing, starvation, and colonization of Palestine** to allow Palestinian children to return to their families, rebuild schools, and heal in their community.

- 2. The Egyptian government must provide Palestinian families legal status** to allow them to earn income and enable children to access food, humane living conditions, and education.



Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Dr. Hala Abdo and Dr. Ru'a Rimawi from Al Quds University in Palestine for their leadership and hard work, and would like to thank the Gazan families in this study for sharing their stories.



References

- 1 Morris U. History & Background. UN. <https://www.un.org/unispal/history-background/> (accessed Nov 20, 2024).
- 2 Palestine - British Mandate, Zionism, Conflict | Britannica. *Britannica*. 2024; published online Nov 19. <https://www.britannica.com/place/Palestine/British-mandate-Zionism-and-the-birth-of-Israel> (accessed Nov 20, 2024).
- 3 Ghanim H. Poetics of Disaster: Nationalism, Gender, and Social Change Among Palestinian Poets in Israel After Nakba. *Int J Polit Cult Soc* 2008; 22: 37–56.
- 4 (PDF) Nakba Habibi: Collapse and Dispersal of a Major Palestinian Community. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/265557178_Nakba_Habibi_Collapse_and_Dispersal_of_a_Major_Palestinian_Community (accessed Nov 11, 2024).
- 5 Sa'di AH, Abu-Lughod L. *Nakba: Palestine, 1948, and the Claims of Memory*. Columbia University Press, 2007.
- 6 UN marks 75 years since displacement of 700,000 Palestinians | UN News. 2023; published online May 15. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2023/05/1129257> (accessed Nov 11, 2024).
- 7 Palestine refugees | UNRWA. <https://www.unrwa.org/palestine-refugees> (accessed Nov 11, 2024).
- 8 Psychological and Social Suffering of Another Generation of Palestinian Children Living Under Occupation: An Urgent Call to Advocate – Health and Human Rights Journal. <https://www.hhrjournal.org/2023/05/24/psychological-and-social-suffering-of-another-generation-of-palestinian-children-living-under-occupation-an-urgent-call-to-advocate/> (accessed Nov 19, 2024).
- 9 Israel's Occupation: 50 Years of Dispossession - Amnesty International. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2017/06/israels-occupation-50-years-of-dispossession/> (accessed Nov 20, 2024).
- 10 The Gaza Strip | The human toll: Impact of 15 years of blockade - June 2022 | UNICEF Middle East and North Africa. <https://www.unicef.org/mena/documents/human-toll-impact-15-years-blockade-june-2022> (accessed Nov 20, 2024).
- 11 Belouzah H, Berger M. The U.N. once predicted Gaza would be 'uninhabitable' by 2020. Two million people still live there. *Wash. Post*. 2023; published online Jan 2. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2023/01/11/un-predicted-gaza-would-be-uninhabitable-by-2020-two-million-people-still-live-there/> (accessed Nov 20, 2024).
- 12 Six Wars Old. *We. Palest.* <https://electronicintifada.net/content/six-wars-old/58461> (accessed Nov 22, 2024).
- 13 Khatib R, McKee M, Yusuf S. Counting the dead in Gaza: difficult but essential. *The Lancet* 2024; 404: 237–8.
- 14 Six-month update report on the human rights situation in Gaza: 1 November 2023 to 30 April 2024. OHCHR. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/reports/six-month-update-report-human-rights-situation-gaza-1-november-2023-30-april-2024> (accessed Nov 11, 2024).
- 15 Azzamouche MH. Karamatou, Israel has wiped out 502 entire families in Gaza: How that number is calculated. *Al Jazeera*. 2023; published online Nov 13. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/11/13/israel-has-wiped-out-502-entire-families-in-gaza-how-that-number-is-calculated> (accessed Nov 11, 2024).
- 16 GAZA STRIP: Hostilities leave the entire population highly food insecure and at risk of Famine | IPC - Integrated Food Security Phase Classification. <https://www.ipcinfo.org/ipc-country-analysis/details-map/en/c/1156689/> (accessed Nov 11, 2024).
- 17 Khatib R, McKee M, Yusuf S. Counting the dead in Gaza: difficult but essential. *The Lancet* 2024; 404: 237–8.
- 18 Nearly 70 percent of deaths in Gaza are women and children: UN. *Al Jazeera*. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/11/19/nearly-70-percent-of-deaths-in-gaza-are-women-and-children-un> (accessed Nov 19, 2024).
- 19 Gaza: Number of children killed higher than four years of world conflict | United Nations in Türkiye. <https://turkiye.un.org/en/259239-gaza-number-children-killed-higher-four-years-world-conflict> (accessed Nov 19, 2024).
- 20 Orphanage only' helps children in Gaza as the war grinds on | UN News. 2024; published online Oct 4. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2024/10/1159856> (accessed Nov 12, 2024).
- 21 Parker C, Tugnell L, Bokach H. In Egypt, Gaza evacuees live in the shadows: 'Everything is closing off'. *Wash. Post*. 2024; published online June 29. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2024/06/29/gaza-evacuees-egypt/> (accessed Nov 11, 2024).
- 22 It's Time to Help Palestinians Left Behind in Egypt. *ReliefWeb*. <https://reliefweb.int/report/egypt/its-time-help-palestinians-left-behind-egypt> (accessed Nov 20, 2024).



linktr.ee/zeenakhazendar

Thank You

For follow-up questions contact:

zeena_khazendar@alumni.stanford.edu

+1 727 871 4462

hala.abdo.1998@gmail.com

+972 59-581-9228