19,000 Israeli kids physically or mentally injured since Oct. 7

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<https://www.jns.org/19000-israeli-kids-physically-or-mentally-injured-since-oct-7/>

An alarming [new report](http://chrome-extension/efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https:/img.mako.co.il/2024/03/03/children_israel_new.pdf?Partner=interlink) demonstrates the devastating impact of the Hamas-led terrorist attack of Oct. 7 and the ensuing war in Gaza on the children of Israel, including nearly 20,000 physically and mentally injured in hostilities.

From Oct. 7 to Feb. 28, the National Insurance Institute recognized 19,407 children as physically or mentally injured, according to the data published by the Child Safety Council on Sunday. About 37% of them (7,257 children) are under the age of 6.

Other notable data points published include 84% of parents responding to a national survey saying that their children aged 2-12 were in emotional distress, 64% reported fear and 62% reported anxiety.

A jump in reports of violence, sexual abuse and neglect towards children was also reported. In the month of October to December, there was a 28% increase in calls to the Ministry of Welfare and Social Services’s 118 support and guidance hotline compared to the same period a year earlier. There was also a 37% increase in calls regarding violence against children in the family.

In those months, 13 investigative cases were opened against adults suspected of committing criminal offenses against minors in hotels, where many of the tens of thousands of evacuees from the north and south have relocated after Oct. 7. Twelve of those cases were for violence and one was for sexual abuse.

During the Hamas-led rampage across the northwestern Negev on Oct. 7, terrorists murdered 38 children and kidnapped 42 others under the age of 18 to Gaza. Three of the murdered children were under the age of 3 and four were between the ages of 3 and 6. Two of the hostages are still in Gaza—Kfir [Bibas](https://www.jns.org/bibas-family-marks-kfirs-first-birthday-in-hamas-captivity/), 9 months old at the time of his kidnapping, and his older brother Ariel, 4 years old, who were kidnapped along with their parents from Kibbutz Nir Oz.

Fifteen of the kidnapped children, including those released and the Bibas brothers, have parents still held hostage in Gaza.

In addition, 116 children were left [orphaned](https://www.jns.org/wire/onefamily-comforts-newly-orphaned-israelis-who-lost-both-parents-on-oct-7/) after the massacre of some 1,200 people, including 20 kids losing both parents and 96 losing one parent.

Nearly 50,000 children of school age as of December 2023 lived in areas that the government forcefully evacuated after Oct. 7, of whom 17,725 were children of preschool age (up to 6 years old). That is in addition to the many families who voluntarily relocated away from the northern and southern border areas.

As of December, there were 8,000 children who had not been integrated into the education system, and if a military campaign is launched to remove Hezbollah from Southern Lebanon, many more will be evacuated.

There is a shortage of about a thousand educational psychologists and also a shortage of educational counselors, according to the report.

Attorney Vered Vindman, CEO of the Child Welfare Council, sent an open letter on Sunday to members of the government ahead of a meeting on the state budget, calling for billions of shekels to be allocated for the field of mental health for children and youth.

“Caring for their fate cannot be satisfied with nice words, it requires budgets and putting the acute needs of children and youth for health, education and welfare as top priorities,” Vindman wrote, adding that if this isn’t prioritized then “the meaning is that we, as a society, are on the sure path to the abyss, with our eyes open.”

The data was presented to Israeli President Isaac Herzog as part of the “Children in Israel 2023” report.