

SPECIAL FOCUS

PALESTINIANS DISABLED DURING THE GAZA GENOCIDE



AL-HAQ

Every year on 3 December, International Day of Persons with Disabilities is observed to address the challenges faced globally by persons with disabilities. The theme of the International Day of Persons with Disabilities 2025 is “Fostering disability inclusive societies for advancing social progress”. Persons with disabilities necessarily need to live in an inclusive society to properly exercise their fundamental human rights. Yet, this would require the existence of a sustainable society. In the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT), and on both sides of the Green Line, Israel has done its utmost to destroy the Palestinian people, their culture, identity and the society they live in, especially in Gaza, in an effort to erase Palestinian presence therein, as part of the ongoing genocide against the Palestinian people.

1. The Growing Number of Palestinians with Disabilities in Gaza

As part of its relentless genocidal campaign in Gaza, the Israeli Occupying Forces (IOF), has killed 69,785 Palestinians and injured 170,965 Palestinians, between 7 October 2023 and 27 November 2025. The United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (UN OHCHR) has warned that, among those wounded, lies an unusually high number of Palestinians with disabilities, with notably “more than 25 per cent expected to acquire life-long impairments requiring access to rehabilitation and other support”. The World Health Organisation estimated between 3,105 and 4,050 limb amputations between January and May 2024. According to Save the Children, during each month in 2024, an average of 475 children were condemned to lifelong disabilities, including severely injured limbs, and impairments from the use of explosive weapons in Gaza.

In August 2025, Ibrahim Khraishi, Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations Office at Geneva, explained to the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities that since 7 October 2023, “the percentage of persons with disabilities had increased as a result of the excessive and premeditated use of force by the Israeli occupation forces” leading to 4,800 amputations of limbs had been documented since the beginning of the war in the Gaza Strip, with 76 per cent of those affecting the upper limbs and 24 per cent the lower limbs. Ten children were losing one or both legs every day.” In September 2025, UN Experts warned that “Gaza now has more child amputees than anywhere else in the world, alongside rising numbers of people with hearing and visual impairments, mental health and psychosocial support needs. ‘This includes nearly every child in Gaza’”, the experts said.

Al-Haq has documented numerous cases of Palestinians, including children, whose legs have been amputated due to Israel’s attacks on Gaza since October 2023. **Yazan Khaled Naeem Al-Souda, 10**, lost his leg on 13 October 2023. He recalled to Al-Haq:

I was playing football, and the house across from us was bombed. My leg was gone. One of my uncles – his name is Khamees – rescued me . . . My uncle came running, carried me, and put me behind the bus. He kept saying, “Bring a rope, tie his leg! Bring a rope!” and he tied it for me . . . he tied it and then . . . he put me on the bus. We found an ambulance heading to the European Hospital. We stopped it and said,

“Just take us to the European Hospital — we have martyrs and wounded people” . . . My leg was cut off. . . ”¹

Another case includes the bombing of the house of **Mohammed Zeid Suleiman Aqishah, 31** without prior warning, in the Jabalia refugee camp on 31 October 2023. Mohammad explained:

The nature of my injury . . . I had both of my legs amputated. I have external metal plates in my hand, and I also sustained an injury to my eye. Additionally, I have some bruises and fractures in my back. I'm sitting here with difficulty, honestly, but I'm managing for the sake of this interview.²

Ahmed Amin Saleh Kalloub, 27 had his leg was amputated in the aftermath of an Israeli attack that took place on 28 December 2023. He recalled to Al-Haq:

Just as I arrived there [at home] and was standing with my sister's husband, the strike happened. A missile hit exactly where we were standing, and another hit the building itself.

Honestly, I don't remember the injury itself at all. But my brother was next to me. Due to the force of the missile, he was thrown to the other side, and I was left with burns and shrapnel injuries — as you can see — and fragments in my head. That's what happened to me.

I was injured on a Thursday, and I regained consciousness on Saturday around noon at Al-Aqsa Hospital.

At Al-Aqsa Hospital, they told me my injuries were third-degree burns . . . Then we heard that the hospital might be evacuated, and we got worried there wouldn't be enough doctors to take care of me. So we came here to the European Hospital. When I arrived here, they found my leg was basically beyond saving. My left toes had already fallen off — they were wrapped in gauze and had detached. About a week or a week and a half later, they told me that my right leg would have to be amputated. Then, shortly afterwards, they told me, “We can't promise, but we'll try to save the left leg.” Eventually, they had to amputate the right leg, and part of the left foot is also gone — half of the forefoot is amputated.

Questioned on the civilian nature of the area he was in while he was targeted and as to whether there were armed clashes there, he answered:

Nothing at all — it was right in the middle of Al-Maghazi Camp market. Everyone was there, the whole community. It's a safe area, no military presence. Even the house they targeted — I still don't understand why it was bombed. There was no one in it.³

¹ Al-Haq, Affidavit taken from Yazan Khaled Naeem Al-Souda, 10, resident of Al-Jalaa, Gaza (25 February 2024), on file with Al-Haq, GZ057.

² Al-Haq, Affidavit taken from Mohammed Zeid Suleiman Aqishah, 31, resident of Beit Lahia, Gaza (17 February 2024), on file with Al-Haq, GZ041.1.

³ Al-Haq, Affidavit taken from Ahmed Amin Saleh Kalloub, 27, resident of the Al-Maghazi camp, Gaza (24 February 2024), on file with Al-Haq, GZ043.

Furthermore, **Ibrahim Omar Mohammed Shahin, 38** testified about the fate of his brother, who suffered a leg amputation due to an Israeli bombardment on a shelter where they were staying:

The school was struck at night, yes — without any prior warning, without any indication that there were armed individuals inside the school or any military activity taking place. No, none of that. Israel justified the strike by claiming there were armed men inside the school, but I can confirm and I know for certain that by around 5:00 p.m., the school had all its doors closed. There were always safety committees formed by some of the young men at the school to lock all doors and reinforce the walls. No one could enter the school at that point.

Then, at around 8:00 p.m., the drone strike hit the school. That attack killed twenty-three (23) people and caused many injuries. Among the injured was my brother Bassam — his leg was amputated. My mother was killed instantly at the scene. The number of casualties was unbelievable. By the time the ambulances arrived and we began evacuating and transferring the wounded to the Indonesian Hospital, I was shocked to learn that my mother had died at the site . . .

Around 8:00 a.m., I received a call from a journalist named Mohammed Abu Salameh, who was at the Indonesian Hospital. I called him to find out who the martyrs were and where they had been taken. He told me: “Your brother Bassam is alive, but in a very critical condition and in the intensive care unit. And your mother — may God have mercy on her — is gone.”

I returned to Bassam and found that he was still... he was still suffering at that time. They were scheduling surgeries to implant platinum rods. His condition was critical — his blood count had dropped to around three . . . They fitted platinum rods in his lower leg and arm. He was about to have a finger amputated.⁴

Some victims even lost both legs, as was the case of **Shadia Ibrahim Othman Hijja, 61**, who recounted to Al-Haq:

A little after 11 a.m., the shelling started. Suddenly everything went dark. We didn't hear anything — just darkness, and then something started falling on us — I don't know, like tiles or pieces of stone or something. I looked around — people were screaming. I didn't see anyone, but I could hear everyone screaming. It was pitch black. I had been holding my daughter's hand and had the ID card in my other hand. Suddenly, she let go of my hand and disappeared. I started shouting, “Ya Hanadi! Ya Hanadi! Ya Hanadi!” Then the second missile hit. At that moment, I couldn't see my daughter at all. I wanted to walk, but I couldn't move. I sat for a bit and collapsed onto the ground — completely unable to move. I tried to pull my legs, but I couldn't move them at all. I said, “Thanks be to God), we're martyrs.” That's it — I thought I was a martyr . . .

⁴ Al-Haq, Affidavit taken from Ibrahim Omar Mohammed Shahin, 38, resident of As-Safouri, Gaza, (24 February 2024), on file with Al-Haq, GZ040.

Everything was dark. I couldn't see. And I couldn't move my legs. I couldn't feel them at all.

*They said there would be an amputation — that they'd have to amputate my legs or something like that. They said, "Sorry, Doctor," or something like that, and they started crying. But I wasn't fully conscious — they amputated them. May you never experience that.*⁵

Other cases of leg amputations include those of Palestinian detainees subjected to torture and ill treatment in Israeli jails or detention centres. **Sufian Mohammed Ibrahim Abu Salah, 43** was arrested and subjected to beatings in Israeli custody. This, along with the inhuman conditions of detention, namely being forced to sit on his knees for very long hours, and having his legs shackled, caused an infection of his left leg from a wound he sustained during his arrest. He testified that medical neglect, beatings, and torture resulted in him having his leg amputated.⁶

They took me to the Sheba Hospital — Tel Hashomer and sent four soldiers with me, of course, in the ambulance behind . . . They kept playing psychological games with me the whole way, saying: "We're going to take you and cut off your legs."

[A]s soon as they took me out of the ambulance and I was heading for the amputation surgery, the four soldiers beat me severely, very severely, very severely . . .

Then the orthopaedic doctor arrived and said, "Sufian, you have to choose between your leg and your life. Your leg needs to be amputated." During this time, the soldiers kept saying: "Come on, just cut it for him, just do it from the start,"

*. . . it was amputated... About two hours later, they discharged me from the hospital following the amputation surgery. I asked for some water, and they gave me thinner to drink . . . Honestly, my eyes went straight to the square can of thinner.*⁷

Al-Haq also documented the case of a Palestinian journalist whose legs were amputated, including the Al-Jazeera correspondent Ismail Farid Mohammed Abu Omar, 41 (on 12 February 2024)⁸ and Sami Mohammed Shehadeh, 37 a journalist for TRT (on 12 April 2024).⁹

2. A Heightened Risk of Death and other Violations Faced by Palestinians with Disabilities

In September 2025, the Committee on the Rights of Persons with disabilities highlighted that persons with disabilities face a heightened risk of death in Gaza:

⁵ Al-Haq, Affidavit taken from Shadia Ibrahim Othman Haja, 61, resident of Al-Nuseirat, Gaza, (17 March 2024) on file with Al-Haq, GZ046.1.

⁶ Al-Haq, Affidavit taken from Sufian Mohammed Ibrahim Abu Salah, 43, resident of Abasan, Gaza, (24 February 2024) on file with Al-Haq, GZ007.

⁷ Al-Haq, Affidavit taken from Sufian Mohammed Ibrahim Abu Salah, 43, resident of Abasan, Gaza, (24 February 2024) on file with Al-Haq, GZ007.

⁸ Al-Haq, Affidavit taken from Ismail Farid Mohammed Abu Omar, 41, resident of Gaza (17 February 2024), on file with Al-Haq, GZ043.

⁹ Al-Haq, Affidavit taken from Sami Mohammed Shehadeh, 37, resident of Al-Karama, Gaza (12 April 2024), on file with Al-Haq, GZ015.

The Committee noted with grave concern the extensive loss of life and heightened risks of violence faced by Palestinians with disabilities in both Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. In Gaza, the limited supply and access to specialised and life-saving services, medical equipment and assistive devices led to the deaths of children and older people with disabilities. Reports highlighted deaths due to famine, acute malnutrition, and deprivation of access to water in Gaza. In the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, people with disabilities were also directly subjected to settler violence and abuses by Israeli Security Forces.

In the Gaza Strip, the systematic combination of attacks by the Israeli Occupying Forces (IOF), causing multiple displacements and the destruction of critical infrastructure along with pre-existing family and community-based networks, added to the gross lack of humanitarian assistance, safe distribution points and shelters, creating a catastrophic situation for persons with disabilities that significantly threatens their life, health and safety.

UN Experts have warned that “people with disabilities in Gaza are totally exhausted and traumatised. They face difficulties fleeing- some people with mobility impairments are forced to crawl through rubble or be dragged on mattresses, while other face barriers in accessing information.” Not only has Israel severely injured thousands of Palestinians, directly causing their disabilities, but it has also prevented the entrance of “many medical-related supplies and assistive aids”, claiming that they are “dual-use” objects. For example, “no wheelchairs have been allowed into Gaza since early 2025”. Further, due to entry restrictions imposed by Israel, basic needs are no longer affordable for Palestinians, a situation aggravated for Palestinians with disabilities who cannot reach health services. Against this backdrop, UN Experts express serious concerns that Israel’s offensive on Gaza City to seize control thereof would be “apocalyptic” for Palestinians with disabilities. They concluded: “In Gaza, living with a disability amounts to a slow death — stripped of humanity and dignity”.

Al-Haq has documented cases of Palestinians who died due to the lack of medicine and/or medical personnel, as illustrated by the testimony of **Ibrahim Omar Muhammad Shaheen, 38**:

At that time, the Indonesian Hospital itself was under threat of invasion and siege. There was pressure that the hospital would be stormed. When my father arrived, he was critically wounded. From what I understood, there were hardly any doctors available — very few — and they weren’t able to perform surgery. My father held on—barely breathing — for approximately twelve hours. After twelve hours, in the presence of my brother, he passed away inside the hospital, due to the absence of surgical intervention.¹⁰

Mohammed Zeid Suleiman Aqishah, 31 further recounted to Al-Haq:

¹⁰ Al-Haq, Affidavit taken from Ibrahim Omar Muhammad Shaheen, 38, resident of Al-Saftawi, Gaza (24 February 2024), on file with Al-Haq, GZ040.

*Honestly, I'm suffering, but they've stopped giving me treatments. They tell me, "We don't know what else we can do for your case. That's as far as we can go — we don't know how to treat you anymore." I have pain in my arm here, and when I speak to the doctors, they say they don't know what to give me — just paracetamol, ibuprofen, or something like that. I mean, someone with injuries like this, and they offer you paracetamol and ibuprofen? Of course, it's not because they don't want to help — but there's nothing available. Because of the siege, and the current pressures, and the huge number of injuries and martyrs coming in, there just aren't enough medications.*¹¹

Similarly, **Ahmed Amin Saleh Kalloub, 27** stated:

*I've been living on painkillers for about 50 days now — 50 days of pain and just noise . . . All I keep thinking about is wanting to get out of this pain I'm in — that's it. I haven't really thought about the future, what I'll do, how I'll live. None of that. Since I got injured, all I've been focused on is surviving the pain — just that.*¹²

Shadia Haja, 63 shed light on the intense suffering of patients who undergo surgery to amputate their legs in Gaza's hospitals:

*The next day, they gave me a half anaesthetic and I went into surgery. They gave me a half anaesthetic so they could amputate my legs. After the anaesthetic wore off, I told them 'I can only be fixed if you give me a full anaesthetic.' They said, 'We don't have that.' I said, 'No, a full anaesthetic.' They gave me a full anaesthetic and performed the operation.*¹³

In September 2025, the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel, (the "CoI") released a report in which it noted:

According to the doctor, seven girls had had their legs amputated without anaesthesia, and most of the patients had been women and children who had been burnt throughout their bodies, with missing limbs. An obstetrician who was in Gaza in December 2023 and January 2024 told the Commission that the hospitals were overwhelmed, and thousands of displaced Palestinians sought refuge at hospital compounds. According to the obstetrician, the floors of the emergency department were bloody and overcrowded, making it difficult at times to reach patients who were on the floor. The obstetrician added that there were children "with horrific amputations, with burns, with traumatic injuries, on the floor in other people's blood" and there was no pain relief available. (para. 98)

¹¹ Al-Haq, Affidavit taken from Mohammed Zeid Suleiman Aqishah, 31, resident of Beit Lahia, Gaza (17 February 2024), on file with Al-Haq, GZ041.1.

¹² Affidavit taken from Ahmed Amin Saleh Kalloub, 27, resident of the Al-Maghazi camp, Gaza (24 February 2024), on file with Al-Haq, GZ051.

¹³ Al-Haq, Affidavit taken from Shadia Ibrahim Othman Haja, 63, resident of Al-Nuseirat, Gaza, (17 March 2024) on file with Al-Haq, GZ046.1.

Lastly, disabilities entail economic losses and a lack of prospects for Palestinians who can no longer practice their profession to earn their livelihood. In this regard, **Mohammed Zeid Suleiman Aqishah, 31** stated:

“I used to work as a barber — I had my own barbershop. Thank God, everything was going well for me. . . Yes, of course. [The injury] has ended my professional future”¹⁴

3. Legal Analysis

The widescale infliction of grave disabilities on civilians in the Gaza Strip represents a pattern indicating a use of force with genocidal intent to destroy the Palestinian group, in breach of the Convention on the Prevention and Repression of the Crime of Genocide (“Genocide Convention”). Article 1 thereof defines genocide as the intentional destruction of a racial, national, ethnic or religious group as such, in whole or in part. One of the genocidal acts listed under the Genocide Convention is “causing serious injuries to body or health”. It is beyond dispute that the disabilities inflicted on Palestinians constitute serious bodily injuries. The International Court of Justice concluded in January 2024 that Israel had plausibly committed genocidal acts in Gaza.

In September 2025, the UN Commission of Inquiry found that Israel had carried out genocidal acts in Gaza and concluded that “Palestinians who were physically and mentally harmed by the Israeli security forces’ military operations will continue to suffer from long-term harm of such a serious nature that they will no longer be able to lead a normal and constructive life”, “especially [...] children with disabilities” (para. 78). Such injuries, in the current context prevailing in Gaza, have led to the death of Palestinians. Along with the widespread and systematic destruction of facilities indispensable to the survival of the population, including hospitals, water infrastructure and energy plants, and the denial of vital supplies, including food, water and medicines, has deprived most Palestinian disabled persons of life-saving treatments, amounting to killing, the first genocidal act listed by the Genocide Convention.

In addition, Israel’s treatment of Palestinians with disabilities is in breach of its obligation to treat protected persons with dignity under Article 27 of the Fourth Geneva Convention (GC IV). This inhuman treatment stems from, *inter alia*, the closure of the Gaza Strip, denying Palestinians, injured by Israel’s attacks, of life-saving medications and medical treatment, which is part and parcel of its genocide against the Palestinian people.

The obligation to treat persons humanely is further enshrined in Article 3(a) of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPW), which provides for the “respect for inherent dignity, individual autonomy [...] of persons”. Israel’s above-mentioned conduct further amounts to a violation of Article 10 of CRPW, which protects the rights of “every human being” to “the inherent right to life, as well as Article 11 thereof, which reads:

States Parties shall take, in accordance with their obligations under international law, including international humanitarian law and international human rights law,

¹⁴ Affidavit taken from Mohammed Zeid Suleiman Aqishah, 31, resident of Beit Lahia, (17 February 2024), on file with Al-Haq, GZ041.1.

all necessary measures to ensure the protection and safety of persons with disabilities in situations of risk, including situations of armed conflict, humanitarian emergencies and the occurrence of natural disasters.

In terms of international human rights law, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) provides that Palestinians, including persons with disabilities, shall enjoy their right to life (Article 6), the right not to be subjected to torture and inhuman, cruel or degrading treatment (Article 7), as well as the right to freedom of movement. While the ICCPR allows for derogations from States' obligations "in time of public emergency", these derogations do not apply to the absolute rights enshrined in Articles 6 and 7 thereof (Article 4).

Conclusion and Recommendations

On the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, Al-Haq urges the international community and Third States to take concrete and decisive actions to end the ongoing genocide:

1. Impose diplomatic, economic sanctions and arms embargoes on Israel;
2. Sanction corporations domiciled in their jurisdiction for the supply of weapons to Israel;
3. End Israel's 17-year blockade and closure of Gaza and dismantle its illegal occupation and apartheid regime, ensuring the full and unhindered access of humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip;
4. We further call on the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court to include additional charges against Prime Minister Netanyahu and former Defense Minister Gallant for genocide and to issue further arrest warrants for those Israeli officials and military commanders most responsible for international crimes against the Palestinian people.