

Stop the shelling of children's future

Since the escalation of the war in Gaza several hundred civilians have been wounded and the general health situation has severely deteriorated. The presidents of the Scandinavian Psychological Associations plead the parties for an immediate cease fire and appropriate working conditions for humanitarian aid organizations. We urge the parties of the armed conflict to fully comply with the Geneva Conventions to ensure the protection of civilians and their relief in times of war.

Threats of major physical damages and the fear of extinction holds true for all ages. But the traumatizing effects of war are especially severe for young minds, both on the Palestinian and the Israeli side of the border. War deprives children of fundamental rights such as a safe home, proper schooling and their parents' ability to care for them. The most vulnerable and invisible victim of the cruelty of war, is the mental health of children.

The present situation represents a daily fear for one's own live and the lives of significant others. This fear constitutes a severe threat towards children's visions and promises for the future and will undoubtedly have long term negative effects on their mental health.

There is great risk that the current situation will destroy the children's conception of a safe future and a normal life. We are worried that in this chaos marked by fear, sorrow, anger and aggression the only survival strategy readily available for the affected children may be hatred and violence, despite devoted and tender attempts by their parents to protect them. This is a tragedy – not only for the children and their families itself – but for all those who wish for a lasting peace in the Middle East.

We strongly urge the parties and the international community to alleviate the suffering of the civilian population through working for a negotiated cease fire followed by a peace settlement.

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