

# Gaza Children's Nightmares on the Rise

6 out of 10 children surveyed experiencing traumatic nightmares

By [Norwegian Refugee Council](#)

Global Research, November 14, 2018

[Norwegian Refugee Council](#) 3 May 2018

Region: [Middle East & North Africa](#)

Theme: [Law and Justice](#), [Police State & Civil Rights](#)

In-depth Report: [PALESTINE](#)

*Children living in the Gaza Strip are experiencing unusually high rates of nightmares and are showing increasing signs of psychosocial deterioration as a result of the violent response to the Gaza protests, just over a month since they began.*

56 per cent of Palestinian children surveyed by Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) in March were suffering from traumatic nightmares. When repeating the survey preliminary findings indicate an increase to 60 per cent, a month into the Great Return March demonstrations during which more than 38 Palestinian protestors have been killed, including 4 children and 2 journalists. More than 6,400 Palestinians have been injured, including at least 530 children, many of whom are left with amputated limbs and permanent disabilities.

Principals from 20 schools interviewed by NRC reported a rise in symptoms of post-traumatic stress in children, including fears, anxiety, stress and nightmares. School principals attributed high levels of post-traumatic stress and low concentration at school to the violent response to the demonstrations. The principals ranked increased psychosocial support in schools as their top need right now.

“The continuous violence children witness in Gaza is disastrous for their mental well-being. A girl of 11 years has lived her whole life under blockade or siege, and seen three wars with massive loss of life and housing,” said NRC Secretary General Jan Egeland. “Now children are again faced with the horrifying prospect of losing family and friends, as many are killed and injured every week.”

NRC provides psychosocial support to children and training for teachers through its Better Learning Programme (BLP), developed in partnership with University of Tromsø in Norway. Part of the programme involves screening schoolchildren for nightmares, which are one of the most pertinent signs of psychological deterioration. The activities include training children to do breathing exercises and drawing their dreams.

“For the children we work with, the nightmares continue for months and years after the violence that causes them,” said Jon-Håkon Schultz, Professor in Educational Psychology at the University of Tromsø in Norway who has participated in the implementation of the BLP programme in Gaza since 2012.

He underlines that these nightmares are traumatic nightmares where the child wake up in fear.

“The current crisis also brings back previous trauma and is a direct threat to the children’s mental health and their development.”

NRC’s education programme coordinator in Gaza, Asa’d Ashour, said:

Children having nightmares are growing more impatient in school and unhappier with their lives, and they are unable to concentrate in class.”

[Reham Qudaih](#), 14, was showing remarkable improvements in dealing with the trauma of the 2014 war on Gaza until her father was shot in the leg during the demonstrations. She is now having daily nightmares in which she dreams that her father is dead or had his leg amputated.

The [widow](#) of Jihad Abo Jamous – killed at the demonstrations – told NRC how her 4 children are waking up crying and screaming at night.

“They feel disconnected from everything and refuse to eat or drink,” Ghadeer said.

[Mohammed Ayoub](#), 14, was getting psychosocial support through NRC’s programme in schools when he was killed at the demonstrations.

The sheer force being used against unarmed civilians has also alarmed doctors in Gaza’s hospitals who are receiving increasing numbers of people with bullet wounds, torn muscles and smashed bones.

Egeland said:

“We call on all protests to remain non-violent. Israel must stop the use of excessive and lethal force against protestors, and hold to account those responsible for use of such force.”

\*

Note to readers: please click the share buttons above. Forward this article to your email lists. Crosspost on your blog site, internet forums. etc.

*Featured image is from Norwegian Refugee Council*

The original source of this article is [Norwegian Refugee Council](#)

Copyright © [Norwegian Refugee Council](#), [Norwegian Refugee Council](#), 2018

---

[Comment on Global Research Articles on our Facebook page](#)

[Become a Member of Global Research](#)

Articles by: [Norwegian  
Refugee Council](#)

**Disclaimer:** The contents of this article are of sole responsibility of the author(s). The Centre for Research on Globalization will not be responsible for any inaccurate or incorrect statement in this article. The Centre of Research on Globalization grants permission to cross-post Global Research articles on community internet sites as long the source and copyright are acknowledged together with a hyperlink to the original Global Research article. For publication of Global Research articles in print or other forms including commercial internet sites, contact: [publications@globalresearch.ca](mailto:publications@globalresearch.ca)

[www.globalresearch.ca](http://www.globalresearch.ca) contains copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available to our readers under the provisions of "fair use" in an effort to advance a better understanding of political, economic and social issues. The material on this site is distributed without profit to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving it for research and educational purposes. If you wish to use copyrighted material for purposes other than "fair use" you must request permission from the copyright owner.

For media inquiries: [publications@globalresearch.ca](mailto:publications@globalresearch.ca)