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Killing the Future: The UN's Findings on Israel and Palestinian Children

By: D.J. Ravindran

A UN Commission has found that Israel has deliberately targeted Palestinian children in Gaza with more than 20,000 killed; this is evidence of genocidal intent. Israeli attacks have affected every aspect of Palestinian children's lives-their physical, emotional, social, and cognitive well-being.

The UN Independent International Inquiry Commission on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem and Israel, has concluded in its latest report-published on 18 June 2026-that Israel has deliberately targeted Palestinian children since 7 October 2023.

The present report makes for grim reading. It examines how Israeli attacks have affected every aspect of Palestinian children's lives-their physical, emotional, social, and cognitive well-being.

The Commission was established by the UN Human Rights Council in May 2021. In 2025, its then members concluded that Israel had committed genocide against Palestinians in Gaza. Since its inception, the Israeli government has strongly opposed the Commission and refused to cooperate with it.

In response to the latest report, the Israeli government described it as "the latest in a series of egregious reports" published by the Commission since 2021. It denounced the findings as "unsubstantiated and outrageous allegations".

The Commission is currently chaired by Justice B.P. Muralidhar, former Chief Justice of the Orissa High Court. Its other members include Justice Florence Mumba, a Zambian judge, and Chris Sidoti, an Australian international law expert.

Commissions of Inquiry or fact-finding missions are ad hoc, non-judicial bodies normally established by the [UN Human Rights Council](#) (though sometimes by the Security Council or General Assembly). Their purpose is to investigate alleged violations of international human rights law, international humanitarian law, or international criminal law. They aim to ensure accountability, deliver justice for victims, create a historical record, and end impunity. In the last 30 years, the UN has established more than 50 such inquiry commissions and fact-finding missions.

The present report makes for grim reading. It examines how Israeli attacks have affected every aspect of Palestinian children's lives-their physical, emotional, social, and cognitive well-being. According to the Commission, between October 2023 and October 2025, at least 20,179 children were killed and 44,143 were injured in Gaza. Tragically, at least 5,031 children under five years old were killed during this period, including 1,029 infants under the age of one and around 420 newborns. Many more children remain buried under the rubble.

Till April 2025, the Gaza Health Ministry had recorded 846 cases of children who had undergone amputations. The Commission quotes a doctor who visited Gaza on a medical mission:

Based on the clustering of injuries and the targeted body parts, I assess that the Israeli soldiers have been deliberately shooting teenage boys in a game of target practice-a different body part being targeted on different days... There is a very clear pattern that suggests this is a deliberate aiming of different body parts [of children].

One particularly harrowing case documented in the report is that of a 10-day-old baby boy who was shot by a quadcopter drone while being breastfed by his mother. The Commission concluded that "the quadcopter controller would have been able to see inside the tent and assess that the target was a mother and a baby".

The report also cites testimony from an Israeli soldier in the ITVX documentary *Breaking Ranks: Inside Israel's War*. The soldier said: "The drones, in my opinion, are what most dehumanise the other side. You see everything on a screen. You drop the bomb. It feels like a game. You can sit in some basement of a house, safe, with your helmet off, scratching your balls, half-dressed, and kill Palestinians."

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Several other Israeli soldiers interviewed in the same documentary confirmed that they had shot unarmed Palestinian civilians, including children, believing they would be shielded from prosecution. The Commission concluded that there exists "a broad pattern of a permissive military culture in which Israeli soldiers are encouraged to directly target Palestinian children with or without directives from superior commanders".

The Commission also investigated the widely reported killing of five-year-old Palestinian girl Hind Rajab on 29 January 2024. Hind was trapped inside a car that came under Israeli fire, which killed all the adults with her. She called Red Crescent volunteers, desperately pleading for rescue. While she was still on the phone, Hind was killed along with the ambulance crew that had come to save her. Based on satellite images and other evidence, the Commission concluded that Israeli forces deliberately targeted the family car, knowing that children were inside. They also intentionally obstructed medical rescue efforts by shelling the ambulance. The Commission found Israel's claim that its troops were not present near the vehicle to be false. The Red Crescent Society later released the live audio recording of Hind's heart-wrenching plea, which became central to the well-known film *The Voice of Hind Rajab*.

The Indian government prevented the release of the film in India, arguing that it would damage India-Israel relations. The film was eventually released.

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In another set of cases, the Commission analysed photos, videos, CT scans, and X-rays of 17 Palestinian children aged between three and 16 years who had been shot. It was able to fully examine 15 of these cases and found that in 12 of them the wounds were consistent with a single, targeted gunshot.

Children from Gaza are subjected to illegal arrests and held incommunicado in unknown locations. The report reiterated its previous findings that Israeli security forces have committed sexual and gender-based violence against children, both boys and girls. It also documented at least 35 instances of Israeli soldiers filming themselves in children's bedrooms in Gaza, mocking and desecrating symbols of childhood. According to the Commission, this reflects a dehumanising attitude of the Israeli forces towards Palestinians, and Palestinian children in particular.

Other findings include the systematic destruction of sexual and reproductive healthcare facilities, which has partially impaired the reproductive capacity of Palestinians. Since 2003, tens of thousands of children in Gaza have been newly orphaned or separated from their families. Nearly 320,000 children under five are at risk of malnutrition.

The psychological toll has been devastating. Nearly 1.2 million children in Gaza are in need of psychosocial support for depression, anxiety, and suicidal thoughts. Since 2003, Israeli forces have destroyed 459 out of 564 school buildings in Gaza, severely disrupting the education of thousands of children.

Israeli forces and settlers have intentionally targeted Palestinian children, and that these deaths are not mere collateral damage. Israeli officials have deliberately portrayed Palestinian children in Gaza as "terrorists". The report cites several statements that illustrate this intent:

On 9 October 2023, Nissim Vaturi, a member of the Knesset and deputy speaker, posted on social media: "Erase Gaza. Nothing else will satisfy us... Do not leave a child there, expel all the remaining ones at the end, so that they will not have a resurrection." On 30 January 2025, he said again: "Gaza is full of terrorists and every child born there is already a terrorist, from the moment of his birth." On 16 October 2023, another Knesset member, Merav Ben-Ari, stated in parliament: "There is no equality with Gazan children [compared to Israeli children]. Children in Gaza brought [their own killing] on themselves." An Israeli soldier posted on 18 March 2024: "The starvation campaign? It's a disgrace and shame, our fault that they are hungry; they deserve to die! All of Gaza should be burned with its 'innocent' inhabitants, from the greatest to the smallest, who are children of Satan!"

Based on its extensive review of available evidence, the Commission has concluded that Israeli security forces continue to commit the crime of genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes in Gaza.

In one of its most shocking findings, the Commission stated:

Children are not just part of a population; their survival is central to the existence and continuity of the Palestinian group. The sheer number of cases investigated and documented by the Commission showing a clear pattern that children were directly targeted by the Israeli security forces constitutes a key element in the Israeli authorities' genocidal intent to destroy the Palestinian group in Gaza.

The Commission called on the Israeli government to immediately halt its military operations in Gaza, end the use of high-impact weapons in residential areas-including quadcopters, drones, and snipers-and withdraw its forces to the 1967 boundary between Gaza and Israel.

It also urged the international community to arrest any Israeli officials against whom arrest warrants have been issued by the International Criminal Court (ICC). Additionally, the Commission called on the UN Security Council to impose comprehensive sanctions-including travel bans, asset freezes, and financial restrictions-on Israeli officials with command responsibility and the leadership of the Israeli security forces.

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India has ratified the Genocide Convention, which places an immediate obligation on all countries to prevent and punish the crime of genocide so that they are not complicit in it. Yet, India appears to be actively courting Israeli officials even as it contributes to the genocide of Palestinians.

On 8 September 2025, Israeli Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich-an ultranationalist who had openly called for the killing of Palestinians-visited New Delhi and signed a bilateral investment treaty. He was welcomed in the Indian capital barely a week after the [International Association of Genocide Scholars](#) declared that Israel is committing genocide in Gaza.

Ten days after his visit, the UN Independent International Inquiry Commission on Palestine concluded that Israel had committed genocide in Gaza as defined under the 1948 Genocide Convention. The Commission identified Israeli President Isaac Herzog, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, and former Defence Minister Yoav Gallant as persons inciting acts of genocide. The report also listed Smotrich as a potential inciter of genocidal acts.

Despite widespread international concern over Israel's actions in Gaza, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Israel on 25 February 2026. The visit was widely seen as legitimising the actions of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, against whom the International Criminal Court had issued an arrest warrant on 21 November 2024. On 18 June 2026, the Commission presented its damning report highlighting the deliberate targeting of Palestinian children as part of Israel's genocidal intent. Just four days later, on 22 June, Major General (retd.) Amir Baram, Director General of Israel's Ministry of Defence, visited India to strengthen defence cooperation.

By continuing to deepen ties with Israel in this manner, the Indian government is not only condoning but, in the eyes of many, becoming complicit in the ongoing genocide.

D.J. Ravindran served as Director of Human Rights in Peacekeeping Operations in Libya, Sudan, and Timor-Leste (East Timor). He has extensive experience working in post-conflict situations, including Cambodia and Uganda. He is currently a member of the UN Working Group on the Use of Mercenaries as a Means of Violating Human Rights and Impeding the Exercise of the Right of Peoples to Self-Determination. The views expressed here are made in a personal capacity.