

P R E S S R E L E A S E

"Children are paying the heaviest price as violence in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory escalates"

October 9, 2023 – Children are facing unimaginable risks to their safety, with dire long-term consequences for their mental health including depression, nightmares, bed-wetting and self-harm, Save the Children warned today.

As the escalation in Israel and Gaza intensifies, the number of children caught up in the violence is soaring. At least 700 Israelis and 413 Palestinians have been killed so far, including at least 78 children in Gaza. The number of children killed in Israel is so far unconfirmed. As the violence continues, official sources struggle to keep pace with casualties, which are expected to keep rising as military operations continue.

In Gaza, airstrikes have levelled homes for children and families, while at least three schools and one hospital have also been damaged. A medical centre in Israel has reportedly also been hit by rocket fire. All schools across Israel and Gaza are closed, disrupting children's access to critical education – a common casualty of repeated escalations, particularly in Gaza.

Reports of Palestinian children being killed and injured in airstrikes and Israeli children being kidnapped and held hostage have exacerbated fears of an unprecedented psychological toll.

Save the Children condemns the violence, saying the scale of the attacks in Israel and Gaza is causing damage that would endure long after the immediate crisis.

Jason Lee, Save the Children's Country Director for the occupied Palestinian territory, said children's sense of safety had been "ripped away".

"Our teams and their families are terrified; they feel like sitting targets. Children across the region are in constant fear," he said. "This violence must stop, otherwise children will continue to pay the price."

Save the Children call for an immediate ceasefire to avoid any further escalation that puts children at risk. All parties must do their utmost to protect children and abide by international humanitarian law.

Save the Children is one of the largest non-governmental organisations working in the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt) of Gaza and the West Bank, addressing the immediate humanitarian and long-term development needs of children and families.

The child right organisation currently implements programmes in the areas of education, child protection, livelihoods and economic opportunities, and mental health. We also provide water and sanitation services and health and nutrition services to women and children.

For media requests, please refer to the contact below.

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Save the Children Switzerland

Every child deserves a future - whether in Switzerland or around the world. With this conviction, the Save the Children Switzerland association uncompromisingly and tirelessly supports the most disadvantaged children. Rooted in Switzerland, Save the Children has been the world's leading children's rights organisation since 1919. Thanks to our local roots in 120 countries, we know the situation on the ground, adapt our projects accordingly and can help immediately in an emergency. We make a lasting and positive difference to children's lives, especially in crises, on the move and in slums. In Switzerland, we have been working for refugee children since 2015 and have great expertise in the field of asylum and migration.