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**THIS IS OUR MOST PROFOUND FEAR:
LOSING NOT JUST OUR HOMES, BUT OUR HISTORY,
IDENTITY AND FUTURE.**

Médecins du Monde Report on the
Psychological Harm of the Israeli Military
Occupation on Palestinian Refugees in the
West Bank.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction and methodology

The Médecins du Monde (MdM) report **“This is our most profound fear: losing not just our homes, but our history, identity and future”** documents the psychological impacts of the Israeli military occupation on Palestinian refugees in the West Bank. In 2021, Médecins du Monde published a report focusing on the mental health of Palestinian rural communities affected by settler violence and home demolitions.

This current report complements that work by shedding light on the psychological harm imposed on Palestinian refugees, reinforcing Médecins du Monde’s expertise in how the occupation impacts the mental health of threatened groups in the West Bank.

The report draws on our clinical practice, quantitative data from our programme and testimonies gathered from Palestinian refugees between January 2024 and March 2025 in eight refugee camps: Jenin, Tulkarm, Nur Shams, Al-Fara’a, Aqbat Jabr, Shu’fat, Al Fawwar and Al ‘Arroub. To avoid retraumatisation, direct testimonies were limited, with insights primarily derived from MdM’s mental health professionals’ fieldwork.

Over the period of data collection, Médecins du Monde conducted Psychological First Aid (PFA) consultations for more than 1,600 Palestinians who were exposed to violence in these eight refugee camps. Of these 1,600 patients, 172 received second Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) visits. Advanced data and statistics regarding symptoms analysis have been drawn from second visits only.

Based on more than three decades of Médecins du Monde’s psychosocial work and on the collection of specific quantitative and qualitative data, the report provides concrete, empirical insights into the mental health consequences of the occupation and reflects recurring mental health patterns across multiple communities living in refugee camps across the West Bank.

The report highlights how continuous, recurrent and escalating violence from the Israeli military forces is causing severe and widespread psychological harm among Palestinian refugees, one of the most vulnerable and underrepresented populations affected by the Israeli occupation. In 2025 alone, over 44,000 refugees were forcibly displaced in the West Bank — the largest such movement since 1967 — and these communities face ongoing violence, frequent raids, forced evictions and restrictions on their movements.

Key findings

- **98% of Palestinian refugees visited by Médecins du Monde experience strong signs of distress**, with 96% declaring that the occupation disrupts their daily routine and 58% encountering sleeping problems, the usual consequences of stress and anxiety.
- In 2025, MdM observed a **sharp increase in mental health consultations, suggesting a significant increase in mental health needs**, which can be explained by the Israeli military operations in refugee camps in the West Bank that intensified in January 2025. While Médecins du Monde had been working in the West Bank since September 2023 with a maximum of about 100 Palestinians with refugee status per month, this figure rose to 500 in February 2025.
- **Médecins du Monde recorded symptoms such as chronic stress, hopelessness, psychosomatic conditions and learned helplessness** in about 70% of the 172 Palestinians with refugee status who received Médecins du Monde's mental health and psychosocial support second visits between January 2024 and March 2025.¹
- **74% of Palestinian refugees visited by Médecins du Monde are exposed to more than one violent incident within the space of four months**, emphasising how Israeli authorities' policies impose repeated, dehumanising, escalating and ongoing psychological harm, disrupting all the conditions necessary for healing — safety, stability, community support and access to care, including humanitarian assistance.

- **Children's cognitive, emotional and social development is impaired** by the Israeli occupation, which disrupts the protective functions of the family and educational environment and undermines their fundamental rights. Children suffer a loss of trust and developmental regression and are unable to experience their childhood.

This report identifies three patterns in the psychological harm inflicted by the Israeli occupation on Palestinian refugees in the West Bank:

(I) The repeated, escalating and continuous exposure to the violence of the Israeli occupation imposes unlimited psychological torment on Palestinian communities. This is marked by a state of **constant hypervigilance, persistent anticipation of death, feelings of despair and hopelessness and severe disruption to daily lives** — all compounded by the perception that the occupation deliberately aims to inflict psychological harm.

(II) The Israeli occupation is actively dismantling the essential conditions for psychological healing: safety, stability, time and space to process, community and family protection structures and a safe environment, as well as access to mental healthcare.

(III) Palestinian psychological suffering is rooted in shared experiences of the past and shared conceptions of the future and is embedded in transgenerational trauma and existential fears of physical and symbolic erasure.

¹ On average, between 6.5% and 8.5% of those receiving the first visit receive a second visit.

Conclusion and recommendations

The report thus concludes that repeated military raids, home invasions, displacements and restrictions inflict sustained psychological harm on Palestinian refugees and are characteristic of psychological torture as defined by the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture.

Médecins du Monde reiterates the need for an end to the occupation as a necessary condition for the psychological healing of the Palestinian people. Based on the report's findings, we call on Third States to:

- Enforce the International Court of Justice (ICJ) Advisory Opinion of July 2024 by taking immediate and concrete action to end the occupation, including full military withdrawal and an end to annexation.
- Pressure Israeli authorities to cease practices that may amount to psychological torture, including attacks on civilians and coercive displacement.
- Ensure the right to health, including mental health, for all Palestinians including refugees, and support a political solution that encompasses refugee rights.
- Protect the United Nations Work and Relief Agency's mandate, essential for delivering basic services.
- Guarantee safe humanitarian access and lift movement restrictions affecting Palestinians and impartial aid organizations.