

The findings of our assessment of the mental health of children in Beit Hanoun and the Gaza Strip generally are in accordance with the predictions. This series reported that "Israeli military attacks in the Gaza Strip have caused loss of life, injury, and mental distress. Children have been killed, and those who have witnessed killings or have been injured themselves have significant psychiatric morbidity." In a survey in central Gaza, less than a week after the first ceasefire in the war, almost all (99%) of 13–17-year-olds could provide precise descriptions of events occurring during the war, and two-thirds had high levels of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptoms. Analysis of symptom scale scores shows that Gaza children distributed their clinical characteristics into 4 clusters: re-experiencing the war, emotional numbing, arousal, and avoidance. During the war, 7.3% of children developed positive PCR for acute stress disorder, and in our Beit Hanoun cluster sample, PTSD prevalence at the detection phase was 30.3%. Detailed awareness of the war around them increases the risk of children's war stress because it encourages attempts to grasp the reasoning behind frightening experiences. Our qualitative data from younger children with PTSD provides an account of specific types of war stress, including a case of a 6-year-old child caught in crossfire while walking up the stairs to his rooftop, and a case of a 9-year-old girl who witnessed the bombing of a building adjacent to her home.