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SHAMS Center**The Israeli Occupation is Applying a New Silent Weapon Through Creating an Environment That Enables the Spread of Pandemics and Infectious Diseases in the Gaza Strip as One Tool Of the Genocide War against Palestinians in the Gaza Strip.**

Human Rights and Democracy Media Center- SHAMS, emphasizes that the Israeli occupation is currently applying a new systematic and well-designed policy to utilize a silent weapon within its genocide war against Palestinians in the Gaza Strip. This policy is creating an environment that enables the spread of pandemics and infectious diseases to kill the maximum possible number of Palestinians, mainly women and children. Children are the most affected by such a policy as the impunity they have is lower than it is among adults because they did not receive all the vaccinations that they need. Therefore, such a situation may lead to genocide as a precedent in human history where allowing the spread of pandemics is utilized within the ongoing war. The occupation is utilizing such a weapon to conceal the failure it faced in the military aggression. The Center added that Palestinian children in the Gaza Strip are subject to a full crime against humanity, which is manifested in killing, denying the entry of food/ medicine/ water/ fuel, and systematic demolishing of houses, civil establishments, schools, hospitals, and health care units. The spread of infectious diseases and pandemics among children in shelters, tents, and other places where displaced persons are gathered, represents a serious human crisis. Thousands of children might be killed due to the spread of diseases and pandemics, especially since there is a lack of medical services and treatment as well as a severe shortage of medicine. Additionally, the disaster will be better seen in case it is taken into consideration that the hospitals and medical centers in the Gaza Strip are demolished.

SHAMS Center stresses that 1.9 million Palestinians are forcibly displaced. The majority of the victims of the Israeli aggression are children, as, according to the Ministry of Education, 4037 school students were killed while another 7259 were wounded. Furthermore, children in the Gaza Strip suffer as a result of the deteriorated health circumstances. The hospital had surgeries for more than a thousand children with amputating a limb without anesthesia, due to the shortage of medical supplies to conduct surgeries for wounded persons. On a related level, the inability of vaccinations led to further disasters in the Gaza Strip. There are more than 360 thousand cases recorded as infectious diseases including Respiratory tract infections, Chickenpox, Meningitis, and Jaundice in the shelters. Additionally, other Dermatological conditions spread among children in the Gaza Strip. Children in the Gaza Strip get only 10% of their need for drinking water causing Dehydration and other diseases resulting from bad nutrition. Likewise, children, below the age of 5 years old, suffer from Diarrhea where there is an increase of 25% in the percentage of the affected children compared to the period pre-aggression. The inability to vaccinate children increases the problem and the shortage of formula milk needed for infants and newborn babies. In addition to that, the Israeli occupation is wielding starvation in the Gaza Strip where 44% of households in the Gaza Strip suffer from severe hunger. Palestinians in the Gaza Strip face deteriorated nutrition circumstances as there is a shortage in food supplies because the Israeli occupation is imposing a restricted siege on the Gaza Strip and denying the entry of food, water, medicine, and fuel. Sewage water is still flowing in the streets of the Gaza Strip and the bumping stations stopped working due to the lack of fuel. The result is pollution of the remained wells for drinking water, which will cause widespread of diseases and pandemics. The environmental conditions and the starting of winter increased the suffering of Palestinians in the shelters and tents. Children are the most affected by these circumstances as they lack



clothes, blankets, and heating materials. Children with special needs face the worst case and their suffering is unbearable.

SHAMS Center denounces the crimes committed by the Israeli occupation against Palestinians, especially in the Gaza Strip since October 7, 2023. The war resulted in killing more than 21 thousand Palestinians including 8800 children and 6300 women. Additionally, there were 311 martyrs from the medical and paramedical teams, 40 martyrs from the Civil Defense, 103 martyrs from Journalists, and more than 7000 missed persons under the rubble. In addition to the martyrs, there are more than 55000 wounded persons. 290 thousand housing units were partially demolished while 65 thousand housing units were entirely demolished. 23 hospitals, 53 health centers, and 140 health institutions were targeted in addition to targeting 102 ambulances.

SHAMS Center affirms that the siege imposed on the Gaza Strip and denying the entry of life essentials (food, water, medicine, and costumes). The Israeli army disconnected water and electricity supplies as well as disconnected telecommunication and consequently, isolating the Gaza Strip. Within the start of winter, which is a hard season this year, the suffering of people increased, as there was a lack of winter clothes, blankets, and heating materials. People do not have the basic needs to live and there is a lack of showering places and cleaning water. Such a situation affects the mental health of people in general and children in particular. Many children lost their relatives and families and so, they are still living under trauma and various kinds of social disorders.

SHAMS Center affirms that the situation imposed on children in the Gaza Strip represents a profound violation of international law and international humanitarian law. The Israeli occupation is violating the Geneva Fourth Convention, which stipulates the necessity to establish safe places for women and children during times of war and armed conflicts. Article 14 of the Convention states: "The High Contracting Parties and, after the outbreak of hostilities, the Parties thereto may establish in their territory and, if the need arises, in occupied areas, hospital and safety zones and localities so organized as to protect from the effects of war, wounded, sick and aged persons, children under fifteen, expectant mothers and mothers of children under seven". Article 24 of the Convention states: "The Parties to the conflict shall take the necessary measures to ensure that children under fifteen, who are orphaned or are separated from their families as a result of the war, are not left to their own resources, and that their maintenance, the exercise of their religion and their education are facilitated in all circumstances". The Israeli crimes represent a profound violation of the international human rights law. In particular, the Israeli occupation is violating the Convention on the Rights of the Child- 1989, which urges all states to provide children with protection and dignified life as well as neutralizing them during wars and armed conflicts. Article 38 of the given convention states: "States Parties undertake to respect and to ensure respect for rules of international humanitarian law applicable to them in armed conflicts which are relevant to the child".

SHAMS Center urges the Special UN Rapporteur on Child Rights, UNICEF, and the International Institutions involved in promoting human rights, to fulfill their legal and moral responsibilities to protect Palestinian children's rights. These parties should work through the United Nations Agencies and through the states that maintain diplomatic relations with the occupation state, to press to end the Israeli crimes against Palestinian children.