THE EMPTY CHAIR

World Week of Prayer for Peace in Palestine and Israel (WWPPI) 2026

A Kairos India Partnership (KIP) / NCCI Campaign

ACTIVITY 2

Daily Intercession Guide-20 to 26 September 2026

For Christian schools, hostels, and organisations. One page per day: a short thematic prayer, a statistic on Palestinian children, and a resonant statistic on Dalit/tribal/Adivasi children in India.

Assembly Setup: *Please place an empty chair visibly at the front of the the gathering (children/students/audience) before the assembly commences.*

Day 1-Saturday, 20 September: THE MISSING

Prayer:

> *God who knows every name, we lift up the children who cannot be found-in Gaza and in our own villages and cities. Be present in the silence of every search that has no answer.*

Gaza: More than 2,900 children in Gaza remain unaccounted for; an estimated 2,700 of them are believed to still be trapped beneath the rubble of destroyed buildings.

(Source: Palestinian Centre for the Missing and Forcibly Disappeared, as reported in April 2026)

India: 98,375 children were reported missing across India in 2024-a 7.8% rise over the previous year, with girls forming the overwhelming majority of cases (75,603 of 98,375).

(Source: NCRB, Crime in India 2024 Report, released in 2026)

Day 2-Sunday, 21 September: HUNGER

Prayer:

> *God of manna and bread multiplied, we pray for children whose bodies bear the weight of war and want. Feed the hungry; convict the systems that let children starve.*

Gaza: UNICEF reports that no child in Gaza is currently able to eat three meals a day containing the nutrients they need, and that famine, while averted, has left deep and lasting damage. *(Source: UNICEF spokesperson James Elder, 2026)*

India: Under NFHS-5, 40.9% of tribal children under five are stunted, 23.2% are wasted, and 39.5% are underweight-figures consistently higher than the national average. *(Source: National Family Health Survey-5)*

Day 3-Monday, 22 September: ORPHANED AND EXPLOITED

Prayer:

> *God, protector of the fatherless, we remember children left without parents by violence, and children left without protection by poverty. Raise up families and communities to shelter them.*

Gaza: Between 15,000 and 19,000 children in Gaza are estimated to have been orphaned since October 2023, most with no functioning state system left to protect them. *(Source: UNICEF / International Rescue Committee, 2026)*

India: NCRB has itself acknowledged that missing children in India become vulnerable to trafficking, labour, and sexual exploitation-a vulnerability rights groups describe as closely, though not simply, linked to caste and poverty. *(Source: NCRB; UN Special Rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of Slavery, Tomoya Obokata)*

Day 4-Tuesday, 23 September: KILLED AND HARMED

Prayer:

> *God who wept at the grave of a friend, we grieve children whose lives were taken by violence, and children whose safety is not treated as a national priority. Let their deaths not be met with our indifference.*

Gaza: At least 21,289 children in Gaza have been reported killed since October 2023. Since the October 2025 ceasefire, more than 300 additional children have been killed-an average of roughly one child every day.

(Source: UNICEF, February and August 2026 updates)

India: India recorded a national average of 42.3 crimes against children per 100,000 child population in 2024; in some cities this rate is nearly four times higher. A precise Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribe child-only breakdown was not available at national level-dioceses are encouraged to request this figure from their State Crime Records Bureau.

(Source: NCRB, Crime in India 2024)

Day 5-Wednesday, 24 September: DISPLACED FROM HOME

Prayer:

> *God who had no place to lay his head, we pray for children without a home to return to-driven out by bombs, by drought, by land taken from their ancestors. Give them a place of rest.*

Gaza: As of mid-2026, roughly 1.9 million of Gaza's 2.1 million people remain displaced, most sheltering among rubble and damaged buildings with no permanent home to return to.

(Source: UNICEF, mid-year 2026 situation update)

India: Adivasi and tribal communities are among the groups most affected by land acquisition, mining, and forest displacement in India. About 1.7 million people were displaced by 119 Central, and State government projects, among them more than half (around 0.9 million) were tribes. Even in the last 40 years, mining activities have alone displaced 2.1 million population including 1.4 million tribals. *(Source: Ministry of Tribal Affairs and Journal of Rural Development, Vol. 36 No. (2) pp. 182 NIRD&PR, Hyderabad)*

Day 6-Thursday, 25 September: DENIED CHILDHOOD

Prayer:

> *God who delighted in children at play, we pray for the childhoods being stolen-by war, by labour, by systems that ask children to survive instead of simply to grow up. Restore to them the right to be children.*

Gaza: UNICEF assessments describe a generation of children in Gaza who spend their days fetching water, queuing for food, and gathering firewood rather than playing-with paper, art supplies, and functioning schools still scarce.

(Source: UNICEF, 2026)

India: Children from struggling and marginalised sections remain over-represented among out-of-school and child-labouring populations in India. According to the Census of India 2011, 11.8 million children across the country aged 5–17 were main workers (those working more than six months).

(Source: UNICEF- Child Labour and Schooling in India: A reappraisal 2024)

Day 7-Friday, 26 September: HOPE AND ADVOCACY

Prayer:

> *God of resurrection, we do not pray only to grieve, but to hope and to act. Turn our lament into advocacy-for Gaza's children, and for the Dalit, Adivasi, and tribal children of our own land. May the empty chair we have carried this week become a full table of justice.*

Closing statistic (Gaza): UNICEF states plainly that "no ceasefire can be considered meaningful while children continue to be killed"-a reminder that this week's prayer is not only remembrance but an unfinished call to action.

(Source: UNICEF 2026, UNICEF/UN News August 2026)

Closing statistic (India): Crimes against children in India rose again in 2024 (up by 5.9%), even as overall registered crime fell-a reminder that protection for the most vulnerable children in India, too, remains an unfinished task.

(Source: NCRB, Crime in India 2024)

Suggested closing action: Invite the congregation/school to write one concrete commitment (a letter to a representative, a signed advocacy statement, a link to a local Dalit/Adivasi child-rights organisation) and place it on the empty chair before it is removed.

Prepared for the Kairos India Partnership (KIP) / National Council of Churches in India (NCCI), for use during WWPPI 2026. Statistics current as of August 2026-please verify against the latest UNICEF, NCRB, and NFHS releases before wide distribution.