

# Children Affected by Armed Conflict

## Israel & the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt)

### July 2011



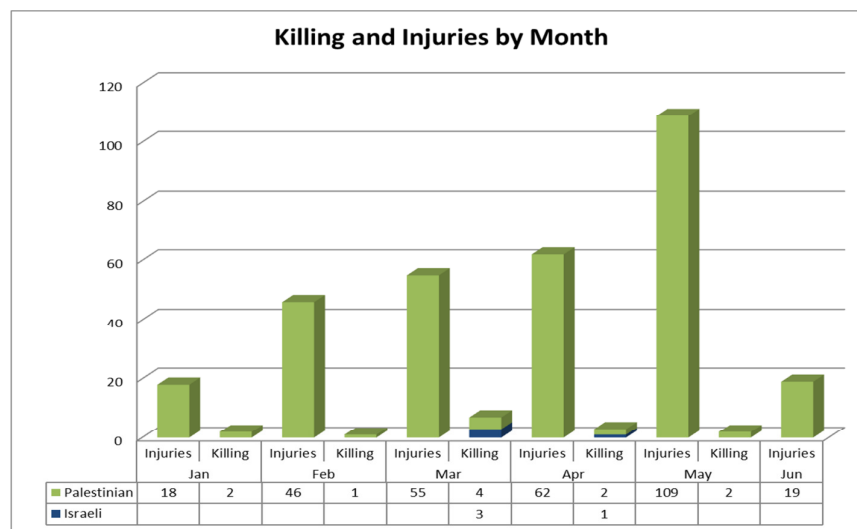
Since 2007, a UNICEF-led working group on grave violations against children has consolidated efforts to report on the impacts of armed conflict on children in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt). Members of the working group include: Al Mezan Centre for Human Rights, Save the Children, DCI-Palestine, B'Tselem, Palestinian Centre for Human Rights, War Child Holland, OCHA, OHCHR, UNESCO, UNICEF, UNRWA and WHO. The violations include killing and injuries, arrest and detention, ill-treatment and torture, recruitment and use of children by armed forces and groups, attacks on schools and hospitals, displacement and denial of humanitarian access including access to health and education. The bulletin is published on a bi-monthly basis highlighting trends and patterns in grave violations against children. This bulletin reports on violations occurring during the months of May and June 2011.

## KEY ISSUES

May and June saw the highest number of children injured in the occupied Palestinian territory since Israeli military operation "Cast lead" in 2009-2010. The majority of children were injured during demonstrations that took place to commemorate the 63<sup>rd</sup> anniversary of the Palestinian "Al Nakba" (the catastrophe). Another issue of concern is the sharp increase in the number of people forcibly displaced in the West Bank, marking the highest number since 2006 when OCHA began recording demolitions. Demolitions have particularly affected Bedouin and herding communities in Area "C"<sup>1</sup>.

## KILLINGS AND INJURIES

During May and June 2011, two Palestinian boys were killed and 128 Palestinian children were injured (98 boys and 30 girls). This represents a decrease in the number of children killed but an increase of children injured compared to March and April 2011 (10 children killed and 117 children injured). No Israeli children were reported killed and injured during the reporting period.



A 17-year-old Palestinian boy was killed when he was shot with live ammunition in his abdomen by an Israeli settler in Silwan, East Jerusalem. In Gaza, a 17-year-old Palestinian boy was killed by shrapnel from an artillery shell fired by Israeli Security Forces in the 'Access Restricted Areas'<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Area C includes over 60 percent of the West Bank where Israel retains authority over law enforcement and control over the building and planning sphere. For more information on demolitions see OCHA 'Monthly Humanitarian Monitor', June 2011.

<sup>2</sup> The 'Access Restricted Areas', or "Buffer Zone" denotes the area separating Israel and Gaza. The Israeli military has officially indicated the boundary of the no-go area to be 300 meters from the border but in practice, it extends up to one kilometre in most areas and two kilometres at its widest point in North Gaza. The number of people directly affected is estimated at

In the West Bank and Gaza, 64 children were injured by tear gas, rubber coated metal bullets or due to physical assault during clashes and military operations that occurred in May and June. An additional 54 children (42 per cent of the total number of children injured) were injured during the 'Al Nakba' Day of commemoration, including 33 children injured in Gaza as a result of gunfire and shrapnel of the Israeli Security Forces.

Five children were injured due to UXO explosions or the mishandling of suspicious objects in the West Bank and Gaza. One incident involved the mishandling of an explosive object in Gaza, which resulted in injuries to three 14-year-old boys, with one boy requiring hand amputation as a result. Another five children were injured by settler violence in the West Bank. Three boys were injured when they were physically assaulted<sup>3</sup> by Israeli settlers and another 15-year-old boy was injured and sustained contusions by a group of Israeli settlers who threw stones at Palestinian children in Jerusalem.

From the 13th to the 15th May, a high number of demonstrations took place to commemorate the 63<sup>rd</sup> anniversary of the Palestinian 'Al Nakba' (the catastrophe) that marks the day of the creation of the state of Israel, when the majority of the Palestinian population became refugees.

Many of the demonstrations resulted in violent clashes between the Israeli Security Forces and protestors across the occupied Palestinian territory, as well as in the border areas, including Lebanon and the Golan Heights, which resulted in the highest number of children injured during demonstrations and clashes in oPt since January 2010.

Nationality	Violation	Region	May	Jun	Total
Palestinian	Injuries	East Jerusalem	8	5	13
		Gaza Strip	36	1	37
		West Bank other	65	13	78
	Killing	East Jerusalem	1	0	1
		Gaza Access Restricted Area	1	0	1
Israeli	Injuries		0	0	0
	Killing		0	0	0

**Security Council Resolution 1998**

On 12 July 2011 the United Nations Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 1998, which recognizes schools and hospitals as safe havens for children. The resolution calls for all parties that attack schools and hospitals to be held accountable.

The new resolution recognizes attacks against schools and hospitals as a grave violation of International Humanitarian Law. It calls for the perpetrators to be listed in the Secretary-General's annual report on Children and Armed Conflict. The annual report currently lists those parties which commit recruitment and use of children in conflict; killing and maiming; and rape or other forms of sexual violence against children.

In at least 31 countries in Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and the Middle East, schools have become the target of violent attacks or threats by both state security forces and non-state armed groups.

Such attacks have devastating consequences on children's lives and on their communities, weakening education and health systems and potentially deepening deprivations and disparities.

To read more: [http://www.un.org/children/conflict/\\_documents/CAACRES1998.pdf](http://www.un.org/children/conflict/_documents/CAACRES1998.pdf)

approximately 113,000 people or 7.5 per cent of Gaza's total population and 35 per cent of the arable land in Gaza (OCHA&WFP 2010: 'Humanitarian Impact of Israeli-imposed Restrictions on Access to Land and Sea in the Gaza Strip').

<sup>3</sup> Physical attack not involving the use of a weapon

## ARREST AND DETENTION

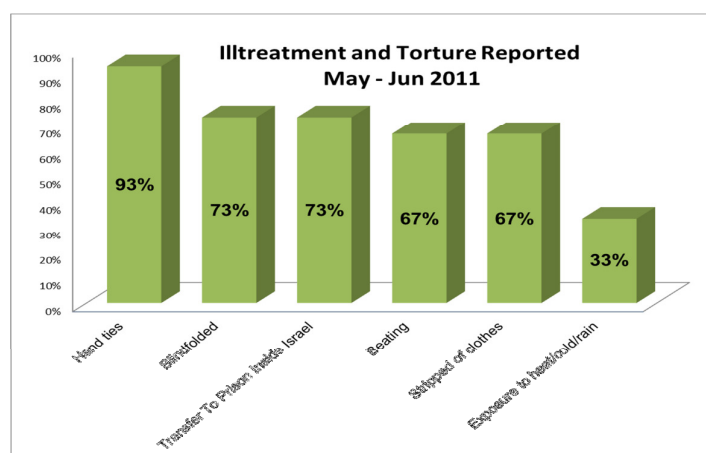
At the end of June 2011, 209 Palestinian boys between the ages of 12 to 17 years were in Israeli detention, a decrease by eleven children detained since the last reporting period. This includes 38 boys between the ages of 12 to 15 detained during the month of May. Currently no children are held in administrative detention.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2008	327	307	325	327	337	323	324	293	304	297	327	342
2009	389	423	420	391	346	355	342	339	326	325	306	305
2010	318	343	342	335	305	291	284	286	269	256	228	213
2011	222	221	226	220	211	209						

Source: DCI Palestine, Detention Bulletin, June 2011.

## ILL-TREATMENT AND TORTURE

During the reporting period, fifteen cases were documented of ill-treatment and in some cases amounting to torture of Palestinian boys, age 13-17, by the Israeli authorities during arrest, interrogation and detention. Affidavits were taken for all cases. The cases involved the use of hand-ties (14 instances), blindfolding (11), beatings (10), stripped of clothes (10), exposure to heat/cold/rain (5), kicking (5), and verbal abuse (5). One boy reported threats of sexual assault. In all instances where affidavits were taken, children reported ill-treatment or in some cases amounting to torture. Eleven children from the West Bank reported being transferred to prisons inside Israel in contravention of the Fourth Geneva Convention.



## RECRUITMENT AND USE OF CHILDREN BY ARMED FORCES AND GROUPS

No incidents reported.

## FORCED DISPLACEMENT

In May and June there was a sharp increase in demolitions. Israeli authorities demolished 166 Palestinian structures across the West Bank and in East Jerusalem, including 54 homes. As a result 332 people lost their homes, including 202 children. An additional 414 people, including 176 children, were otherwise affected by the demolitions, which caused community displacement and threats to livelihood.

OCHA reported in the June Humanitarian Monitor that more people were forcibly displaced in the oPt in the first half of 2011 than in any other period since the recording of demolitions started in 2006. At least 689 people were displaced as a result of the demolitions, half of them children. This exceeds the total number of people displaced in all of 2009 or 2010. In 2011, several Area “C” communities experienced multiple demolitions in short succession, with each demolition worsening the living conditions of residents, and reducing access to services and ability to earn a living. The demolitions also have negative psychosocial consequences such as anxiety, depression, hopelessness and insecurity, particularly among children. (Source OCHA ‘Monthly Humanitarian Monitor’, June 2011)

## ATTACKS AND DAMAGE TO SCHOOLS

During the reporting period there was a decrease in incidents of attacks on schools, with seven incidents documented (including one new case from end of April), affecting 1,462 Palestinian students. No attacks on Israeli schools were reported.

Four incidents involved the presence of Israeli security forces, including firing teargas and sound bombs, destroying a school’s water storage, and entering school premises. Two attacks by settlers were reported. One incident occurred in Nablus, where a group of settlers started a fire inside a secondary school, damaging the prayer room, and a second one when settlers raided a school in East Jerusalem. In addition, a demolition order was issued against a new primary school due to open for the 2011/2012 school year.

A young student in Grade 10 – age 15 – in Gaza commented that since 2005 his school has been the site of numerous military operations that have resulted in death, injury and the demolition of houses, “My home, like others in the communities near the border, has been completely demolished. During the first five years my education performance was rated as excellent. Over the last five years my performance has been severely lacking however. This is because of the ongoing operations of the Israeli occupation on my mental and physical capabilities. My first wish is for security I want to feel better when I wake up and not see any more military towers and machinery rolling near the border.” (Grade 10 student)

(Source: *Safe Schools Protecting Education from Attacks – Twelve schools in the Gaza ‘Buffer zone’, UNESCO 2011*)

## DENIAL OF HUMANITARIAN ACCESS / IMPACT OF THE CONFLICT ON ACCESS TO BASIC SERVICES

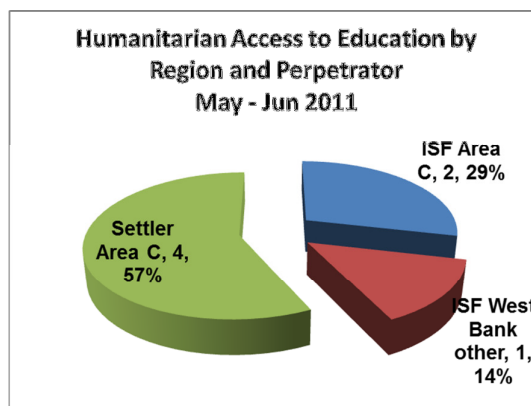
### Access to healthcare

Children in need of specialized medical care outside of Gaza continue to face considerable delays and denial of access to health services. In May and June 2011, the Israeli District Liaison Office approved 733 out of 773 applications for children to cross Erez for medical treatment outside of Gaza. Thirty-nine applications were delayed and one case was denied. *For more information on referral of patients from Gaza strip see: [http://issuu.com/who-opt/docs/update\\_rad\\_may\\_2011](http://issuu.com/who-opt/docs/update_rad_may_2011) OR [http://issuu.com/who-opt/docs/update\\_rad\\_report\\_june\\_2011](http://issuu.com/who-opt/docs/update_rad_report_june_2011)*

## Access to education

Seven incidents of denial of humanitarian access were documented, in which Palestinian children were denied access to education. No cases of denial of humanitarian access for Israeli children were reported.

Four incidents involved Israeli settlers, youth and adults throwing stones at a school bus or directly at children waiting for a military escort to school. Delays in the Israeli Security Forces escort tasked to protect school children continued to be reported.



### School transportation and access to education

Children in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, face severe and chronic protection challenges getting to and from school every day. They cross Israeli military check points; experience settler harassment and violence on their commute to and from school, and some must walk for long distances on dangerous roads. These problems, related to lack of safe access to education, result in drop out (especially girls in secondary school) as well as in separation of families in their efforts to ensure that their children go to school.

The school transportation project in Susiya, a village in the southern Hebron hills, is an example of how a protective intervention such as transportation can help children stay in school. The village is surrounded by Israeli settlements and a military camp; in addition there was a road block on the main street to Yatta, where the school is located. All these factors created a situation in which children's access to education was severely hampered. Families had to relocate in order to send their children to school. After a small van was provided by a humanitarian organisation to transport the children to school, previously displaced families returned to their village. The number of families in Susiya increased from 20 (in 2006) to 45 (in 2011). Study shows that protected access to education was one of the main factors that helped families decide to return.

In 2011/2012 selected vulnerable communities at risk of school drop-out will be supported with protected transportation through a collaboration between humanitarian actors and the Palestinian Authority to ensure safe access to education for children.