

THE BARE LIFE OF PALESTINIAN CHILDREN: A PHILOSOPHICAL EXPLORATION OF GAZA AS A STATE OF EXCEPTION

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Abstract

Drawing upon the concepts of state of exception and zoe proposed by Agamben in his book Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life, this research explores the humanitarian crisis faced by children of Palestine particularly Gaza. The immediate and long term consequences of war on the mental and physical well being of children is a heartbreaking reality of today's world which cannot be ignored. Children across the world have been suffering from immense hardships due to wars waged by adults. During conditions of war, the healthcare, educational and family system of the entire region collapses which immensely impact the children of war. Children of Gaza have suffered from forced displacement, mass killing and continuous violence by Israeli forces. This research adopts a philosophical approach to address challenges faced by children of Gaza, urging the global community to practice peace and harmony instead of chaos and destruction since tranquility and concord plays a pivotal role in protecting children from relentless adversities. It is crucial to adopt effective strategies and strict measures to protect the rights of children under all conditions.

Key words: bare life, children of Gaza, dehumanization, humanitarian crisis, state of exception

1. Introduction

The children are the least responsible for the creation of armed conflicts, yet they are the one most affected from its consequences. The sufferings of Palestinian children started after Nakba 1948 and after many decades, children and people of Palestine are still experiencing unimaginable hardships (Qabaha and Hamamra, 2021). Since October 2023, Israeli forces have escalated their cruel acts against children of Gaza, mercilessly killing them through shooting and bombing. The refugee camps, schools, hospitals and residential buildings are being bombed on a daily basis, resulting in the unjust and unlawful killing of people. Children's bodies are being torn apart into pieces, and the world is watching silently. Thousands of children have been killed within the last two years, and the atrocities still continue to exist. According to reports of UN and UNICEF, Israel is committing genocide in Gaza, and the city of Gaza has been turned into 'graveyard of children'. Children are becoming disabled because the Israeli military is using explosive weapons against them. Due to shortage of medical facilities and collapse of the healthcare system, many children with chronic disorders in Gaza are losing their lives. The blockage of humanitarian aid from entering into Gaza is the deliberate attempt of Israeli occupation forces to kill as many people living in Gaza as they can (Nabiebu et al., 2026). Despite the pressure of the global community to end ethnic cleansing of Palestinians, the Israeli government with the backing of the United States is committing war crimes against Palestinian children.

The miseries of children in Gaza clearly examines the deteriorated conditions of children during war times. They suffer from physical as well psychological harms, and their childhood gets stolen from them (Shaw, 2003). The international law and conventions of the United Nations provide a special status to children belonging to war torn regions and urges the

involved parties to refrain from harming children in any way. Despite the presence of an international criminal court and specific conventions for the protection of children in the UN, the world is witnessing the mass killing of children living in war affected zones. The region of the Middle East has been under the shadows of violence and war since decades, affecting millions of people and children. Contemporary warfare is far more dangerous to children than conventional wars as the children and civilians are being killed on a large scale by using modern war technologies. The attack on an elementary school in Minab Iran was conducted by US-Israel using the technology of Artificial intelligence, resulting in the murder of 120 school children. Children are becoming less and less protected in today's age.

1.1 Research Objective

1. To demonstrate the adversities faced by children of Gaza
2. To explore the afflicted city of Gaza as a zone of exception
3. To examine the conditions of bare life in Palestinian children

2. Review of Literature

Articles and reports written on children's suffering during conditions of war belonging to Palestine especially Gaza have been added in this section to provide a literary foundation of research. The physical and psychological consequences of war on children have been driving the attention of writers in recent years due to the escalation of conflicts in the 21st century in Gaza.

Van et al. (2025) talked about the sufferings of children in Gaza since October 2023, stating that 13,700 children have been killed in two years. It condemned the moral decline of people and governments across the world to let this humanitarian crisis happen in Gaza. Since 7 October, the children of Gaza have suffered unbearable pain, losing their families, education and even their own lives in Israeli unjustified attacks. Using the theoretical framework of cyclic trauma, the article stated that the genocide and aid-blockage in Gaza has made it a more darker chapter of history than Holocaust and Rwanda genocide. It also stressed the urgent need to end war, opening of borders to let aid inside Gaza and the assurance of accountability, appealing to the powerful authorities and common men to collectively stand against injustice in order to protect children.

In relation to study of Palestinian children's sufferings, Veronese and Cavazzoni (2020) elaborated the comparison between findings of traditional diagnostic method and narrative method to study lives of Palestinian children in refugee camps. Traditional diagnostic methods showed the children of Palestine as weak, vulnerable and emotionally disturbed. On the contrary, the Child-centered method revealed the resilience and strength of Palestinian children. Critical psychology was used as a theoretical framework to conduct this research, focusing on socio-constructionist ideas. The study argued that the traditional diagnostic methods ignored the strength of Palestinian children, presenting them merely as traumatized victims. The much better approach is to communicate directly with children and try to understand their stories through their own narratives.

Thabet et al. (2004) described that Palestinian children suffer from both PTSD and depression as the symptoms of these psychological issues are closely intertwined. The study investigated Palestinian children aged from 9 to 15 and findings revealed that they suffered from

insomnia, anxiety, fragmented memories and concentration problems. They suffered from traumatic events both directly and indirectly which triggered anxiety and depression in them. It shows the mental vulnerability of children living in war zones and how their physical and psychological health is compromised because of war-mongering monsters.

Bjertness et al. (2023) pointed out that innocent people including children are facing a severe humanitarian crisis in Gaza. In the article, authors reveal that the only power plant of Gaza has been demolished and people have now very limited access to water, food and electricity. Schools, hospitals and even ambulances have been destroyed. Healthcare facilities are insufficient and children's hospitals are not functioning anymore, risking the lives of thousands of sick children. International surveys and reports revealed that children in Gaza are facing serious psychological problems including PTSD, depression and anxiety. The research stressed the urgent need for an end to war and permanent halt of Israeli attacks on civilians and innocent children in Gaza.

Bdier et al. (2026) highlighted the hardships of disabled children and their families while living in Gaza which is under constant bombings of Israeli forces, in a research article. 30 parents of disabled children of Gaza were interviewed and the findings uncovered that parents noticed massive changes in behaviour and psychology of their children. This damaging condition of children was further collapsed due to lack of any rehabilitation provision and support system. Parents shared how they constantly felt guilty because of their powerlessness and vulnerability.

Thabet and Thabet (2015) reported that 35% of sample children in Gaza showed symptoms of serious PTSD in a survey investigation. Findings revealed that 30.9% of children were afflicted with severe anxiety. Among the participants of study, young girls showed higher levels of psychological disruption. Despite going through countless challenges, most children shared that they had great pride in their Palestinian identity, family, traditions and religion. Children living in camps and villages showed more resilience and strength than those living in urban areas. Javanbakht (2024) focused on the psychological health of war-affected civilians and children; a topic which is often disregarded. In the context of Gaza genocide, the study declared that exposure to terror incidents and repeated violence triggers depression, PTSD and distress in victims of war. Since, children are in the stage of cognitive development, they are more vulnerable to such complications. Intergenerational trauma is also an issue which can arise due to long exposure to war, risking the lives of thousands of children across generations.

Documenting the hardships faced by Palestinians, Qouta and Odeh (2005) elaborated the continued violence faced by people of Palestine particularly those belonging to the Gaza strip and West Bank. During the Al-Aqsa Intifada in 2000, thousands of people in Palestine were killed and critically injured. Along with suffering from physical harm such as food deprivation, Palestinians also bore the burden of psychological trauma. Most of the children showed symptoms of depression, severe anxiety and PTSD. Moreover, Hein et al. (1993) described psychological and mental consequences of violent happenings during Palestinian Intifada on the children of Palestine, particularly Gaza. Although the incidents were traumatic for children, many of them supported this revolt of Palestinian people against brutal occupation forces of Israel.

Wells et al. (2024) pointed out that a large number of people in Gaza are being killed on a daily basis, including infants and children. In merely four months, 25,000 innocent civilians and children were killed brutally by Israel. The whole population of Gaza is suffering from shortage of food and clean water, leading to the condition of famine. Scholars across the world must raise their voice in support of innocent children who are being killed, injured and displaced by the Israeli government. The research called for an immediate termination of attacks on Gaza, urging that schools and hospitals in Gaza should be restored and basic humanitarian aid must be provided to victims of war in Gaza.

Asqool et al. (2023) discussed the grave violation of human rights by Israel in Gaza strip during 2008, 2012 and 2014 and those heinous acts are still continuing. Children of Gaza have been most affected in this whole brutal process as thousands of them have been killed and disabled by Israeli forces. Although international laws exist including the fourth Geneva convention to protect children, Israel is still blatantly violating the international humanitarian laws, killing thousands of civilians and children. It is imperative to call out these violations of children's basic rights to safeguard them under all conditions.

Nasari et al. (2025) demonstrated the detrimental condition of war-torn Lebanon and Gaza which has particularly affected children. According to UNICEF reports, 890 children were reported dead within the time period of merely six weeks in Lebanon due to war in 2024. Approximately 17,000 children were killed in Gaza within one year by Israeli occupation forces. The atrocities done on children of Lebanon and Gaza are now some of the darkest chapters of history. The Middle East is the region which is most affected by war. Nearly 4.5 million people have been killed in wars across the Middle East, particularly in countries of Syria, Iraq and Yemen. People residing in conflict zones suffer from environmental, medical, financial and psychological issues while children bear the greatest impact.

In a quantitative study, Thabet and Thabet (2016) examined the life of children living in Gaza postwar 2009. To evaluate the war related trauma in children, researchers interviewed 195 young individuals in Gaza aged from 7 to 18 years. 101 boys and 94 girls were selected from different parts of Gaza and the resulting report revealed that 97% of the children experience trauma of hearing military bombardment and 90% of children are still haunted by the direct observation of mutilated bodies. Findings also revealed that 85% of the children were forced to leave their homeland and the hardships encountered during displacement still cause them emotional distress. Children who experienced the war of 2009 were greatly impacted both psychologically and physically. Their quality of life deteriorated to a great extent due to collapse of healthcare and educational departments. Children of Gaza need proper social, emotional and financial support. United Nations, humanitarian organizations, NGOs and governments across the world should provide adequate support to Gaza so that affected children can heal from postwar trauma.

Manzanero et al. (2021) in data driven study used the Harvard Trauma Questionnaire (HTQ) to evaluate the traumatic experience of children while living in Gaza after the military attack from Israel in 2014. The brutal operation remained ongoing for 51 days according to the collected data from 1850 young boys and girls. The findings revealed that 83% of children suffered from the bombardment of residential areas, 70% of them noticed the desecration of mosques, 59% of the children watched dead bodies and 28% of them had PTSD and psychological trauma. Ben Saad (2024) in research analysis reported the mass killing of civilians in Gaza since October 7, 2023. The healthcare system in Gaza has collapsed,

particularly affecting women and children. Basic medical care, hygienic protocols, proper infrastructure and even basic necessities of food and water are mostly not available during childbirth, risking the life of both children and mother.

Nijim (2023) examined that Gaza is facing a slow motion genocide by the hands of Israeli government and military. Since Nakba 1948, Israeli policies have been trying to wipe out the entire population of the country. The infrastructures in Palestine, particularly Gaza are being targeted continuously on a daily basis including hospitals, schools and houses of civilians, resulting in the mass killing of Palestinians. Bhutta et al. (2025) showed concern over the cruel Israeli operation in Gaza which killed thousands of innocent people, including thousands of children in a research study. The actions of the Israeli military are a clear violation of humanitarian law. UN has also declared that Israeli atrocities in Gaza fall under the legal definition of genocide. The IPC report of August 2025 has also warned that one quarter of the population in Gaza is facing conditions of famine and severe malnutrition.

Hamamra et al. (2025) in a survey study described that children in Gaza have been living in adverse circumstances for decades and the situation has worsened after October 7, 2023. Severe malnutrition, unsafe living conditions, lack of basic human resources and psychological trauma are some of the main problems affecting children living in Gaza. Researchers interviewed people living in Rafah camps individually and concluded that all of them were facing problems of restricted access to basic human resources, contagious disease outbreak and health deterioration. In conclusion, children belonging to war torn regions face physical, emotional, financial as well as psychological challenges.

The war torn childhood of oppressed children in Palestine and Gaza has been under the focus of many researchers and scholars. Most of the existing scholarship has focused on the statistical data and quantitative analysis to approach this issue but this research intends to fill this gap by conducting a philosophical inquiry of unprotected childhood and humanitarian crisis in Gaza.

3. Materials and Methods

3.1 Theoretical Framework

Giorgio Agamben's concepts of bios vs zoe and zone of exception has been utilized as the theoretical grounding of this research.

3.1.1 State of exception

The idea of state of exception was first presented by Schmitt and Agamben later elaborated it in his book *Homo Sacer*. According to Agamben, zone of indistinction refers to an uncertain ambiguous space where boundaries between life and death, security and abandonment, law and suspension of law become unclear. War-zone regions, prisons and concentration camps are prime examples of such space, where people are forced to live an uncertain and miserable life. In modern times, most people are living in zones of indistinction where they think they are controlling their own life but in reality, they are being monitored and handled by sovereign powers of the world. Law is technically present in every state but the supreme rulers decide who will be protected and who will be abandoned by this legal system.

In times of emergency or war, the suspension of law for abandoned people becomes more convenient; by pushing those chosen people to a place where there is no law; state of exception. They can be killed at any time in the name of collateral damage and civilian casualties. This indiscriminate killing of people creates cyclic violence in affected areas but no one takes responsibility for this prevalence of instability because law is suspended in state of indistinction (Lyall, 2019). State of exception validates the fact that the judicial system is controlled by supreme authorities. They have the command to declare war or emergency at any time of their will and legal frameworks will follow them. Sovereign powers can easily halt the enforcement of law by creating a state of exceptions. Agamben claimed that *“exception proves everything”* (Agamben, 1998). In normal situations, there remains a blurry line between existence of law and suspension of law but during the conditions of exception like war, the hidden powers behind legal frameworks are exposed.

When the judiciary and political authorities openly converge in a state of exception, they collectively become a “killing machine” for humans (Agamben, 2005). Unlike Schmitt who claimed that state of exception is created by juridical weakness, Agamben argues that there is a strong relation between legal and political systems (McLoughlin, 2016). Agamben compared the situation of law in the zone of exceptions with the door of the law presented in Kafka’s book *The Trial* (Kafka, 1999). Just like the man in Kafka’s story who always waits in front of an open law door but can’t enter it, people of the real-world believe they are living in protected legal systems but most of them are the exception. Laws were never created to protect them. Agamben asserted that camps including refugee camps or detention camps are the places where states of exception become permanent. The camps are the political structures that have become the pivotal point of power mechanism. Global powers are enhancing the zones of exception deliberately with every passing day to maintain their control over people’s lives, land and resources across the world. Agamben stated in his book:

“The birth of the camp in our time appears as an event that decisively signals the political space of modernity itself. The camp is the new, hidden regulator of the inscription of life in the order or, rather, the sign of the system's inability to function without being transformed into a lethal machine. To an order without localization (the state of exception, in which law is suspended) there now corresponds a localization without order (the camp as permanent space of exception)” (Agamben, 1998).

Agamben in the sequel book of *Homo Sacer* titled *State of Exception* included post 9\11 suspected prisoners held by the US government in detention camps into the category of state of exception. People of specific ethnicity, religion or race are declared as enemies and threats by supreme rulers so that their lives can be reduced to mere biological existence. Butler in her collection of essays *Prekarious Life*, used Agamben’s bare life theory to critique how US government and international media chose specific groups of population and declared them as suspected terrorists and their lives as less worthy (Butler, 2004). Agier in his distinguished book written on the sufferings of displaced people entitled as *Managing the Undesirables: Refugee Camps and Humanitarian Government* described “refugee camps as spaces of exception” (Agier, 2011). Displaced people live in devastating conditions, existing as helpless dependent people who are controlled by political powerful structures, resulting in refugee crises (Davitti, 2018; Sukiasyan, 2024).

3.1.2 Bios and zoe

Agamben used the concept of Greek terms “bios” and “zoe” in his book, explaining that bios is a qualified and political form of life which is protected by law. On the contrary, zoe means a person barely surviving, whose life has no value, and he can be killed by anyone as he is deprived of all political, social and legal rights. Agamben grasped the concept of difference between mere life and the “good life” primarily after exploring ideas of Aristotle. (Nikolopoulou, 2000) As Agamben stated in his book: *“In the concept “people” we can easily recognize the categorial pairs that we have seen to define the original political structure: bare life (people) and political existence (People), exclusion and inclusion, zoe and bios. The “people” thus always already carries the fundamental biopolitical fracture within itself”* (Agamben, 1998).

In ancient Greek, there was a clear difference between bios and zoe. This notion of life was rejected by famous Greek philosopher Aristotle who emphasized that humans are naturally political beings. In his influential book *Politics*, he argued that in order to live a quality life (bios politikos), humans should get out of their ‘oikos’ (home: just biological existence) and step into the world of ‘polis’ (public life). He advocated for the rule of law in society, where every human should have the opportunity to live a politically valuable life (Aristotle, 2017). Agamben argues that unlike ancient times where the political powers were completely disinterested in “zoe”, the modern supreme political authorities are using the biological beings as a tool to maintain their rule. The population rate, birth, death, reproduction and health data of common people are being monitored and regulated by state governments and global elites. Additionally, emergencies and wars are being announced by the global powers to impose their control over people and to govern biological life (Barnett and Duvall, 2005). In the 21st century, those who are abusing their power are either hidden or disguised and there is no institution capable enough to hold them accountable for their crimes against humanity (Grant and Keohane, 2005).

The paradoxical strategy of sovereign powers to promise freedom to people along with controlling their lives refers to their resemblance with totalitarian regimes like Nazism and Fascism. Exercising complete control over bare life is their shared agenda they hide behind their beautiful slogans. The democratic institutions that came into being after long historical toil are transformed into exactly what they were apparently struggling to get rid of. The modern strategy is more complicated as it advocates for the security of life while creating forms of life they label as worthy of killing just like the mass killing of people of Gaza (Zaydah, 2025). These excluded forms of life include prisoners held after labeling them as suspected terrorists, refugees suffering in camps and war-affected people living in devastated areas (Sibani and Faith, 2025; Timothy et al., 2026). Children are tragically declared as the most affected population in this context (Shohel, 2023; Terekli and Besiktas, 2025). Agamben questioned the inability of democratic powers to save Zoe, stating that:

“Behind the long, strife-ridden process that leads to the recognition of rights and formal liberties stands once again the body of the sacred man with his double sovereign, his life that cannot be sacrificed yet may, nevertheless, be killed. Why democracy, at the very moment in which it seemed to have finally triumphed over its adversaries and reached its greatest height, proved itself incapable of saving zoe? Western politics has not succeeded in constructing the link between zoe and bios, between voice and language, that would have

healed the fracture. Bare life remains included in politics in the form of the exception, that is, as something that is included solely through an exclusion” (Agamben, 1998).

Agamben asserted that life in its pure form is complete and there is no need to create different dimensions of political and biological life. He quoted the notion of “Dasein” (being-there), proposed by Martin Heidegger in his book *Being and Time*, explaining that he himself shares the identical thought that the politically qualified life lies in biological existence (Heidegger, 1962). Agamben claimed that western politics has a great role in propagating and prevailing the difference between bios and zoe. However, in today’s world, the line has become blurred and bios have been merged into politics which Foucault called “Biopolitics” (Foucault, 1990). Although people are still being controlled by the political power of the world in normal times, but in times of emergencies and wars, the specific groups become the special target to be treated as homo sacer.

3.2 Research Methodology

This study has employed the Agambenian concept of zoe and state of exception to closely examine the dehumanization of children in Gaza. A qualitative research approach has been adopted to conduct this research by mainly focusing on Agamben’s philosophy and relating it to the real humanitarian crisis in Palestine particularly Gaza. Global reports, surveys and verified statistical data available on the immense distress and wretchedness faced by children of Gaza have been widely studied and explored to scrutinize the conditions of bare life in Gaza.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Gaza as a Site of Humanitarian Crisis and Childhood Erasure

In the present age, children of Gaza present the clearest depiction of Agambenian notion of bare life. They are being killed without any shame and fear of accountability. The humanitarian aid has been blocked by Israeli forces to enter Gaza despite the fact that 75 percent of Gaza's population depend on humanitarian assistance due to the war crisis (Abuzerr et al., 2024). Between the first four month of Gaza genocide from October 2023 to January 2024, Israeli forces killed nearly 10,000 children in Gaza, clearly violating the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (Boukari et al., 2024). The United Nations has clearly mentioned the six grave crimes that should never be practiced against children in war. They include killing of children, abduction of children, recruitment of children as soldiers, blockade of humanitarian assistance, attack on school and hospital and sexual violence against children. In the context of Gaza, nearly all the UN mentioned crimes have been committed against children.

The state of exception is strongly connected with the idea of exclusion. Just like Homo sacer used to get excluded from society in ancient Rome, people existing as bare lives in war-torn areas like Palestine are excluded from any institutional protection. They are stripped of legal security, political rights, human dignity and basic facilities. The political powers directly control and regulate people's lives after pushing them to live in war zones and emergencies. After being forced into a zone of exception where life is uncertain and law is suspended,

people become passive and coerced subjects, lacking any autonomy and political agency (Humphreys, 2006). Agamben stated in his book:

“The sovereign exception is thus the figure in which singularity is represented as such, which is to say, insofar as it is unrepresentable. What cannot be included in any way is included in the form of the exception. The exception is what cannot be included in the whole of which it is a member and cannot be a member of the whole in which it is always already included. What emerges in this limit figure is the radical crisis of every possibility of clearly distinguishing between membership and inclusion, between what is outside and what is inside, between exception and rule” (Agamben, 1998).

Israeli forces have completely destroyed the infrastructure of Gaza, particularly the healthcare department by attacking hospitals and ambulances (Katoub, 2025; Sajid, 2025). Collapsed healthcare system has endangered the lives of people living in Gaza (Hamamra et al., 2026). Children have become orphaned after losing their parents and entire families in brutal bombing. The basic human needs including shelter, food, water and medicine are rare to find in Gaza and children are facing challenges of malnutrition. Even the availability of baby formula and basic hygienic facilities are scarce for infants. According to the reports of Human Rights Watch, Israel forces have used white phosphorus on populated areas of Gaza which resulted in chemical burns, disabilities and organ failure in hundreds of people including innocent children. Due to constant bombing on heavily populated areas and residential buildings, children are going through severe physical injuries including spinal cord, brain injuries and amputations (Nasari et al., 2025).

Israel has reportedly used 18,000 tonnes of bomb in Gaza which is 1.5 times more intense than what was used in the atomic bombing of Hiroshima (Soni, 2023). The darkest chapter of history which occurred during World war two is now being repeated in Gaza and thousands of children are being killed because of it. Antonio Guterres who is the general secretary of the UN has stated that “Gaza has become the graveyard of children” (Kadivar, 2024). The apartheid and genocide of Palestinian people including the mass killing of children is a grave crime against humanity (Ari and Turan, 2023; Sathar, 2023). According to reports given by UNRWA (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs), from October 2023 to January 2015, Israel has killed 47,000 civilians in Gaza among whom 13000 were innocent children (Harghandiwal, 2025). Approximately 10,000 people including children are still under rubble of destroyed homes and buildings.

The exacerbation of food insecurity in Gaza has led to a malnutrition crisis in children under five, resulting in the increased mortality rate among children (Ashour et al., 2025). The humanitarian aid has been blocked to enter Gaza deliberately by the Israeli state to create conditions of famine, resulting in the intensification of violence (Buheji and Hasan, 2024; Whyte, 2026). The starvation is being used as a weapon against people of Gaza and this man made famine is greatly risking the health and life of children (Ashour et al., 2025; Hassoun, 2026). The blockage of aid into Gaza has resulted in the death of 147 people including 88 children from starvation (Osendarp et al., 2025). Agamben’s idea of bare life is applicable to the condition of innocent people, specifically children in Gaza (Davids et al., 2025).

According to WHO (World Health Organization), the lack of clean water and hygienic conditions is causing the spread of infectious diseases among children (Boussaa et al., 2025). Almost 90 percent of the Gaza population does not have access to clean water and 85 percent

of them live in poverty (Alokaily, 2024). The UN has reported the alarming increase of infectious diseases among children younger than 5 years of age due to poor hygienic environment and lack of basic health facilities (Taha et al., 2024). The World Health Organization (WHO) has reported that there has been an alarming increase in the Hepatitis A cases in Gaza, particularly children (Dardona et al., 2024; Khadoura et al., 2025). Since October 2023, nearly 10 children in Gaza are losing their limbs on a daily basis, causing an endless physical and psychological catastrophe for amputated children (Al Shami and Nashwan, 2025).

Gaza has the highest number of children with amputation across the world and the death rate of children in Gaza since October 2023 has been declared as the highest than any other conflict across the world (De Vogli et al., 2025). In the first year of Gaza genocide since October 2023, the life expectancy rate in Gaza strip has reduced approximately 30 years according to researches. (Guillot et al., 2024) Palestinian Health Ministry has reported that at least one child is killed every 10 minutes in Gaza (Yaquub et al., 2023). Jabalia camp which was the largest refugee camp in Gaza was also bombed by Israeli forces, killing hundreds of children. The brutal murder of five year old little Palestinian girl Hind Rajab along with her family reveal the inhumane and evil face of the Israeli state and forces who intentionally kill children (Loader, 2025). It was reported that 335 bullets were fired on the car of Hind Rajab until she was killed (Echchaibi, 2024; Katurji et al., 2026).

According to Agamben, the politics of modern rulers depend exactly on what they desperately attempt to exclude; zoe. They create situations of conflicts repeatedly across the world, kill and injure millions of people including children in occupied lands, generate displacement and refugee crises but their slogans revolve around liberal democracy and bringing peace into the world (Broz, 2021; Simons, 2025). A Washington reporter in 1944 wrote a letter to his friend saying: "I am pretty sick of the whole theory of American self-righteousness. My only contention is that we have the appearance of greater morality only where we can afford to be more moral, which isn't as often as we like to believe. Sometimes I think that we are the world's greatest hypocrites" (McGarr, 2022).

The genocide in Gaza has resulted in the forced displacement of thousands of families into shelters, refugee camps and other places, resulting in the physical and mental health problems in affected people (Goodarzi et al., 2023). The UN has reported that within two months of the post October 7 attack, the Israeli government forcibly displaced 85 percent of Gaza population which accounts to approximately two million people (Irfan, 2026). The Israeli state and forces used coercion to forcibly migrate and throw people out of their houses and homeland in order to colonize the land (Procter, 2024). Loss of family members and exposure to constant bombardment and violence has caused psychological issues among children of Gaza including depression, anxiety, distress and PTSD (Taha et al., 2024).

Besides destroying the physical health of children in Gaza, the violence and constant exposure to terror incidents has disrupted the psychological and mental health of affected children (Altawil et al., 2023; Aqtam, 2025; Bailey, 2026). The displaced and refugee children of Gaza go through severe mental problems even after moving to peaceful and stable places (Latif et al., 2025). According to a survey study, 76 percent of participants showed symptoms of depression and 83 percent had symptoms of PTSD (Zughbur et al., 2025). Approximately 70 to 90 percent of children living in the Gaza strip have war induced trauma, death anxiety and PTSD (Al-Hroub, 2026). Studies indicate that children living in Gaza

suffer from high levels of psychological challenges as compared to children living in other regions of Palestine because in Gaza, children witness more intense kinds of destruction on a repeated basis (Veronese et al., 2024). Gaza has been turned into a state of exception on the command of sovereign powers and children of Gaza are living bare lives without any legal or political protection.

Agamben focused on the marginalized people living across the world who are abandoned by all kinds of legal rights. According to his ideas, the stability in the world cannot be achieved by forcing specific groups and communities to live in a state of exceptions. In the 21st century, Palestinian territory, specifically Gaza, presents the best example of state of exception, where Israeli colonizers kill civilians including children on a large scale without any fear of accountability (Hanafi, 2013; Khatib et al., 2024). Palestinians suffer from four different forms of exception; they are abandoned legally, politically, economically and socially. Their homes are destroyed and they are forced to live in camps where the difficulties multiply (Abujidi, 2009; Verdeja, 2026). Agamben's description of the state of exception strongly aligns with the contemporary world where practices of exception are growing day by day (Damai, 2005). According to Agamben, sovereign powers have supreme authority over judiciary; they are the decision makers, and they choose who will live life fully as political beings protected by law and who will remain outside the legal protection.

The war mongers always seek pleasure in murdering and exploiting little children and history is full of the dark chapters of children mass killing. The brutal killing of children is not a new phenomenon which we witnessed in 2026. It has been happening since the world can remember and it will continue to happen if practical implementation of children laws does not happen (Rivetti, 2026). The accountability and prosecution of those responsible for child massacres is an essential step towards the restoration of peace into this world.

5. Conclusion

This study has employed Agamben's theory of bare life to scrutinize the hardships and challenges faced by Palestinian children. The city of Gaza, which is the main focus of this research, is the clearest representation of Agamben's idea of state of exception. The children living in Gaza are constantly exposed to lethal violence, injustice, pain and traumatic incidents which align with the perspective of Agamben where he mentioned that sovereign powers throw human beings to state of exceptions by declaring wars and emergencies so that they can turn them into bare lives like Roman rulers used to do by using law of homo sacer. Within the parameters of the zone of exception, bare lives can be killed, tortured and all the injustices will most likely get overlooked and ignored by the global community. Children living in 'war zones' are subjected to afflictions and difficulties which even adults cannot bear to witness. The brutal child killing can be turned into mass casualties and bombing on houses can be labeled as precise attacks, it has been happening since centuries and is still being practiced by the Israeli occupation government in Palestine particularly Gaza.

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