

# Over 20,000 children buried, trapped, detained, lost amid Gaza war: report

June 24, 2024

Online Desk :

Nearly 21,000 children are missing in Gaza, British aid group Save the Children has claimed. In a report published on Monday, the group said the thousands of missing Palestinian children are believed to be trapped beneath rubble, buried in unmarked graves, harmed beyond recognition by explosives, detained by Israeli forces, or lost in the chaos of conflict.

“It is nearly impossible to collect and verify information under the current conditions in Gaza,” the group said, “but at least 17,000 children are believed to be unaccompanied and separated and approximately 4,000 children are likely missing under the rubble, with an unknown number also in mass graves”.

Israel has killed more than 14,000 children in Gaza since October 7, while others are suffering from severe malnutrition and do not “even have the energy to cry”, the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), said in a report earlier this year.

“Since October, Gaza has faced relentless violence which has killed over 37,000 people, including thousands of children. It follows an attack in Israel by Palestinian armed groups that killed over a thousand people, including at least 33 children,” the Save the Children report reads.

It also notes that about 250 Palestinian children are also missing in the occupied West Bank, as of 9 June.

## Accountability

Jeremy Stoner, Save the Children’s regional director for the Middle East, has called for an independent investigation into the situation surrounding Gaza’s missing children, and for accountability. “Families are tortured by the uncertainty of the whereabouts of their loved ones. No parent should have to dig through rubble or mass graves to try and find their child’s body. No child should be alone, unprotected in a war zone. No child should be detained or held hostage,” he added.

Khaled Quzmar, the general director of the child rights organisation Defense for Children International Palestine, told Al Jazeera that the impact that they have witnessed in the conflict in Gaza is at a level previously unseen, even during the second world war. “It is a war against children. Children in Gaza are the big cost of the Israeli genocide in Gaza,” Quzmar said.

International criticism has mounted amid the growing death toll in the war, as well as the deteriorating humanitarian crisis. However, on Sunday, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu reiterated that he would not agree to any deal that stipulated an end to Israel’s war on Gaza.