

# 500 days after evacuation from Gaza, children 'dream of peace and returning home'

*500 days after children were evacuated from Rafah, SOS Children's Villages warns of escalating trauma, rising hunger, and mass displacement in Gaza.*

VIENNA, AUSTRIA, July 24, 2025

/EINPresswire.com/ -- Today marks 500 days since SOS Children's Villages evacuated 68 children, along with 11 caregivers and their families, from the SOS Children's Village in Rafah due to the imminent threat of a ground attack. The evacuation was seen as a temporary measure to remove them from immediate danger. Since then, the SOS Children's Village in Rafah has been [completely destroyed](#) by Israeli bombardment.



Siwar, 14, is one of 68 children evacuated from SOS Children's Village Rafah to the West Bank in March 2024. After eight months without school, she is now catching up thanks to a special education programme run in partnership with Zouhour Al Amal private

In Gaza, more than 19,000 children have lost one or both parents since the war began. Now, the region is spiralling toward famine. Aid organizations including the World Food Programme are warning of [mass starvation](#) across Gaza. In the past few weeks alone, Palestinian officials report [at least 101 people](#) have died of hunger, including 80 children. Despite mounting needs, humanitarian aid has been militarized and access remains dangerously restricted. (UN News, July 2025)

Many of the children evacuated from Rafah 500 days ago had already endured the trauma of war and loss of family members. Yet even in the face of so much loss, some speak of rebuilding their lives and pursuing dreams.

Ghada Hirzallah, National Director of SOS Children's Villages Palestine, said: "Despite the hardship, many children and youth we work with still speak of hopeful futures. They want to become doctors, chefs, teachers, engineers, artists – in roles where they can help others. They dream of peace, of returning to their homes, to Gaza, and of feeling safe enough to build a life.

"Some of the young people want to continue their education and dream of a day on which they

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can resume their studies and scholarships. What they need most is the stability and protection to make those dreams feel possible,” she said.

However, the unstable security situation in the West Bank has also caused distress, particularly since January 2025. Frequent military incursions have triggered past traumas, especially among children who associate military presence with earlier traumatic experiences in Gaza.

SOS Children's Villages worked through diplomatic channels with all relevant authorities to bring the children and adults to Bethlehem, West Bank, where they arrived safely on 11 March 2024. The children were aged between

two and 14 years and had lost parental care before the war.

When the children first arrived, staff described how during their first breakfast after leaving Gaza, the children hesitated to eat what was on their plates because they were used to sharing limited amounts of food and didn't understand that they were allowed to eat it all.

Since being evacuated, the children have adapted well to structured daily routines, including going to school, weekend outings, and creative and recreational activities such as sports, art therapy, music and singing lessons.

Speaking about the evacuated children and how they are faring now, Ghada Hirzallah said: “We see them now engaging joyfully in activities. Despite the fear and instability, their smiles and laughter during the sessions are profoundly moving. It confirms the importance of our presence and programmes and reminds us that even in crisis, healing is possible with the right support.”

Another significant challenge for the evacuated children is overcoming the deep emotional strain of being separated from extended family members, after losing parental care and enduring life-threatening conditions in Gaza.

SOS Children's Villages has consistently called for the guarantee that all Gazans forced to flee – including the evacuated children and staff - must be given the right to return so they can rebuild their lives in safety and dignity.

Children who could not be evacuated from Gaza, alongside additional unaccompanied children the organization is now caring for, are living in an SOS Children's Villages encampment in Khan Younis, with bombs landing as close as 800 meters from their temporary accommodation.

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