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**SHAMS Center: Due to the Ongoing Israeli Aggression on the Gaza Strip
The Horror in the Gaza Strip is Indescribable
Psychological Trauma Has Catastrophic Impact on Children in the Future**

Human Rights and Democracy Media Center- SHAMS, affirms that the horror resulting from the Israeli ongoing aggression on the Gaza Strip is indescribable. The psychological disorders and trauma resulting from the aggression will return with catastrophic impacts on children in the future. SHAMS Center warned about the impacts of the aggression on the future of Palestinian children in the Gaza Strip, which will result from the ongoing Israeli aggression. Children are exposed to the panics of war, which will be reflected negatively on their future behavior and will damage their mental health and affect their well-being. The impacts will be noticed currently as well as in the mid and long terms. Among the symptoms that are seen currently, there is stress/ tension, fear of death, or anxiety. Children are expected to face sleep disorders and nightmares due to the difficult scenes they witness. Some children might suffer from bed-wetting, grief, depression, aggressive behavior, and losing control of the self. These symptoms and disorders result from the application of excessive power by the Israeli occupation against Palestinians as well as the arbitrary shelling and execution of people in the streets. Such scenes would last long in the memory of children and will be reflected in their future behavior.

SHAMS Center affirms that the ongoing Israeli aggression caused psychological trauma among children in the Gaza Strip due to destroying houses and civic establishments including schools, hospitals, academic institutions, health centers, shelters, and other facilities. The shelling at night usually causes terror among children and they are terrified due to hearing the loud sounds of explosions. Such facts were affirmed by the reports of the international organizations involved in providing health services. In this regard, a report published by UNRWA affirmed that there is a horrible increase in trauma symptoms among children in the Gaza Strip. The UNRWA stated that these facts were indicated from the feedback of the teams working on providing psychological first aid services for children. The UNRWA operates a team of 284 social workers and psychologists active in providing first psychological aid in the shelters. As of December 30, 2023, the UNRWA reached (77206) beneficiaries. For the period 28-29/12/2023, the counselors provided 1133 consultations for families and individuals in Khanyounis and Rafah in addition to 1046 group counseling sessions. 14798 displaced individuals benefited from these services while the accumulated number of beneficiaries from the psychological services program (which started on October 7, 2023) reached 51204 beneficiaries. During the same period, the counselors provided psychological support to 303 employees of the UNRWA teams who received consultations face-to-face and remotely. The accumulated number of UNRWA employees who received psychological support since the beginning of the aggression reached 500 persons.

SHAMS Center warns of the impacts of the trauma and psychological disorders that children will face in the future, especially with the destruction of the health facilities and the institutions that provide mental health services for children in the Gaza Strip. The crises will increase once taking into consideration that the occupation forces targeted the universities and the academic cadres specialized in mental health. Many counselors and scholars who specialized in counseling services were among the killed persons in the Gaza Strip, which will affect providing the service for beneficiaries in the future. Within the shortage in the cadre, children who face trauma will not find any resource of support, which will increase their suffering.



In addition to that, there is a shortage of medical supplies and medicine as the occupation bans the entry of this material to the Gaza Strip.

SHAMS Center calls for the necessity of providing debriefing and entertainment activities for children to address the psychological impacts and traumas resulting from the horrors of war and aggression. This can be achieved by organizing various activities and events, including painting and engaging in dialogue with children by their caregivers or trained professionals. It is crucial to grant children the freedom to express their feelings as a form of debriefing, allowing them to feel comfort and reassurance. Additionally, arranging psychological rehabilitation sessions is essential for them to overcome the negative impacts imposed by war on their mental well-being and to eliminate any negative emotions they may harbor.

SHAMS Center emphasizes that the Israeli aggression on the Gaza Strip and its negative repercussions on children, constitute a serious violation of international law and international human rights law, especially the Fourth Geneva Convention dated 12/8/1949. This convention affirms the protection of civilians, particularly children and women, during times of war and armed conflict. It stresses the necessity of establishing safe zones for them, keeping them away from conflict areas and war operations. Article 14 of the convention states that after the outbreak of hostilities, parties to the conflict should establish, in their territories or in occupied territories if necessary, healing and safety zones organized to protect the wounded, sick, disabled, elderly, and children under the age of fifteen, as well as pregnant women and mothers of children under seven. Article 24 emphasizes that parties to the conflict must take all necessary measures to ensure that children under fifteen, who are orphaned or separated from their families, are not neglected and are provided with care, support, and education. On a related level, the actions carried out by the Israeli occupying forces constitute a serious violation of international human rights law, particularly the 1989 International Convention on the Rights of the Child. This convention calls on all states and parties to conflict to provide necessary guarantees for the protection of children, keeping them away from danger, and ensuring ways of life and decent living conditions for them. Article 38 of the convention pledges that state parties will respect the rules of international humanitarian law applicable to them in armed conflicts related to children and ensure compliance with these rules. States parties, in accordance with their obligations under international humanitarian law to protect civilian populations in armed conflicts, shall take all practical measures to ensure the protection and care of children affected by armed conflict.

Shams Center calls on the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Rights of the Child, UNICEF, the World Health Organization, and international human rights organizations to fulfill their responsibilities and exert pressure on the occupying government, compelling it to stop its crimes against Palestinian children in the Gaza Strip. This appeal is based on the lofty principles of the United Nations Charter and the international ethical, humanitarian, and legal values.