

Playing Spaces in Palestinian Refugee Camps: Another Face of Violence Against Children

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Abstract

This study explores the spatial practices of Palestinian children in refugee camp, where the Israeli politics of dispossession and marginalization have produced spaces of control, restrictions, and insecurity for the Palestinians, continue to make the life of the children very difficult. Within these conditions of children's play becomes a spatial strategy of adaptation also as a form of resistance.

The research plays a role in engaging and contributing with the political, social and spatial complexities of refugee camps, using architecture as both a critical lens and a witness to injustice. It argues that children's imaginative practices in Qalandiya offer valuable insights into the role of architecture and urbanism. By examining how children navigate and reimagine their space, the research emphasizes how play can both expose the violence embedded in the refugee spaces and suggest alternative spatial futures.

To address the central question of how do children in refugee camps cater for their need to play within the limited restricted spaces, the study employed a mixed methodology, involves gathering data through a literature review, onsite observation, mapping and children's drawings, drawn purposely for this study, as an expressive channel to allow them to express their inner stories in Qalandiya spaces. In April 2025, 35 children (aged 6 - 12, of both genders) were asked to draw a drawing, representing existing playing spaces.

Finding reveal that suffering due to political injustices from the occupation is another face of violence towards Palestinian children. This transforms Qalandiya refugee camp into a violent environment one shaped and experienced differently through children's perspectives.

Keywords: Deprivation, Israeli Occupation, Palestinian Refugee Children, Play Spaces, Refugee Camp, Violence.