

UNICEF oPt Monthly Update

May 2010

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Highlights

- On 4 May, the Bank of Palestine provided UNICEF with USD 250,000 towards supporting 20 family centres established in Gaza in the wake of “Cast Lead”. The family centres provide children and their caregivers with a broad range of psychosocial support, learning and recreational activities in a safe environment.
- UNICEF has delivered four water tanker trucks that will distribute safe water to 90 schools in Gaza when classes re-open. Funding for the trucks was provided by the Government of Japan.
- This monthly update provides a brief synopsis of the 1612 Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism on children affected by armed conflict, and the findings since 2010 of the Israel / oPt working group on grave violations against children.

Overview

The early 1990s brought about a new global understanding of conflict and its impact on civilians, and children in particular. Children were more clearly than before identified as victims of these wars, and the situation of child soldiers was of prominent concern.

The 1996 Machel Study on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Children (<http://www.unicef.org/graca/>), called for the creation of a system of monitoring and reporting on grave violations of children’s rights. The landmark report also advocated for the active involvement of the highest decision-making authority within the United Nations, the Security Council.

The first UN Special Representative of the Secretary General for Children and Armed Conflict was appointed in 1997, and the Security Council held its first thematic debate the following year. In 2000, the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of

Water – a fundamental child right



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Hadeel, 12, queues up with classmates at the Refayeh / Deirat school in southern Hebron for UNICEF-supplied drinking water delivered via tanker. Water scarcity is among the most severe hardships in “Area C”, which covers 60 per cent of the West Bank, and where access to basic services is administered under Israeli planning laws. Palestinians in Refayeh / Deirat consume just 20 litres of water per person per day. To read more on food security and nutrition challenges particular to the vulnerable communities living in “Area C”, click on: http://www.unicef.org/oPt/UNICEF-oPt_April_Update.pdf

the Child related to the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict was adopted and opened for ratification. In his 2001 annual report on children and armed conflict, the UN Secretary General included, for the first time, a list of “parties to conflict who recruit or use children.” In his 2003 annual report, the Secretary General presented a list of “egregious violations” of children’s rights during conflict:

- i) Killing or maiming;
- ii) Recruiting or using child soldiers;
- iii) Attacks against schools or hospitals;
- iv) Rape or other grave sexual violence;
- v) Abduction; and
- vi) Denial of humanitarian access.

The Security Council today is more actively engaged on issues related to children and armed conflict than any other thematic issue, and a clear link between its peace and security agenda and the concern over children and armed conflict has been established.

The 1612 Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM)

UN Security Council Resolution 1612 (UNSCR 1612), adopted in 2005, established a mandatory framework for a monitoring and reporting mechanism in countries with an established pattern of child recruitment. The

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mechanism was to provide for “timely, objective, accurate and reliable information on the recruitment and use of child soldiers in violation of international humanitarian law, and on other violations and abuses committed against children in armed conflict.”

All UN Country Teams in countries listed by the Secretary General were required to establish a 1612 MRM, a country-level task force, and an action plan to support affected children. UNSCR 1612 also called for setting up a Security Council level working group for regular monitoring. The MRM is not conducted to directly secure criminal prosecutions nor to contribute to national or international criminal processes, although cases can be referred to organisations that support victims in pursuing legal action.

In 2010, there were 14 countries with 1612 Task Forces reporting bi-monthly to the Security Council on the six egregious violations. Haiti, Lebanon, Thailand and Israel /oPt report voluntarily.

UN Security Council Resolution 1882, passed unanimously in August 2009, expands the criteria for selecting countries / parties that are mandated to report on such violations, to include killing / maiming, and rape / sexual abuse.

The Israel / oPt working group on grave violations against children

Since 2007, a UNICEF-led working group composed of Palestinian, Israeli and international human rights organisations, has voluntarily reported to the Security Council on violations committed against children in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt). The group reports on killing / maiming; recruitment or use of child soldiers; attacks against schools and hospitals; and denial of humanitarian access. The group additionally reports on arrest and detention; ill-treatment and torture; and displacement. Multiple human rights agencies provide information to the 1612 database.

Members of the working group include Al Mezan Centre for Human Rights; Save the Children UK and Sweden; Defense for Children International – Palestine (DCI-Palestine); B'Tselem; Palestinian Centre for Human Rights; War Child Holland; the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA); the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR); the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA); and the World Health Organisation.

Protecting childhood in Gaza



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UNICEF Regional Director for the Middle East and Northern Africa Sigrid Kaag talks to children at the UNICEF-supported Jabalia Rehabilitation Family Centre in Northern Gaza. Her visit came just days after a summer camp for children being set up by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency was vandalised by armed attackers. To listen to an interview on Ms. Kaag's visit, click on: www.unicef.org/infobycountry/oPt_53759.html

1612 findings on grave violations against children in 2010

The following summarises the main findings of the Israel / oPt working group on grave violations against children between January and April 2010.

Killing and maiming

During this reporting period, three Palestinian children were killed, and 111 injured in conflict-related incidents. There were no deaths of Israeli children; one Israeli child was injured.

In Gaza, one child was killed on 8 January in an Israeli airstrike on or near the tunnel in which he was working. Two children were killed in the West Bank in March during clashes between Israeli forces and stone-throwing youths. The hospital that treated the children in Nablus reported that both children were killed by live ammunition. The Israeli authorities have launched an investigation.

The majority of injuries among Palestinian children were related to demonstrations. One Israeli settler child was injured in an incident involving stone throwing Palestinians in the West Bank. (See Table 2 on page 4).

Recruiting or using child soldiers

Two Palestinian children were reportedly used as human shields during military operations in the West Bank. In February, a 16-year-old girl reported that she

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was ordered to open closets and lift beds during a night search of her home by Israeli soldiers. In April, a 14-year-old boy said he was forced to walk in front of Israeli soldiers who were being pelted with stones.

Arrest and detention

As at end-April, there were 335 Palestinian children being held in Israeli detention facilities, including 32 children between 12 and 15 years of age, and one girl, the first female detained in six months. Two children were reportedly being held in administrative detention (without charges or trial) in March 2010, following three months of no new administrative detainees between December 2009-February 2010. (See Table 1 on page 4)

Ill-treatment and torture

Twelve cases of ill-treatment and torture of Palestinian children during their arrest, interrogation and detention by Israeli authorities were documented since January. Children reported excessive handcuffing and blindfolding; prolonged painful positions; beating and kicking; humiliation through stripping or verbal abuse; threats of sexual assault. At least two children were held in solitary confinement for periods ranging from three to five days. (See Table 3 on page 4)

Displacement

Fifty-two children were reportedly displaced as a result of house demolitions by the Israeli authorities in the West Bank between January and February. Since the beginning of the year, 65 Palestinian structures, including 29 used as homes, were demolished, and 145 demolition or stop-work orders were issued, affecting at least 251 individuals, including 62 children.

In Gaza, four children were displaced when Israeli tanks and bulldozers demolished three houses in al Maghazi refugee camp.

Humanitarian access – disruption of education

Eight incidents related to the interference of normal operations at schools were reported since the beginning of year. In the West Bank, the incidents included a school demolition; an act of vandalism by Israeli settlers; and the flooding of a school yard by raw sewage from a nearby Israeli settlement. In Gaza, the incidents involved damages to schools due to Israeli military operations.

There were 26 reported incidents of children being hindered from getting to school; of disruptions in learning; or instances when their safety was compromised. The incidents range from closures of roads or checkpoints; to searches at checkpoints that

Bringing fun to classrooms



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Learning outcomes have plummeted across oPt. Across the West Bank, a UNICEF programme is working to infuse schools in vulnerable areas with much needed and refreshing opportunities for students to play, interact with each other, and learn critical life skills. View the photo essay at:
<http://www.unicef.org/oPt/6163.html>

result in missed classes; and to harassment or more severe cases of settler violence that result in injury to students on their way to school.

Humanitarian access – to healthcare

Children in need of specialised care outside of Gaza continue to face severe access restrictions. Between January and March, the Israeli District Liaison approved 920 out of 1050 cases but delayed 130 applications. Patients who miss their appointments due to delays must re-submit applications for permits to cross Erez and delays can be critical. In January, a two-year-old boy with a congenital heart condition died while waiting for an appointment in Israel that had to be rescheduled due to delays in receiving his permit. Statistics for April are not yet available.

Capacity building on reporting and monitoring grave violations

In 2010, capacity building efforts by the UNICEF-led working group are focused on:

- Development of a 1612 database to provide for strengthened data collection and analysis;
- Training of child protection partners in reporting and monitoring standards, and to strengthen the evidence base on issues related to access to education and settler violence;
- Development of a benchmark study on juvenile justice systems, both civil and military / security, in Israel and oPt.

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Table 1: Number of Palestinian children in Israeli 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								

Source: DCI-Palestine Detention Bulletin April 2010

Table 2

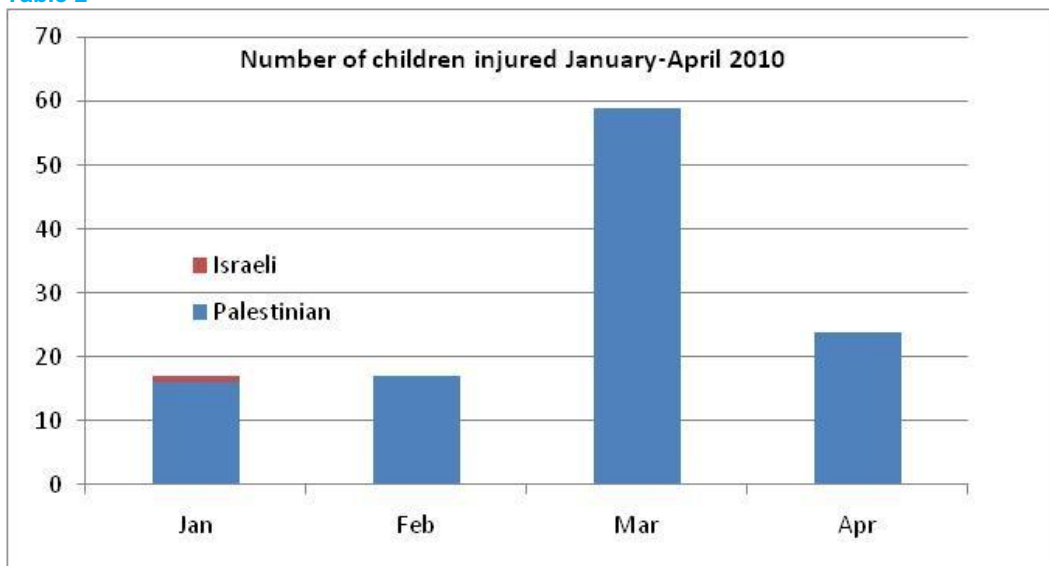
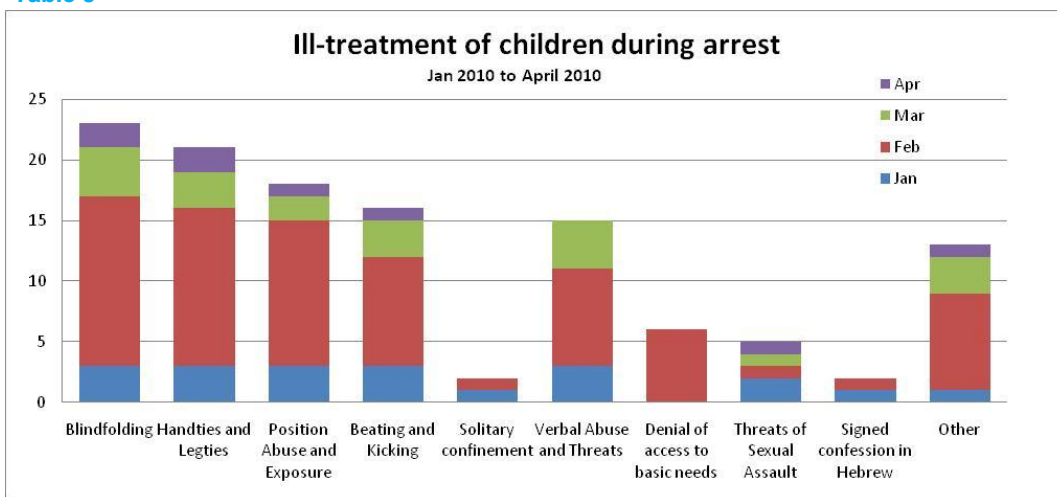


Table 3



New UNICEF photos and video are available to be used by UN agencies, partners, and international media outlets. To request photos, please contact: photo@unicef.org; to get videos, please visit: thenewsmarket.com/unicef

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