

The Forgotten Youth: Analyzing the Impact of Protracted Conflicts on Palestinian Children

Keck Center for International and Strategic Studies: The Ronald Lehman Program in Diplomacy and International Conflict

Sajah Ali

Abstract

Protracted conflicts, due to their sheer length and intensity, are unique in their impacts on populations in contrast to regular conflicts. Consequently, children living in protracted conflicts are often irreversibly and significantly impacted. Past research on the impact of violent conflicts on children tends to explore both short-term conflicts and short-term impacts, as they occur more commonly. Specifically, previous research focuses largely on the psychological impacts of conflicts. This paper adds to the discussion on the impact of protracted conflicts on children by exploring physical health, mental, and social development impacts. This paper zooms in on the Israel-Palestine conflict, one of the longest conflicts in contemporary history, finding that Palestinian children are permanently impacted physically, mentally, and socially by this protracted conflict.

Since the beginning of the Second Intifada, September 30, 2000, Israeli forces have killed 2,252 Palestinian children.¹ That shocking statistic on its own, is just one reason why it is crucial to explore the impact of this 75-year-old protracted conflict on Palestinian children. This paper aims to answer the question: what are the long-lasting impacts of the protracted Israel-Palestine conflict on Palestinian children? The paper supports the hypothesis that Palestinian children suffer from multidimensional, severe, long-lasting health, mental, and social development impacts. This argument is guided by Social Identity Theory which posits that children's development is ongoing, forming their identities, socially and mentally, around their reality and environment which in this case are embedded in a protracted conflict.

This research paper is a qualitative study that utilizes scholarly articles and reports. Most notably, this research draws on reports from the National Library of Medicine, Save the Children, Science Direct, and the World Association of Social Psychiatry. Moreover, statistical evidence is drawn from non-governmental organizations' reports such as the United Nations, OCHA, Human Rights Watch, and B'Tselem.

In the analysis section, this paper contends that Palestinian children experience severe mental and physical health drawbacks as well as disruptions in their social development evident through a high prevalence of continuous traumatic stress disorder (CTS), a high trend of malnutrition and iron deficiencies, and educational benchmarks. All of these impacts are long-lasting and life-altering. First, the paper will contextualize this issue by providing a historical background to the conflict along with a review of the literature on the effects of conflicts on

¹ Amira Hass, "Adam, Fuad, Abdullah, Omar: The 28 Palestinian Kids Killed by Israeli Forces This Year," Haaretz.com, June 12, 2023, <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2023-06-12/ty-article-opinion/.premium/these-are-their-names-28-palestinian-kids-killed-by-israeli-forces-this-year/00000188-aa5a-db59-a19a-fe7b87120000>.

children. Then the paper will briefly summarize the theory supporting the hypothesis followed by an analysis using scholarly evidence, policy implication, and a conclusion.

Background

The Palestinian-Israeli conflict is at its core a conflict over territory. The roots and origins of the conflict can be traced centuries but for the purposes of this paper, the start of this conflict can be pinpointed to 1917, with the Balfour Declaration.² The Balfour Declaration provided the legal basis for Jewish immigration to Palestine as a result of the persecution of Jews in Europe from the Nazi regime. At the time, Palestine was under British Mandate and this declaration allowed for an influx of Jewish immigrants.³ In fact, between 1932 to 1936 there were around 47,000 Jewish immigrants to Palestine, which was 46 percent of Jewish emigration from Europe.⁴

Zionism, a movement advocating for the creation of a Jewish homeland and the Balfour Declaration, ultimately led to the failed United Nations (UN) resolution partitioning Palestine into two independent states, one Palestinian, and the other Jewish.⁵ In the absence of a political solution, Great Britain ended its mandate in Palestine and the Jewish people simultaneously declared independence, establishing the State of Israel.⁶ In 1948, more than 750,000 Palestinians became refugees as they were expelled from their homes and over 400 Palestinian villages were violently destroyed.⁷ From 1948 until 1966, Israeli authorities confined the remaining

² "Israeli-Palestinian Conflict | Global Conflict Tracker," Council on Foreign Relations, April 25, 2023, <https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/israeli-palestinian-conflict>.

³ Thomas Woodley, "Jewish Immigration to Historical Palestine," CJPME, November 2013, https://www.cjpme.org/fs_181.

⁴ Woodley, "Jewish Immigration to Historical Palestine,"

⁵ "History of the Question of Palestine," United Nations, May 23, 2023, <https://www.un.org/unispal/history/>.

⁶ "History of the Question of Palestine ,"

⁷ Omar Shakir, "A Threshold Crossed," Human Rights Watch, March 28, 2023, <https://www.hrw.org/report/2021/04/27/threshold-crossed/israeli-authorities-and-crimes-apartheid-and-persecution>.

Palestinians to dozens of enclaves and placed them under military rule.⁸ The Israeli authorities further enforced rules that required Palestinians to have permission to leave their enclaves, restricting their right to movement, and infringing upon their basic human rights.⁹ In 1967 following the violent conflict known as the Six Day War, Israel expanded further by seizing control of the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, and East Jerusalem from Egypt and Jordan respectively, thus creating the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT).¹⁰ Israel additionally unilaterally annexed East Jerusalem in 1967 and the Golan Heights in 1981. The abuse of Palestinian human rights remained rampant with frequent land confiscation, forced displacement, and geographical fragmentation, along with massacres in Palestinian villages such as Kufr Yasin, Khan Yunis, and Qalqilya.¹¹

In 1978, after many years of violence between the Palestinians and Israel, and Israel and neighboring countries, Israel and Egypt signed the Camp David Accords, which strived for peace.¹² While the accords ended the thirty years of conflict between Egypt and Israel, the agreement was criticized by the UN for its exclusion of the Palestinian delegation in negotiations about the future of the disputed territories in Palestine.¹³ Thus, the Camp David Accords and further rising tensions between Israel and the Palestinians led to the first Intifada, one of two popular uprisings of Palestinians in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, aimed at ending Israel's occupation.¹⁴ The first Intifada, or “uprising”, began in December of 1987 and ended in September 1993 with the signing of the first Oslo Accords, which were regarded as a pivotal milestone in the peace process. The Oslo Accords set up a framework for Palestinians to have

⁸ Shakir, “A Threshold Crossed,”

⁹ Shakir, “A Threshold Crossed,”

¹⁰ Shakir, “A Threshold Crossed,”

¹¹ “This Is Apartheid,”

¹² Joe Sommerlad, “A Brief History of the Israel-Palestinian Conflict,” *The Independent*, June 18, 2021, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/israel-palestine-war-history-gaza-b1850628.html>.

¹³ Sommerlad, “A Brief History of the Israel-Palestinian Conflict,”

¹⁴ Sommerlad, “A Brief History of the Israel-Palestinian Conflict,”

self-governance in the West Bank and Gaza, albeit limited, in exchange for the Palestinian Liberation Organization formally recognizing the State of Israel.¹⁵ Unfortunately, the deal was short-lived, with Palestinians arguing that Israel was not holding true to their promise to remove troops from Gaza and Hebron.¹⁶ Moreover, illegal settlements persisted in the West Bank, despite promises made in the Accords.¹⁷

Thus, rising tensions through Israel's growing settlements and the failure of the Oslo Accords contributed to the Second Intifada in 2000.¹⁸ The heavy-armed visit of the Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's to the Al-Aqsa Mosque, the third holiest site in Islam, angered many Palestinians.¹⁹ The second intifada was significantly more violent than the first Intifada with over 3,000 Palestinian casualties and around 1,000 Israeli casualties.²⁰ The Second Intifada ended with Israel building the Separation Wall in the West Bank which is ruled illegal by both the International Criminal Court and the International Court of Justice.²¹

Since 2005 the situation in Palestine has only escalated. The period between 2014 to 2018 was regarded as the deadliest years of the conflict, with the UN highlighting the highest number of casualties during this time.²² American foreign policy during Trump's administration further exacerbated the conflict. Trump's recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital city and his decision to move the American Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem heightened tensions and violence in the area.²³ In 2020 the tensions escalated further when the Israeli court decided to evict and forcibly remove Palestinian families from East Jerusalem to make way for Jewish

¹⁵ "Oslo Accords," History.com, August 21, 2018, <https://www.history.com/topics/middle-east/oslo-accords>.

¹⁶ "Oslo Accords,"

¹⁷ "Oslo Accords,"

¹⁸ Brym, "Intifada,"

¹⁹ "Second Intifada,"

²⁰ "Second Intifada,"

²¹ Shakir, "A Threshold Crossed,"

²² Niall McCarthy and Felix Richter, "Infographic: The Human Cost of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict," Statista Infographics, May 12, 2021, <https://www.statista.com/chart/16516/israeli-palestinian-casualties-by-in-gaza-and-the-west-bank/>.

²³ Mark Landler, David Halbfinger, and Isabel Kershner, "Did Trump Kill off a Two-State Solution? He Says No, Palestinians Say Yes," The New York Times, December 8, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/12/07/us/politics/trump-jerusalem-palestinians.html>.

settlers.²⁴ This illegal decision spurred international outrage and gained a lot of traction on social media. It also triggered another round of fighting between Israel and Gaza.²⁵

Most recently, Israel's new extremist government has made a two-state solution non-viable.²⁶ Several members of Prime Minister Netanyahu's new government have spoken outwardly against any recognition of Palestinian rights over the OPT, advocating the mass transfer of the Palestinian population in the OPT to other Arab countries and proudly promoting discrimination against Palestinians in general.²⁷ Ultimately, the lack of peace negotiations and Israel's new government has rendered a stalemate in any type of progress on resolving this longstanding conflict.²⁸

Literature Review

The field exploring the impact of armed conflict on children is an ever-evolving area that touches on many spheres of academia including psychology, international relations, anthropology, economics, sociology, and more. Thus, there have been significant developments and recent research in this area of interest. The depth and breadth of this pervasive issue make it a topic that can be approached from many different angles with varying focuses. While this paper will focus primarily on the complexities of protracted conflicts' impact on children in regard to the Palestine-Israel conflict, this section will underline the variables and valuable angles of past research that have been accomplished on the broader topic of the effect of armed conflict on children.

²⁴ "Sheikh Jarrah"

²⁵ "Sheikh Jarrah"

²⁶ Michael Barnett et al., "Israel's One-State Reality," Foreign Affairs, June 8, 2023, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/middle-east/israel-palestine-one-state-solution>.

²⁷ Michael Barnett et al., "Israel's One-State Reality,"

²⁸ Barnett et al., "Israel's One-State Reality,"

The current work in the field involves adopting particularly focused lenses and frameworks. The most dominating lenses include the social-environmental structural framework, the child protection approach, and the intergenerational and societal impact approach.²⁹ All three areas of work have contributed significant research and findings in regard to the impact of conflict on children.

Social Environmental Structural Framework

Scholars have explored several dimensions of the impact of conflict on children, focusing on mental and physical health. In the past two decades, they have focused more on the ecology aspect of a conflict's impact on children.³⁰ The ecological framework allows for a more nuanced and holistic exploration of the issue because it is rooted in children's social environments by accounting for micro, meso, and macro systems.³¹ For example, the approach accounts for all the interactions that play a role in children's life during conflict such as family dynamics, social surroundings, school life or lack thereof, and more.³² This framework enables both depth and nuance because it focuses on the everyday sources of stress that children in conflict experience, which play a more significant role in transforming a child's social environment.³³ While this framework accounts for direct harm, such as killings, sexual violence, abduction, and attacks on schools and hospitals, it also encapsulates more indirect physical harm such as malnutrition and the contractions of diseases and infections.³⁴

Researchers have been able to contextualize children's social environment by deeply examining case studies from regions that have been significantly impacted by conflicts. Thus,

²⁹ Michael G. Wessells, "Children and Armed Conflict: Introduction and Overview," American Psychological Association, August 2016, <https://psycnet.apa.org/fulltext/2016-38187-002.html#s11>.

³⁰ Wessells, "Children and Armed Conflict: Introduction and Overview,"

³¹ Wessells, "Children and Armed Conflict: Introduction and Overview,"

³² Wessells, "Children and Armed Conflict: Introduction and Overview,"

³³ Wessells, "Children and Armed Conflict: Introduction and Overview,"

³⁴ Ayesha Kadir, Sherry Shenoda, and Jeffrey Goldhagen, "Effects of Armed Conflict on Child Health and Development: A Systematic Review," *PLoS one*, January 16, 2019, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6334973/>.

approaching this multifaceted topic from a case studies approach allows for specificity and depth, while also providing an opportunity to look for trends. This work expands to many countries including Colombia, Syria, Iraq, South Sudan, Yemen, Libya, Afghanistan, and Mali.³⁵

There are numerous case studies exploring Gaza, however, most reports tend to neglect the West Bank and the rest of the OPT completely, which is a notable limitation and gap in research. Another noteworthy limitation of this approach is that the ecological framework can have low contextual sensitivity in its efforts when examining traditions and customs in which the conflict is occurring.³⁶ In conducting a case study on a country, researchers can often come into their research with Western measures which can impose a sense of universality that is often not present.³⁷ For example, children in certain countries may have reactions to conflicts that are commonplace to their culture and tradition but deemed unconventional by Western standards.³⁸ This could lead to confusion and a lack of understanding between researchers and natives of the countries or territories.³⁹

Child Protection Approach

Another noteworthy approach focuses on the egregious human rights abuses towards children.⁴⁰ This framework highlights the exigence of protecting children impacted by armed conflict. Thus, this approach is closely intertwined with the psychological and physical well-being of war-affected children. The standards which child protection systems seek to uphold are based on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Children, which denotes basic human rights that all children deserve.⁴¹ Rights such as Article 38 regarding war and armed conflict and

³⁵ Le and Nguyen, "The Impacts of Armed Conflict on Child Health"

³⁶ Wessells, "Children and Armed Conflict: Introduction and Overview,"

³⁷ Wessells, "Children and Armed Conflict: Introduction and Overview,"

³⁸ Wessells, "Children and Armed Conflict: Introduction and Overview,"

³⁹ Wessells, "Children and Armed Conflict: Introduction and Overview,"

⁴⁰ Wessells, "Children and Armed Conflict: Introduction and Overview,"

⁴¹ "A Summary of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child," Unicef, 1989, https://www.unicef.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/UNCRC_summary-1_1.pdf

numerous other articles about the right to education, the right to an adequate standard of living, and more are key to this approach.⁴²

Research through this method often draws upon the UN's yearly report "Children and armed conflict: report of the Secretary-General", highlighting the need to adhere to various UN conventions.⁴³ This report is thorough in updating the abuse of children's human rights violations in specific countries. The introduction of the 2021 report states: "The United Nations verified 23,982 grave violations, of which 22,645 were committed in 2021 and 1,337 were committed earlier but verified only in 2021".⁴⁴ Furthermore, using the Rights of Children as a framework to examine the impacts of armed conflict on children provides a foundation and baseline for researchers to consult. The child protection approach has recently prioritized strengthening national child protection systems. This new approach aims to recognize that systemic issues require systemic approaches.⁴⁵ Thus, the systems approach encourages governments and non-formal actors to step in to protect children.

Intergenerational and Society Impacts

Lastly several scholars' work explores the long-term impacts as observed through the lenses of intergenerational and societal effects of a conflict. The Biomedical Center report titled "The intergenerational effects of war on the health of children" tackles the topic of children and armed conflict by exploring the persistence of the issue through generations of family members. This paper measures four features of conflict: violence, mental health, infection, and malnutrition.⁴⁶ Thus, the paper utilizes those four features to track their intergenerational impacts

⁴² "A Summary of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child,"

⁴³ "Children and Armed Conflict,"

⁴⁴ "Children and Armed Conflict,"

⁴⁵ Wessells, "Children and Armed Conflict: Introduction and Overview,"

⁴⁶ Delan Devakumar et al., "The Intergenerational Effects of War on the Health of Children - BMC Medicine," BioMed Central, April 2, 2014, <https://bmcmedicine.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/1741-7015-12-57>.

by focusing on maternal exposure to conflict.⁴⁷ In this regard, the study highlights a connection between parental trauma and psychological stress during a conflict and adverse health effects including PTSD among newborns.⁴⁸ In doing so, the report finds links between parental PTSD and symptoms in children, proving that stressful emotions and anxiety can be passed from one generation to the next.⁴⁹ Moreover, there are numerous other studies that explore the intergenerational impacts of war on children and paternal transfers of trauma, higher levels of violent behaviors, and other stressors.⁵⁰

Studies that focus on the intragenerational effects of a conflict tend to focus mainly on children from a maternal point of interest, rather than from an angle that focuses on a child raised in a conflict zone or later confronted with conflict. The limitation of these studies is that children are not the main subjects and protracted conflicts are not the main focus.

While there is some research on the longer-term effects of conflict, there are few papers that deeply analyze the full multidimensional effect of protracted conflicts on children. Thus, this research paper aims to look into the Palestine-Israel conflict through the lens of long-lasting conflicts. Moreover, research that investigates the Palestine-Israel conflict on children often will only focus on children in Gaza rather than holistically exploring all the OPT. While children in Gaza suffer from more frequent and intense violence, research should expand to all the OPT as conflict is still prevalent to different degrees in many other areas including West Bank and East Jerusalem.

⁴⁷ Devakumar et al., “The Intergenerational Effects of War on the Health of Children”

⁴⁸ Devakumar et al., “The Intergenerational Effects of War on the Health of Children”

⁴⁹ Devakumar et al., “The Intergenerational Effects of War on the Health of Children”

⁵⁰ Betancourt, “The Intergenerational Effect of War,”

Theory

I argue in this paper that protracted conflicts, such as the Israel-Palestine conflict, have severe impacts on children. I use Social Identity Theory (SIT) to explain that political violence is underpinned by the idea that collective identity is widely acknowledged as playing a pivotal role in intractable political violence.⁵¹ The SIT can be applied to children experiencing conflict stress with regard to stress.⁵² A recent study asserts that SIT impacts children by shaping and forming their identity around conflict.⁵³ The study argues that during long periods of conflict, children internalize what is happening around them systematically and form their identity based on that environment. For example, because children are still developing, their reality becomes intertwined with their identity, not only through changes in their mental health, but also social trajectory, and behavior.⁵⁴ Due to protracted conflicts, children are constantly living in fear being forced to adapt and produce coping mechanisms that consequently change their identity.⁵⁵ This can cause children of that society to be more aggressive or even socially detached.⁵⁶ Thus, as a group of children experiencing violence, children's reality becomes their identity socially, mentally, and physically.

Analysis

With 2023 marking the 75th year of the conflict, the Israel-Palestine conflict provides a case study of the effects of protracted conflicts on children. Thus, by exploring the Israel-Palestine conflict, this paper finds that protracted conflicts irreversibly impact children's health

⁵¹ Orla T. Muldoon, Understanding the impact of political violence in childhood: A theoretical review using a social identity approach, *Clinical Psychology Review*, Volume 33, Issue 8, 2013, Pages 929-939, <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0272735813000925>

⁵² Muldoon, "Understanding the impact of political violence in childhood"

⁵³ Muldoon, "Understanding the impact of political violence in childhood"

⁵⁴ Muldoon, "Understanding the impact of political violence in childhood"

⁵⁵ Muldoon, "Understanding the impact of political violence in childhood"

⁵⁶ Muldoon, "Understanding the impact of political violence in childhood"

and development. This paper draws evidence from a wide variety of sources including reports from human rights organizations and humanitarian organizations, national health and science journals, and psychological databases. Moreover, this research relies on textbooks for a majority of the psychological information, while utilizing comprehensive journals and reports for the political elements of the paper. Specifically, this paper is presented in three distinct sections with focus clusters that detail the evidence of the severity of protracted conflicts on children's health and development. The three sections include mental health with a focus on continuous traumatic stress disorder (CTS), physical health with a focus on malnutrition and anemia, and social development with a focus on educational and intellectual development. The variety and intersectionality of the three sections lead to the conclusion that the protracted Israel-Palestine conflict has irreversible impacts on Palestinian children's health and development.

This paper focuses on children for many reasons, but most specifically because children are still in the phase of growth and impressionability neurologically, physically, and mentally. Due to being less mature neurologically and physically, researching children allows for a greater understanding of the full effect of conflict on individuals. Specifically in Palestine, the population is notably young with 2.35 million under the age of 18 years, representing 43.9% of the total population.⁵⁷ As evident in these statistics children are the future of Palestine and thus it is crucial to examine the impact the conflict has had on this large part of the population.

⁵⁷ "Child & Adolescent Mental Health National Strategy 2023 to 2028," State of Palestine Ministry of Health , May 7, 2023, https://site.moh.ps/Content/Books/7nV6BevAx3csVSIXvu8A4NaEzUDUxmGIPsowVjwZNidXaUJyomJe7c_7dHoHom7Mc8LrmKz6RGy9R6yCRNpfdWQFtygtYZk5oVdTEiO1xo1L6.pdf.

Mental Health: Continuous Traumatic Stress Disorder (CTS)

The term Continuous Traumatic Stress (CTS) was first coined by South African scholar Frank Chikane in 1989 whilst he was studying the psychological effect of apartheid on the black population in South Africa.⁵⁸ Chikane found that children were particularly vulnerable to developing CTS in response to extended periods of political repression, violence, civil conflict, and systemic racism.⁵⁹ In his research, Chikane explains a clear distinction between Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and CTS. The key difference was that while PTSD victims have fears that stem from past experiences which overwhelmingly have no possibility of reoccurrence, children who suffer from CTS are in a situation of repeated exposure and lack of proper psychological care, leaving victims in an environment in which revictimization becomes reality.⁶⁰

Victims of PTSD traditionally feel frightened, distressed, and angered by situations that no longer pose threats and danger to the victim.⁶¹ Thus, the assumption is that the person is at a point in which they face emotions in the aftermath of their traumatic experience.⁶² In contrast, CTS victims live with the traumatic present danger and have to be preoccupied with their current and anticipated future trauma instead of being able to process past traumatic events.⁶³ Examples of CTS include people who were bullied for a long period of time, being raised from birth to young adulthood with abusive or alcoholic parents and constant exposure to violence.⁶⁴ All of these examples can lead to disabilities, dissociative disorders, insomnia, violence and impulsive

⁵⁸ Zainab Asad, "When There Is No 'Post' to the Trauma," GRMR, September 21, 2021, <https://www.gmruf.org/blog/2021/9/20/when-there-is-no-post-to-the-trauma-exploring-continuous-traumatic-stress-in-refugee-populations>.

⁵⁹ Asad, "When There Is No 'Post' to the Trauma,"

⁶⁰ Asad, "When There Is No 'Post' to the Trauma,"

⁶¹ Asad, "When There Is No 'Post' to the Trauma,"

⁶² Asad, "When There Is No 'Post' to the Trauma,"

⁶³ Asad, "When There Is No 'Post' to the Trauma,"

⁶⁴ Asad, "When There Is No 'Post' to the Trauma,"

behaviors, and many more.⁶⁵ CTS victims also often face physiological symptoms including insomnia, nightmares, sweating, nightmares, and bedwetting.⁶⁶

In large, the children of Palestine are all victims of CTS. The Palestinian people have experienced war generation after generation since 1917, when the British first occupied Palestine.⁶⁷ Specifically, the children of Gaza have experienced constant war decade after decade. Besides from the Israeli air, sea, and land blockade that has entrenched poverty and food insecurity, the Gaza Strip has been overwhelmed with direct assaults and attacks including the First Intifada from 1987 to 1993, the Al-Aqsa Intifada from 2000 to 2005, the Operation Cast Lead from December 2008 to 2009, the Operation Pillar of Defense in November 2012, Operation Protective Edge from July to August of 2013, the Israeli War on Gaza in May 2021 (Operation Guardian of the Walls), and most recently again in May of 2023.⁶⁸ Consequently, the children of Gaza live in constant fear of war, with the psychological anticipation that at any moment their lives or the lives of their loved ones could be taken from them at any moment.

When adopting the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5) in the context of Palestinian children, the results show the extent of CTS among Palestinian children. Statistics of deaths and injuries of Palestinian children provide a background to understanding the severity of the issue. For example, between 2000 and 2022, the Israeli military killed over 2,242 Palestinian children with over 28,060 children suffering from injuries at the hands of the Israeli government.⁶⁹ This statistic covers all areas of the OPT with 1,000 children from Gaza and 781 from the West Bank. Killings range from military bombardments, attacks

⁶⁵ Asad, "When There Is No 'Post' to the Trauma,"

⁶⁶ "Child & Adolescent Mental Health National Strategy 2023 to 2028," State of Palestine Ministry of Health, May 7, 2023. https://site.moh.ps/Content/Books/7nV6BevAx3csVSIXvu8A4NaEzUDUxmGIPsowVjwZNidXaUJyomJe7c_7dHoHom7Mc8LrmKz6RGy9R6yCRNpfdWQFtygtYZk5oVdTEiO1xo1L6.pdf.

⁶⁷ Farajallah, "Continuous Traumatic Stress in Palestine"

⁶⁸ Farajallah, "Continuous Traumatic Stress in Palestine"

⁶⁹ "Child & Adolescent Mental Health National Strategy 2023 to 2028,"

from settlers, and attacks from Israeli police. In 2021 alone, Israel killed 76 children with live ammunition, with most children aged from zero to eight years old.⁷⁰ Every single one of those 2,242 murdered children has siblings, friends, and family. Besides from the all-encompassing child deaths statistic, it is crucial to acknowledge that Palestinians go through periods of intense warfare and conflict where they are exposed to seeing family members and friends killed and injured. For example, the 2014 fifty-day attack was the deadliest since the 1967 war with over 2,200 civilians killed, including 551 children.⁷¹ At least 142 Palestinian families with three or more family members were killed in the attack.⁷² Moreover, over 11,200 Palestinian civilians, including 3,436 children were injured, with 10% suffering from permanent disabilities.⁷³ Additionally, over 18,000 homes, 82 hospitals and clinics, and 259 schools in Gaza were destroyed.⁷⁴

Consequently, the DSM-5 model that measures trauma found that every single Palestinian child has been exposed to at least three traumatic events highlighting the very nature of continuous traumatic stress. The same report finds that of the traumatic events, 99% of Palestinian children suffered from humiliation, 97% were exposed to the sound of explosions and bombs, 85% witnessed family members' and friends' funerals, and 84% witnessed violence from the Israeli forces, such as tanks and military planes.⁷⁵ In examining the behavioral impacts, parents reported that after the Second Intifada, 46% of parents reported aggressive behavior among their children, 27% reported bed wetting, and 39% suffered from nightmares.⁷⁶ Overall, a

⁷⁰ "Child & Adolescent Mental Health National Strategy 2023 to 2028,"

⁷¹ Farajallah, "Continuous Traumatic Stress in Palestine"

⁷² Farajallah, "Continuous Traumatic Stress in Palestine"

⁷³ Farajallah, "Continuous Traumatic Stress in Palestine"

⁷⁴ Farajallah, "Continuous Traumatic Stress in Palestine"

⁷⁵ Farajallah, "Continuous Traumatic Stress in Palestine"

⁷⁶ Farajallah, "Continuous Traumatic Stress in Palestine"

Save the Children report found that 95% of Palestinian children show symptoms of depression, hyperactivity, aggression, and a preference for being alone.⁷⁷

When analyzing the longevity of this conflict and accounting for the high levels of trauma Palestinian children are faced with, most Palestinian children are impacted by continuous traumatic stress disorder. High-frequency behavioral symptoms and the DSM-5 model make it evident that CTS is just one clear effect that this protracted conflict has on Palestinian children. As Samah Jabr, a psychiatrist in Occupied Palestine and chair of the mental health unit at the Palestine Health Ministry states:

We fail to acknowledge and understand the fortune that comes with getting out of traumatic situations, to be left in a relatively harmless place where our fear seems absurd. Palestinians can never leave the dark place where instead of reaching a period of eventual retrospective reflection and treatment, they are constantly in a state of awaiting the next trauma.⁷⁸

Physical Health: Malnutrition

While direct physical harm toward children as a result of military occupation is often recorded in detail, indirect and long-term physical impacts such as undernutrition are often neglected. The World Health Organization (WHO) states that undernutrition manifests in four broad forms which include wasting, stunting, underweight, and micronutrient deficiencies.⁷⁹ Palestinian children most commonly suffer from chronic and acute malnutrition and iron deficiency anemia (IDA), which is a micronutrient deficiency.⁸⁰ Acute malnutrition is a direct result of a short period of insufficient nutrition which leads to wasting, while chronic malnutrition is a direct product of prolonged episodes of inadequate nutrition which leads to

⁷⁷ Farajallah, "Continuous Traumatic Stress in Palestine"

⁷⁸ Asad, "When There Is No 'Post' to the Trauma,"

⁷⁹ "Malnutrition," World Health Organization, accessed July 3, 2023, https://www.who.int/health-topics/malnutrition#tab=tab_1.

⁸⁰ "Malnutrition,"

stunting.⁸¹ Moreover, micronutrient deficiencies, such as IDA, are severely impactful as a lack of vitamins and minerals that are crucial for bodily functions prevents individuals from producing enzymes, hormones, and other substances needed for growth and development.⁸² Furthermore, being underweight is defined as having a low weight-for-age, and children who are underweight can be stunted, wasted, or both.⁸³ It is crucial to explore malnutrition and anemia further as a direct result of the protracted Palestine-Israel conflict because according to the WHO, more than 50% of children in conflict deaths are directly or indirectly caused by malnutrition. Children who do not die from malnutrition are still permanently impacted as when a child is malnourished for the first two years of their life, the child's physical and mental growth is slowed irreversibly. Ultimately, malnutrition is severely impactful to children because undernutrition commonly prevents children from reaching their physical and cognitive potential.

A report from 2013 found that Palestinian adolescents record a high prevalence of stunting, wasting, underweight, and iron deficiency anemia (IDA).⁸⁴ Chronic and acute malnutrition and widespread IDA are not random occurrences among children, the high prevalence of malnutrition and IDA among Palestinian children are directly correlated to the protracted conflict. Two uprisings, consistent military occupation, high rates of unemployment, food insecurity, curfews, and sieges, and more elements of the conflict are all contributors to the deterioration of Palestinian children.⁸⁵ Anemia and malnutrition among Palestinian preschoolers tend to be the most significant issue.⁸⁶ Most notably, chronic malnutrition from 1998-2007

⁸¹ Sunhea Choi, "Definition of Malnutrition," Malnutrition, accessed July 10, 2023, https://www.med.soton.ac.uk/nutrition/NewMaleL/module_1_unit_1_what_is_3.html#:~:text=Acute%20malnutrition%20is%20the%20result,nutrition%20and%20leads%20to%20stunting

⁸² "Malnutrition,"

⁸³ "Malnutrition,"

⁸⁴ Maria Tsigga and Maria G. Grammatikopoulou, "Assessing the Silent Epidemic of Malnutrition in Palestinian Preschool Children," *Journal of Epidemiology and Global Health*, January 12, 2013, <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2210600612000640>.

⁸⁵ Tsigga and Grammatikopoulou, "Assessing the Silent Epidemic"

⁸⁶ Tsigga and Grammatikopoulou, "Assessing the Silent Epidemic"

exceeded 10% of the under-five population.⁸⁷ Chronic malnutrition, being a direct product of prolonged episodes of inadequate nutrition, highlights how the protracted conflict has irreversible impacts on Palestinian children, especially because chronic malnutrition leads to stunting, preventing children from reaching their physical and cognitive potential.

Poverty and siege are the two most significant contributors to the aforementioned problems. The OPT has one of the world's highest unemployment rates with the unemployment rate rising to 25.78% in 2023.⁸⁸ Moreover, poverty is entrenched in Palestine with over 36% of the Palestinian population living below the poverty line.⁸⁹ In addition, over one-third of the Palestinian population is food insecure, however when separated by region, the findings are more representative of the dire conditions.⁹⁰ Around 24% of individuals in the West Bank are food insecure and over 75% of people in the Gaza Strip are food insecure.⁹¹ These numbers are directly and indirectly caused by the protracted conflict in Palestine.

Systematic annexation of the West Bank, the expansion of illegal settlements, and the confiscation of land and natural resources by Israel have detrimentally impacted Palestine's agricultural sector, which is the largest sector of the Palestinian economy. As B'tselem reports, the Israeli regime has annexed hundreds of thousands of dunams of farmland and pastureland in the West Bank and East Jerusalem since 1967.⁹² This is excluding Israel's practice of burning and uprooting a reported 800,000 trees since 1967.⁹³ Palestinian olive trees are a key staple

⁸⁷Tsigga and Grammatikopoulou, "Assessing the Silent Epidemic"

⁸⁸ "Palestine Unemployment Rate," Trading Economics, 2023, <https://tradingeconomics.com/palestine/unemployment-rate>.

⁸⁹ "Occupied Palestinian Territory Has World's Highest Unemployment Rate," UNCTAD, September 12, 2018, <https://unctad.org/press-material/occupied-palestinian-territory-has-worlds-highest-unemployment-rate-unctad-report>.

⁹⁰ "Food Insecurity in Palestine," Food Security Cluster, January 27, 2023, <https://fscluster.org/state-of-palestine/document/food-insecurity-palestine#:~:text=More%20percent%20data%20from%20the,SDG%20'severe%20category>.

⁹¹ Tsigga and Grammatikopoulou, "Assessing the Silent Epidemic"

⁹² "A Regime of Jewish Supremacy from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea: This Is Apartheid," B'tselem: The Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories, January 12, 2021, https://www.btselem.org/publications/fulltext/202101_this_is_apartheid.

⁹³ Layla Hedroug, "Israel's Campaign against Palestinian Olive Trees," The Yale Review of International Studies, March 11, 2023, <http://yris.yira.org/global-issue/6018#:~:text=Since%201967%2C%20more%20than%20800%2C000,uprooted%20by%20the%20Israeli%20authority>.

product to the Palestinian agricultural economic sector. According to the Centre for Economic Policy and Research (CEPR), the agricultural sector in Palestine employs 13.4 percent of the population formally, however, it more notably employs 90 percent of Palestinians informally. Thus, the protracted occupation directly impacts Palestinian children's undernutrition due to the fact that the Israeli government has persistently annexed and uprooted fertile farmland from Palestinians, which could significantly alleviate malnutrition and food insecurity.

Asides from the West Bank and East Jerusalem, the persisting blockade in Gaza also contributes to Palestinian children's undernutrition. The UN reports that the 2008 to 2009 Israeli Operation Cast Lead for example erased more than 60 percent of Gaza's total stock of productive capital and the 2014 strike destroyed 85 percent of what was left.⁹⁴ Among the destroyed productive assets were power stations, commercial establishments, agricultural land, roads, and more.⁹⁵ Thus, it is clear that the blockade, an element of this protracted conflict, is directly and indirectly connected to children's malnutrition.

Social Development: Education

Protracted conflicts, such as the Israel-Palestine conflict, significantly impact children's education, which is something that Palestinians highly value for the normalcy and structure it provides Palestinian children. Palestinians are often heard saying “We fight through education”, and “Education means everything”.⁹⁶ Unfortunately, education, like everything else in this protracted conflict, is anything but normal for children, as Palestine is one of the most heavily affected countries by attacks on education in the past decade.⁹⁷ More than 4,000 Palestinian

⁹⁴ “Occupied Palestinian Territory Has World’s Highest Unemployment Rate,”

⁹⁵ “Occupied Palestinian Territory Has World’s Highest Unemployment Rate ,”

⁹⁶ Viet Nguyen-Gillham et al., “Normalizing the Abnormal: Palestinian Youth and the Contradictions of Resilience in Protracted Conflict,” *Health and Social Care in the Community*, May 2008, <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/j.1365-2524.2008.00767.x>.

⁹⁷ “Measuring the Impact of Attacks on Education in Palestine,” Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack, March 2022, https://protectingeducation.org/wp-content/uploads/impact_attackededucation_palestine_2022_en.pdf.

students and educators were harmed mentally and physically by attacks on education between 2015 and 2019, which was the highest number worldwide during that given year period.⁹⁸ The impacts of attacks on education are severe with detriments to literacy and numeracy rates among young children, loss of class and learning time, negative impacts on older children's future success, and physical impacts.

The common forms of attacks on education vary between the West Bank and Gaza.⁹⁹ The most prevalent forms of attacks on education in the West Bank and East Jerusalem include the heavy use of teargas and other weapons in and around schools, settler violence affecting schools and personnel, armed clashes near schools, raids, search and arrest operations in schools, intimidation of school children and teachers, checkpoints or other restrictive movements near schools, and more.¹⁰⁰ Moreover, one of the most common attacks on children's education is through the rejection of building permits by the Israeli Authorities.¹⁰¹ The authorities persistently and systematically deny Palestinian applications for building permits and frequently demolish or issue stop-work orders on primary or pre-schools throughout the West Bank, specifically Area C.¹⁰² For example, during the years 2019 and 2021 the Israeli authorities issues partial or full demolition orders to dozens of Palestinian schools.¹⁰³ Comparatively, explosive assaults, both air-launched and ground-launched, are the most common attacks on Palestinian children's education in Gaza.¹⁰⁴ The majority of incidents were reported to be collateral and occurred during outbreaks of fighting between the Israeli army and Palestinians.¹⁰⁵

⁹⁸ "Measuring the Impact of Attacks on Education in Palestine,"

⁹⁹ "Measuring the Impact of Attacks on Education in Palestine,"

¹⁰⁰ "Measuring the Impact of Attacks on Education in Palestine,"

¹⁰¹ "Measuring the Impact of Attacks on Education in Palestine,"

¹⁰² "Measuring the Impact of Attacks on Education in Palestine,"

¹⁰³ "Measuring the Impact of Attacks on Education in Palestine,"

¹⁰⁴ "Measuring the Impact of Attacks on Education in Palestine,"

¹⁰⁵ "Measuring the Impact of Attacks on Education in Palestine,"

A comprehensive case study from the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack (GCPEA) recorded statistics and conclusions from the attacks on Palestinian children's education from January 2019 to September 2021. The case study split their data into two sections, one section explored the attack of tear gas, stun grenades, and other weapons firing at students, educators, or the school, while the other section explored damages to facilities by explosive weapons.¹⁰⁶ The report found that between 2019 and 2021, over 490 students and educators were injured as a result of the military occupation, with over 9,650 people losing time learning or teaching, including 600 staff members. More notably, of the 160 reported incidents in the West Bank between 2019 and 2021 over 75% of them involved direct tear gas and other weapons towards schools, highlighting that students were the target of the attack. The GCPEA found that most direct attacks occur when Israeli forces attempt to disperse students congregating near school gates, making arrests near or at school, or clashes between students and settlers.¹⁰⁷

Asides from firing at students and faculty, education is also under attack from the physical damages inflicted on schools by explosive weapons.¹⁰⁸ Explosive weapons physically impacted at least 305 schools and kindergartens in Palestine between January 2019 and September 2021, with nearly all instances occurring in Gaza.¹⁰⁹ According to UNRWA, around 25 percent of schools in Gaza were destroyed or damaged during the assaults in May 2021.¹¹⁰ Over 270 schools were damaged in May of 2021, including 63 UNRWA-operated schools.¹¹¹ Moreover, around 169,300 students and 10,530 kindergarten students were enrolled in UNRWA or UNRWA-funded schools that were damaged during the hostilities.¹¹² In context, the

¹⁰⁶ "Measuring the Impact of Attacks on Education in Palestine,"

¹⁰⁷ "Measuring the Impact of Attacks on Education in Palestine,"

¹⁰⁸ "Measuring the Impact of Attacks on Education in Palestine,"

¹⁰⁹ "Measuring the Impact of Attacks on Education in Palestine,"

¹¹⁰ "Measuring the Impact of Attacks on Education in Palestine,"

¹¹¹ "Humanitarian Needs Overview (OPT)" United Nations Office for the coordination of humanitarian affairs, 2021, https://www.ochaopt.org/sites/default/files/hno_2021.pdf.

¹¹² "Humanitarian Needs Overview (OPT)"

aforementioned number represents approximately 28 percent of all students attending schools in Gaza and 18 percent of all kindergarten schools in Gaza at the time of the clash.¹¹³ The damages were consequential with ten schools experiencing major damage to the structural integrity of the buildings, while the rest of the schools suffered mild to moderate damages.¹¹⁴ Damages included cracked walls, broken windows and doors, damage to learning materials and water tanks, and more.¹¹⁵

Both direct firings at individuals and damage to schools from explosive weapons have numerous and long-lasting impacts on children’s education and development. One of the primary root causes of the impact on children’s educational development is the loss of class and learning time.¹¹⁶ The loss of class and learning time can subsequently be attributed to both direct firing instances and damages to the physical structure of the school.¹¹⁷ Injuries sustained from firing weapons such as teargas can cause loss of consciousness, broken bones or bruising from tear gas canisters, wounds from live or rubber-coated bullets such as the loss of eyesight, and breathing difficulties from inhalation and suffocation, which forced students to take time off school.¹¹⁸ Moreover, threats of explosive weapons and damage to school property caused school closures.¹¹⁹ In May 2021, for example, schools closed weeks earlier than planned due to hostilities and damages to the internet and electricity.¹²⁰ Thus, the GCPEA found that between January 2019 and February 2021, students and teachers lost at least 249 hours of class, impacting over 9,060 students and 380 faculty.¹²¹

¹¹³ “Humanitarian Needs Overview (OPT)”

¹¹⁴ “Humanitarian Needs Overview (OPT)”

¹¹⁵ “Humanitarian Needs Overview (OPT)”

¹¹⁶ “Measuring the Impact of Attacks on Education in Palestine,”

¹¹⁷ “Measuring the Impact of Attacks on Education in Palestine,”

¹¹⁸ “Measuring the Impact of Attacks on Education in Palestine,”

¹¹⁹ “Measuring the Impact of Attacks on Education in Palestine,”

¹²⁰ “Measuring the Impact of Attacks on Education in Palestine,”

¹²¹ “Measuring the Impact of Attacks on Education in Palestine,”

Consequently, the loss of class time as a result of the conflict has detrimental impacts on younger children's literacy and numeracy rates.¹²² From 2019 and 2020 it was reported that the levels of literacy of children aged seven to 14 years old is only 52.7%, with boys having a 47.8% literacy and girls having a 57.0% literacy rate.¹²³ This is reflected in the fact that all-boys schools are more directly targeted compared to all-girls schools, with all-boys schools having higher chances of missed school time. Moreover, literature rates vary according to region with the West Bank having a literacy rate of 57.6% and Gaza having only 47.0% of children obtaining basic reading skills.¹²⁴ This is also reflected in the GCPEA's findings of missed school time due to damages to the physical school and a higher proportion of explosive air and ground bombardments. Other reasons for the low literacy rate include school dropouts due to child labor or schools being banned from being built.¹²⁵

Among older children, the attacks on education from the protracted conflict thwart the results of their final exams which significantly impacts their future. A report from the European Economic Association found that highly armed conflicts, such as the Second Intifada, have had consequential impacts on high school students passing their final exam, their total test score, and the probability of them being admitted to university.¹²⁶ At the end of the two-year focus period in grades 11 and 12, in which students choose to study arts or science, all students in the West Bank take a final exam called the Tawjihi General Examination.¹²⁷ The Tawjihi Certificate is equivalent to a high school diploma completion certificate and is a prerequisite for students pursuing undergraduate studies.¹²⁸ The exam test scores determine acceptance to a university in

¹²² "Child & Adolescent Mental Health National Strategy 2023 to 2028,".

¹²³ "Child & Adolescent Mental Health National Strategy 2023 to 2028,".

¹²⁴ "Child & Adolescent Mental Health National Strategy 2023 to 2028,".

¹²⁵ "Measuring the Impact of Attacks on Education in Palestine,"

¹²⁶ Tilman Brück, Michele Di Maio, and Sami H Miaari, "Learning the Hard Way: The Effect of Violent Conflict on Student Academic Achievement," *Journal of the European Economic Association*, January 19, 2019, <https://academic.oup.com/jeea/article/17/5/1502/5292664>.

¹²⁷ Brück, Di Maio, and Miaari, "Learning the Hard Way"

¹²⁸ Brück, Di Maio, and Miaari, "Learning the Hard Way"

the OPT or abroad, with many universities requiring minimum scores of 650 out of 1000 for acceptance.¹²⁹ University is very important for the advancement of the Palestinian youth, and extremely beneficial as Palestinian universities are extremely cheap.

Universities abroad, on the other hand, enable a safe learning environment for Palestinians. Moreover, higher education is a requirement for many jobs in the public sector in the OPT, where the wages are higher than in the private sector.¹³⁰ Evidence suggests that from 2000 to 2006, during the Second Intifada, the probability of passing the exam was negative and highly significant.¹³¹ In fact, the report found that just one standard deviation increase in the number of fatalities occurring during the academic year at the locality level reduced the probability of passing the exam by a whole percentage point.¹³² Although the data was based on fatalities from the Second Intifada, exploring the impact of conflict on the probability of passing the final exam, these results can be generalizable as the number of Palestinian deaths has only increased. Consequently, young Palestinian children's and adolescents' education, learning development, and advancement are significantly impacted by the military occupation in this protracted conflict.

Policy Implications and Solutions

Through mental health, physical health, and social development, it is evident that children are significantly and severely impacted by protracted conflicts. In order to provide meaningful prescriptions, one must address both the micro and short-term solutions along with the macro and long-term solutions. Thus, the short-term, micro solutions can be regarded as prevention, not the cure. The short-term solutions broadly can be categorized as programs of

¹²⁹ Brück, Di Maio, and Miaari, "Learning the Hard Way"

¹³⁰ Brück, Di Maio, and Miaari, "Learning the Hard Way"

¹³¹ Brück, Di Maio, and Miaari, "Learning the Hard Way"

¹³² Brück, Di Maio, and Miaari, "Learning the Hard Way"

support. When looking into mental, physical, and social development, these support programs differ in their goals, but at their core, have the same foundation. Comparatively, the long-term solutions, or main solution, is ending the cycle of war and violence.

Programs of support, as a micro, short-term solution, are crucial when addressing the protracted nature of a conflict. As the conflict has persisted, with no signs of slowing down, it is key for humanitarian organizations and local organizations to provide psychological support systems, humanitarian aid for food security, and humanitarian assistance for school security. In terms of mental health, comprehensive psychological care is needed for the children of Palestine, and the country is in dire need of stable and advanced clinical health programs. An example of a mental health program support is the United Palestine Appeals (UPA) Healing Through Feeling Program.¹³³ The format of this program is centered around hiring local mental health practitioners (MHPS) who are provided with comprehensive training and professional development.¹³⁴

After rigorous training the MHPS are partnered with schools around the OPT to teach and lead psychoeducational sessions for teachers and parents alike.¹³⁵ By increasing knowledge around trauma, such as CTS, caregivers can alleviate and address trauma in their children.¹³⁶ This is just one example of a program that can help children's mental health in Palestine. Moreover, humanitarian aid, in the form of food security, is another effective program in alleviating malnutrition among Palestinian children. Humanitarian aid that addresses malnutrition provides vitamin supplements to address deficiencies, food supplementation,

¹³³ "Healing through Feeling Program," United Palestinian Appeal, accessed July 3, 2023, <https://upaconnect.org/programs/health-and-wellness/healing-through-feeling-program/#:~:text=UPA's%20Healing%20Through%20Feeling%20program%20is%20building%20a%20cushion%20of,edge%20training%20and%20professional>

¹³⁴ "Healing through Feeling Program,"

¹³⁵ "Healing through Feeling Program,"

¹³⁶ "Healing through Feeling Program,"

growth monitoring, school feeding programs, infection prevention treatments, and maternal education about feeding practices.¹³⁷ All these actions have been found to be extremely effective in reducing malnutrition.

A study evaluating the global impact of the Health Project, a humanitarian aid program, found that only eight months after the initiation of the project, the prevalence of IDA dropped by 50 percent and global malnutrition was reduced by 70 percent.¹³⁸ Thus, humanitarian aid is found to be highly effective in addressing malnutrition. Lastly, in terms of social development from attacks on education, the GCPEA encourages humanitarian aid from both governments and nonprofit organizations in the form of “Build Back Better” programs.¹³⁹ The GCPEA argues that programs should ensure that there is both sufficient funding for rapid improvement of physical damage to schools and improvements to make schools safer.¹⁴⁰ In addressing the loss of school time, the GCPEA promotes the necessity of needs assessments from humanitarian organizations where such organizations provide “catch-up classes” to make up for the hundreds of schooling time lost due to the conflict.¹⁴¹ For example, after the attacks on Gaza in May 2021, 17 NGOs and partners provided summer classes and activities for around 190,000 school children in Gaza.¹⁴² Moreover, by the end of 2021 GCPEA’s education cluster partners provided full rehabilitation of 70 percent of the schools damaged, with the remaining 30 percent going under repairs.¹⁴³

While the short-term solutions are all effective in practice, the only solution that will permanently provide protection and safety for children is to end the cycle of violence. It would

¹³⁷ Tsigga and Grammatikopoulou, “Assessing the Silent Epidemic”

¹³⁸ Tsigga and Grammatikopoulou, “Assessing the Silent Epidemic”

¹³⁹ “Measuring the Impact of Attacks on Education in Palestine,”

¹⁴⁰ “Measuring the Impact of Attacks on Education in Palestine,”

¹⁴¹ “Measuring the Impact of Attacks on Education in Palestine,”

¹⁴² “Measuring the Impact of Attacks on Education in Palestine,”

¹⁴³ “Measuring the Impact of Attacks on Education in Palestine,”

be naïve to argue that there is a simple fix to such a complex and long-lasting conflict, however, there are steps that can be taken to end the perpetual cycle of war. As Social Identity Theory suggests, Palestinian children's identities are shaped around their reality of violence. The only way to change this outcome is by aiming to end the cycle of violence. Allies of Israel continue to annually allocate billions of dollars to Israel's advanced military system. This funding, in turn, is directly impacting Palestinian children mentally, physically, and socially. In particular, the United States appropriates \$3.8 billion dollars for Israel's foreign military funding and missile defense annually, as per the FY2023 Consolidated Appropriations Act.¹⁴⁴ In fact, in 2023 the US added \$98.58 million in funding.¹⁴⁵ With such significant funding, there should be a conditional balanced diplomatic process in place that engages both sides to commit to an effective process that would end the conflict once and for all. An international approach to mediate the resolution of this conflict, including the US and EU, should learn from the failure of the Oslo Accords and work toward a future that protects the youth.

Conclusion

In summary, Palestinian children are significantly impacted physically, mentally, and socially by the protracted conflict between Israel and Palestine. This paper contributes to research in International Relations because it builds on studies of conflict and the effects of conflicts on children. Moreover, this research paper explores the effects of conflicts on children from a multidimensional perspective providing a more nuanced picture, than some of the earlier work on this topic that focused on narrower perspectives. One limitation of this paper rests in the fact that it explores three different areas in which children in protracted conflicts struggle, as such given the length of the paper, it was difficult to include all the evidence in all three areas.

¹⁴⁴ "U.S. Foreign Aid to Israel," Congressional Research Service, March 1, 2023, <https://sgp.fas.org/crs/mideast/RL33222.pdf>.

¹⁴⁵ "U.S. Foreign Aid to Israel," Congressional Research Service, March 1, 2023, <https://sgp.fas.org/crs/mideast/RL33222.pdf>.

Another limitation of this research is that I was unable to interview and obtain more information from practitioners and experts in Palestine. While I had planned to conduct interviews with members of the UPA, unfortunately, due to the nature of the ongoing conflict, I was unable to implement such interviews. If given more time I would additionally dedicate a substantial portion of research into long-term solutions and policy development of this pervasive and significant issue.

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