



Concept Note

International Conference on the Reality of Child Rights in Times of War and Crisis

For the Children of Palestine and the World: Reviving the Convention on the Rights of the Child in Times of War and Crises – A Universal Imperative for Global Justice

Under the auspice of
HE. Prof. Rami Hamdallah

Date: 29-30 April 2025

Hosting organization: Palestinian Child Institute, An-Najah National University, Nablus- Palestine

Organizers: the Palestinian Child Institute at An-Najah National University, the Palestinian Early Childhood Development Network, the Arab Early Childhood Network (ANECD), International Network on Peacebuilding for Young Children (INPB) and the Early Childhood Peace Consortium (ECPC)

Background:

The safeguarding of children's rights amidst war and crisis is a cornerstone of international law, enshrined in conventions such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), and The Fourth Geneva Convention. These frameworks underscore the imperative of ensuring children's access to protection, education, healthcare, and developmental opportunities, even in the most adverse conditions. Prominent global entities—including UNICEF, UNESCO, and the World Health Organization (WHO)—spearhead initiatives to uphold these principles through advocacy, technical support, and strategic partnerships with national authorities to ensure adherence to child rights frameworks.

The reality of escalating crises and genocide practices against children demands an unequivocal global response. This conference seeks to unite global voices in advocating for children's rights and justice, creating actionable frameworks and tools for ECD in the detrimental wars and crisis, occupation, and systemic, long-last

In a world where over 400 million children are affected by war, we must champion a new, unified approach to protect children's rights, free from double standards and political agendas.

By hosting this conference, Palestine reaffirms its commitment to global peacebuilding, justice, and the fundamental rights of every child to live with dignity and hope.

The history:

The decisive link between early childhood development (ECD), peacebuilding, social justice, and child rights was brought to the forefront during the First International Conference on Early Childhood Development: Children, Peace, and Hope hosted by the Palestinian Child Institute at An-Najah National University in November 2019. In partnership with national and international organizations, the conference highlighted the intersection of neuroscience, education, and health as pivotal arenas for early childhood care and development, emphasizing the detrimental impact of wars and crisis, occupation, and systemic, long-lasting violence on children.

The global early childhood community has repeatedly raised concerns over the increasing magnitude of poly-crises affecting children worldwide and Palestine in particular. These crises underscore the urgent need to address violations of child rights during wars and crisis to revive and strengthen existing treaties and conventions and equip them with new global tools for their implementation.

In September 2023, the Early Childhood Peace Consortium (ECPC) and the International Network on Peacebuilding with Young Children (INPB), supported by UN missions from Ireland, Colombia, and Chile, convened a High-Level Meeting at the United Nations. This event emphasized the transformative power of ECD in promoting peace and social cohesion and identified urgent actions for member states, including:

- Advocating for a UN Resolution on ECD and Peacebuilding.
- Accelerating the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 3, 4, 5, and 16 by reforming public policies and ensuring universal access to services.
- Strengthening partnerships to implement and scale up ECD programs that foster a culture of peace and protect children in wars and crisis zones.

Since this meeting, the world has witnessed escalated wars and crisis with devastating impacts on the 473 million Children Living in wars and crisis Zones including Palestinian children suffering from occupation and violent misuse of power since 1948.

In August 2024, JUZ00R for Health and Social Development, under the umbrella of the Palestinian Network for Early Childhood (PNECD) and the Arab Network for Early Childhood (ANECD), organized an international conference on the Impact of the Gaza Crisis and War on Palestinian Children: "Perseverance despite Genocide."

The conference revealed the catastrophic effects of the genocide actions in Gaza, where more than 50,000 were killed, 45% of whom were children. Still, thousands are missing under the rubble, and tens of thousands are wounded with wounded children, no surviving families (WCNSF), and a high rate of amputations. One stark example is the suspension of UNRWA's operations by the Israeli Occupation during the War on Gaza, a blatant breach of international agreements safeguarding children in wars and crisis zones. This suspension disrupted essential education, healthcare, and protection services for vulnerable populations, exacerbating the dire conditions faced by children and their families.

Proposed conference:

This unprecedented ordeal demands an urgent new approach to global action for the protection of children's rights, advocating for accountability without double standards and other political agendas.

The proposed 2025 conference builds upon the chain of programs, initiatives and conferences, addressing the escalating global crisis affecting hundreds of millions of children living in wars and crisis zones. The conference aspires to serve as a transformative platform, catalysing meaningful action and fostering hope for children living amidst crises.

By convening diverse stakeholders, it aims to translate commitments into tangible outcomes, paving the way for a brighter, more equitable future for children worldwide.

The choice of Nablus, with its historical legacy of interfaith harmony and social cohesion, reflects the conference's commitment to promoting peace and solidarity.

Objectives:

1. Analyse the multidimensional impacts of war and crises on early childhood development. Integrate insights from neuroscience, psychology, and trauma studies, introducing the concept of "Unchilding" as a framework for understanding the systemic dehumanization of children in wars and crisis.
2. Address violations of child rights and share first-hand accounts from wars and crisis zones to highlight gaps in the enforcement of international conventions.
3. Examine the violations children face, such as the deliberate deprivation of conditions essential for early childhood development, as a violation of international obligations and, specifically, as international crimes classified as genocide."
4. Showcase child-cantered peacebuilding and reconciliation approaches, drawing on global case studies such as Northern Ireland's experiences.
5. Formulate a roadmap for enhanced advocacy and partnerships between Palestinian and international institutions, fostering support from global donors.
6. Amplify the urgency of protecting children's rights in war and crises zones, emphasizing the need for actionable interventions.
7. Revising the current mechanizes of implementation and monitoring for respecting and protecting child rights by state parties of international instruments, and the need for an equal non-discriminatory application grounded in the universality of human rights.
8. Construct and suggest a Roadmap for Global Advocacy towards a UN and international agencies and develop programmatic partnerships between Palestinian institutions and international and regional ECD organizations to advocate against child rights violations globally.

Conference Highlights:

- Venue: Nablus, a historic city symbolizing interfaith harmony and social cohesion, offers an inspiring setting for advancing the argument for building peace and safeguarding child rights.
- Program: The agenda includes keynote speeches, personal testimonies, expert panel discussions, and an exhibition at the premises of the Palestinian Child Institute and An-Najah University, showcasing innovative programs and interventions.
- Participants: The conference will convene international and local experts in ECD and law, representatives from wars and crisis-affected regions, policymakers, donors, and leaders of global ECD organizations.

Proposed pillars for the conference:

1. Protection and Resilience: Safeguarding Children in Crisis and Wars
 - Addressing the immediate and long-term protection needs of children in war and crises zones, including safeguarding education, health, and psychological well-being.
 - International legal system and the importance of precautionary measures under international law to maintain the effective protection of child rights.
 - Highlighting resilience-building strategies through community-led approaches.
2. Advocacy and Accountability: Upholding Child Rights Frameworks
 - Strengthening the enforcement of international conventions and holding violators accountable.
 - Empowering the capacity of international criminal law responsiveness to violations of child rights.
 - Amplifying the voices of affected communities in global platforms to prioritize child rights in policy-making.
3. Bridging Gaps Through Partnerships
 - Fostering collaboration between local, regional, and international organizations to develop scalable, innovative interventions in ECD and child rights protection.
 - Showcasing successful models and programs that address the multidimensional impacts of crises on children.