

15 YEARS OF GAZA BLOCKADE 80pc of children suffer 'distress'

AFP, Gaza City

Four out of five children in Gaza suffer from emotional distress, Save the Children said yesterday, 15 years after Israel slapped a strict blockade on the Palestinian territory.

Israel imposed the measure in June 2007, as fighters of the Islamist Hamas movement took control of the densely populated enclave. Israel, and Egypt, continue to severely restrict the flow of people and materials in and out.

In a report called "Trapped", Britain-based Save the Children said the mental health of Gazan children has continued to deteriorate.

Since 2018, the number reporting symptoms of "depression, grief and fear," had risen from 55 percent to 80 percent, the report said.

Save the Children's director for the occupied Palestinian territories, Jason Lee said: "The children we spoke to for this report described living in a perpetual state of fear, worry, sadness and grief, waiting for the next round of violence to erupt, and feeling unable to sleep or concentrate."

"The physical evidence of their distress — bedwetting, loss of ability to speak or to complete basic tasks — is shocking and should serve as a wakeup call to the international community," he added.

Children make up nearly half of Gaza's population of 2.1 million. Around 800,000 young people in the territory who have "never known life without the blockade," Save the Children said.

In a statement marking the anniversary of the blockade, HRW said that "Israel, with Egypt's help, has turned Gaza into an open-air prison".



POST-BREXIT TRADING RULES FOR N IRELAND

EU sues UK

Anger in London after European court blocks Rwanda asylum plan



AFP, Brussels

The European Commission launched new legal action against Britain yesterday, accusing London of putting peace in Northern Ireland at risk by trying to overhaul the post-Brexit trade withdrawal treaty that it had signed.

Johnson's government insists it is not breaking international law, citing a "necessity" to act to restore Northern Ireland's power sharing institutions.

Meanwhile, furious Conservatives yesterday called on government to abandon a European human rights pact after a judge dramatically blocked its plan to fly asylum-seekers to Rwanda.

The intervention by the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) forced the government to abandon the first flight.

Under the UK's agreement with

Rwanda, all migrants arriving illegally in Britain are liable to be sent to the East African nation for processing and settlement. The ECHR, ruling in favour of an Iraqi claimant, said his expulsion should wait until London's High Court has taken a final decision on the policy's legality at a hearing next month.

"Opening the door to unilaterally changing an international agreement is a breach of international law, as well. So let's call a spade a spade. This is illegal."

In London, PM Boris Johnson's spokesman said his government is "disappointed".

On Monday, the British government introduced legislation to rip up post-Brexit trading rules for Northern Ireland, in an attempt to override the EU

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