

Situation of Concern: Israel and the State of Palestine

Major developments and Context

The present bulletin covers the period 01 January 2019 to 31 December 2019. During this period, children in the State of Palestine and Israel continued to be severely affected by the prevailing situation of military occupation, conflict and closure. The United Nations (UN) verified that 32 Palestinian children and one Israeli child were killed, and 1,539 Palestinian children and eight Israeli children were injured in conflict-related incidents.¹

The 'Great March of Return' (GMR) demonstrations along the perimeter fence separating Israel and the Gaza Strip, initiated on 30 March 2018, continued on an almost-weekly basis throughout 2019. The UN continued to issue calls to all actors to refrain from targeting children, putting children at risk, or encouraging or exploiting children's participation in violence². The UN verified 1,036 Palestinian children injured and 12 killed as a result of Israeli forces' (IF) use of live ammunition, rubber-coated bullets and tear gas canisters against demonstrators. The majority of demonstration-related killings of children were during the first three months of 2019 (seven incidents). Israeli media sources reported during the year that IF amended open-fire regulations to instruct soldiers to shoot only at demonstrators' ankles, and employed a sniper rifle firing a smaller caliber bullet than the 7.62mm round that the IDF indicated it had used since start of the GMR.³ The UN requested the Government of Israel for official confirmation and details on the reported military regulations. The continued use of live ammunition, accounting for 37% of verified injuries, as well as other weapons against children in the context of GMR demonstrations remains a concern. On 25 December 2019, the GMR organizing committee⁴ issued a statement that demonstrations would be held less frequently in 2020, at that time stating that the next one would take place on 30 March 2020, coinciding with Palestinian Land Day⁵.

The reporting period also saw intermittent armed conflict escalations, including two major armed conflict escalations in May and November, during which some 450 airstrikes by Israeli forces on the Gaza Strip and over 1,000 rockets fired towards Israel by Palestinian armed groups. These escalations resulted in grave violations against children in the Gaza Strip and Israel including killing and maiming, as well as disruption to education. In March, a rocket fired from Gaza, attributed to Hamas, destroyed a home in central Israel, injuring three Israeli children. Between 03 to 06 May, Palestinian armed groups fired nearly 700 rockets towards Israel and IF carried out more than 300 strikes in Gaza, resulting in the killing of two Palestinian children by Israel and one Palestinian child by a rocket fired by Palestinian armed groups that fell short and landed on a home in Gaza. Between 12 and 14 November, following the killing of an armed group commander by Israel, IF carried out further airstrikes resulting in the killing of eight and injury of 34 Palestinian children. More than 500 rockets and mortars were fired towards Israel by Palestinian armed groups, some of which landed inside Gaza, injuring seven Palestinian children. All schools

¹ The CAAC Bulletin is based on information verified as part of UN monitoring and reporting on grave violations against children in armed conflict, including the 2019 annual report of the Secretary General on Children and Armed Conflict. It is published to provide additional information on trends and the impact of violations on children and contribute to the evidence base informing programmatic responses for children affected by grave violations. Examples of verified incidents are included in the Bulletin; the level of detail provided regarding each incident varies according to the UN's access to primary and secondary sources to monitor the incident; information provided by those sources; and, in some instances, do no harm and security considerations.

² For example, "Statement of the Humanitarian Coordinator, Mr. Jamie McGoldrick, calling for the protection of children in the Gaza Strip," 10 October 2019.

³ A "Questions and Answers" published on the IDF website in February 2019 states: "Snipers during these events have used industry standard 7.62mm ammunition, in use by many state militaries including NATO members. The IDF has also assessed alternative ammunitions, including the 0.22 gauge, in use in Israel and in the use of other security agencies internationally. However, such means have not found to be suitable for use in this context for a variety of reasons..."

⁴ The 'Higher National Committee' responsible for organizing the GMR is a broad-based coordinating committee including various sectors of Palestinian society, including civil society and Palestinian political factions.

⁵ Note, Land Day demonstrations did not take place on 30 March due to the state of emergency declared throughout the State of Palestine following the onset of the global COVID-19 pandemic; and no further GMR demonstrations have been organized in 2020.

in the Gaza Strip and southern and central Israel were closed during this period. Smaller scale rocket launches and airstrikes occurred throughout 2019, as did periods during which dozens of incendiary balloons were launched from Gaza towards Israel. Israel periodically reduced and sometimes expanded the restricted fishing zone off the Gaza coast.

The occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, was most affected by injuries and detention of Palestinian children by Israeli forces, including verified ill-treatment of at least 166 children during their arrest, transfer, and detention including, inter alia, blindfolds, painful hand ties, physical violence and verbal abuse, solitary confinement, and deprivation of water and food, as well as breaches of due process such as being informed of their rights, or access to a lawyer or parent before or during interrogation⁶. Children in the West Bank were also affected by an 80% increase in education related interferences by IF and Israeli settlers, with a total of 212 verified in 2019 compared to 114 in 2018. In January, Israel unilaterally decided not to renew the mandate of the Temporary International Presence in Hebron (TIPH), and during the reporting period in the H2 area of Hebron 199 injuries to Palestinian children and 101 education interferences, particularly the use of tear gas and other weapons in and near schools resulting in disruption to classes, were verified, representing 44% of all injuries and 48% of all education interferences verified in the West Bank⁷. In East Jerusalem, the situation was tense particularly in the Issawieh neighbourhood following the killing of a young Palestinian adult in June and ongoing Israeli police operations throughout the remainder of the year; the UN verified the detention or arrest of at least 169 Palestinian children in Issawieh by IF during 2019. In August, a 17-year-old Israeli girl was killed by an improvised explosive device in the West Bank. More detailed reports on these incidents are found in this bulletin.

Regarding investigations into previous incidents of killing of children, as of March Israel had announced that it had opened investigations into seven incidents in which Palestinian children were killed by its forces during Gaza demonstrations since March 2018⁸. In October, an IF soldier was demoted in rank and sentenced to one month of military labour as part of a plea bargain⁹ related to an incident in which an unarmed 14-year-old Palestinian boy was shot in the chest and killed during a demonstration at the Gaza fence in on 13 July 2018. The soldier pled guilty and was convicted of “acting without authorization in a manner endangering to life and well-being” reportedly after firing his weapon without permission and inconsistent with rules of engagement, but was not charged with a more serious offence because the military investigation reportedly did not have enough evidence linking the child’s death with the soldier’s gunshot¹⁰. Following the killing of five children and adult family members in an IF airstrike on a residence in the central Gaza Strip in November 2019, IF announced it would investigate the incident. In the West Bank, media reported in March that Israel’s Military Police Investigations Unit (MPIU) opened an investigation into the IF killing of a 17-year old paramedic in the al-Dheisheh refugee camp. In November, it was reported that the Military Advocate General (MAG), responsible for internal investigations of incidents involving the IDF, closed the investigations into two incidents in which two Palestinian boys were killed by IF in the West Bank in January and February 2018. No further information was reported.

⁶ Refer to section on Detention of children for further details.

⁷ In comparison, in 2018 H2 accounted for 17% of child injuries in the West Bank (246/1,421) and 30% of education related violations (35/118).

⁸ In the period from March 2018 and March 2019, 40 Palestinian children were killed by IF in demonstrations at the Gaza fence.

⁹ The “Questions and Answers” published on the IDF website (see footnote 3) includes a section on Investigation of Allegations of Misconduct which summarizes the judgment, noting that the soldier was demoted to private and also received a 60-day suspended sentence.

¹⁰ For more information, see also: Ensuring accountability and justice for all violations of international law in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem: Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, A/HRC/43/21, 15 January 2020, paragraph 25. The report observes that: “The offence that forms the basis for the conviction and the leniency of the sentence appear starkly inconsistent with the gravity of the conduct, casting serious doubts on the effectiveness of the Israeli internal investigation and prosecution system to ensure accountability for human rights and international humanitarian law violations in line with international standards. The case appears also to highlight structural limitations inherent to the Israeli military justice system in focusing on the responsibility of soldiers in complying with orders and standard operating procedures, without addressing the legality of those same rules of engagement and the connected responsibility of military commanders.”

Recruitment and use of children

The military wings of Palestinian factions in Gaza, including the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ)'s al-Quds Brigades and Hamas' al-Qassam Brigades, organized summer camps for young adults and children as young as 14, which exposed participants to military content and activities. The UN did not receive reports of individual cases or patterns of recruitment connected to camp activities, although the exposure of children to violence and their mass participation in military-style activities alongside adult participants and organized by members of armed groups raised protection concerns.

The camps' activities and opening and closing ceremonies were covered in local and social media, including hundreds of photos and videos of young people in military style activities and brandishing mock and real weapons. Information circulated by armed groups indicated that al-Quds Brigades targeted 3,000 participants aged 15-25 in all five governorates of the Gaza Strip in two camps referred to as "Glory 2" and "Glory 3", with content including inter alia political and religious topics, physical training, first aid, and military-style activities, starting on 29 June. Meanwhile Hamas' al-Qassam Brigades, reached 35,000 participants aged 14 and older through "Pioneers for Liberation" camps starting on 20 July and held for two weeks throughout the Gaza Strip. The UN used direct and indirect contacts to remind camp organizers that such activities are inappropriate for children and unnecessarily expose them to violence.

Killing and maiming

Killing

The United Nations verified a total of 32 Palestinian children (29 boys and three girls, aged between four months and 17 years) who were killed in the occupied West Bank including East Jerusalem (5), and the Gaza Strip (27), marking a decline from 59 in 2018. The 32 Palestinian children were killed by Israeli forces (29), a Palestinian armed group (1), and two boys were killed by accidents involving unexploded ordnance not attributed to any party to the conflict.

One 17-year-old Israeli girl was killed by an improvised explosive device near the Dolev settlement in the West Bank in August 2019, attributed to unidentified perpetrators¹¹.

All five of the Palestinian children killed in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, were killed by Israeli forces (four boys and one girl, aged 14-17). A 17-year-old boy was shot and killed by IF stationed in a watchtower near Silwad, east of Ramallah, allegedly after throwing stones at Israeli cars, and a 16-year-old boy was shot and killed near the separation barrier between Jerusalem and Bethlehem. In the Dheisheh refugee camp, a 17-year-old male refugee and volunteer paramedic wearing a first-responder vest with the universal protective emblem was shot in the stomach and killed while responding to injuries following an IF arrest operation in the camp, and subsequent clashes. One 14-year-old boy and one 17-year-old girl were shot and killed in the context of confirmed or alleged stabbing attacks.¹²

¹¹ The UN could not independently verify the perpetrator of the attack. The Israel Security Agency (ISA) reported it had arrested several individuals suspected of being linked with the attack or with organizations allegedly involved in the preparation of the attack, particularly the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. Many of those arrested reported serious ill-treatment during their detention; see: "Israeli practices affecting the human rights of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem: Report of the Secretary General," A/75/336, 1 September 2020, paras. 14-18

¹² In the incident in which the 14-year-old was killed after stabbing a Police officer in the Old City of Jerusalem, police officers shot the boy several times at close range, including after he had already fallen injured to the ground, raising concerns of possible excessive use of force. According to a witness and health providers, IF then prevented a Palestinian paramedic from providing medical assistance to the injured 16-year-old boy who had participated in the attack. In the latter incident, a 16-year-old girl was shot after an alleged stabbing attempt on a police officer at al-Zayim checkpoint; IF reportedly prevented a PRCS ambulance from reaching the fatally wounded girl.

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Of the 27 Palestinian children killed in the Gaza Strip, 24 (23 boys and one girl aged four months to 17) were killed by IF. Twelve boys were killed by IF in the context of demonstrations at the Gaza-Israel fence, including the “Great March of Return” demonstrations which continued in 2019.¹³ Of these, eight died as a result of being shot with live ammunition in the upper body, while four died after being shot in the head with other weapons.¹⁴ For example, on 08 February east of Khan Younis, a 13-year-old boy was shot by IF in the chest and killed approximately 200-300 meters from the fence. On 11 January east of Jabalia, a 13-year-old boy was shot in the head with a tear gas canister while standing among other demonstrators assembled 150-300 meters from the fence, fracturing his skull and causing a brain injury; he was pronounced dead three days later. Of continued concern was the targeted use of lethal force against children who were unarmed and not appearing to pose an imminent threat of death or risk of serious injury to Israeli forces’ soldiers on the other side of the fence.¹⁵

Outside the context of demonstrations, one 14-year-old boy was shot in the head and killed by IF at the fence while attending ‘night disruption’ activities; according to eyewitnesses he was standing approximately 200 meters from the fence inside Gaza and holding a poster of another 14-year-old who had been killed two weeks prior, when he was shot in the forehead with live ammunition.¹⁶ Another 15-year-old boy was fatally shot by IF after crossing the fence at night with two other boys, one of whom was also injured; the two survivors were detained.¹⁷

Ten children (nine boys and one girl, aged four months to 17 years) were killed during IF airstrikes on the Gaza Strip during conflict escalations in May and November 2019. Seven of these children were inside their homes when they were killed, including five boys (aged 1-13) killed in one incident on 14 November which injured seven other children at the same location.

One 14-month-old girl was also killed by a Palestinian armed group during the May escalation, when a projectile apparently mis-fired and exploded on the victim’s home.

Two boys aged ten and 13 were killed in Gaza in incidents not attributed to any party, after they mishandled unexploded ordinances found in or near their homes.

¹³ Information regarding the killing and maiming of children in the context of the Great March of Return prior to 2019 is included in the 2018 CAAC Bulletin: <https://www.unicef.org/sop/reports/annual-caac-bulletin-2018>

¹⁴ Three boys were confirmed to have killed by tear gas canisters fired by IF. A fourth boy was killed during demonstrations by a weapon fired by IF, thought to be a tear gas canister, which could not be conclusively identified from the fragments recovered from the child’s large wound.

¹⁵ A “Questions and Answers” published on the IDF website in February 2019 states that: “According to IDF Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), in contexts such as the Gaza border events, potentially lethal force may only be used in circumstances in which there is a real and imminent danger to human life or bodily integrity” and that: “When employing potentially lethal force, IDF forces aim to wound and not to kill. In order to achieve this, IDF forces are required to aim below the knee and do not aim live ammunition at the center of body mass.”

¹⁶ The night disruption activities have occurred periodically from August 2018 onwards, outside official demonstration times to harass IF stationed at the fence. The activities often involved participants chanting slogans, making noise, shining lights and lasers, burning tires, damaging the fence, and launching homemade fireworks and firecrackers or incendiary kites.

¹⁷ UN documentation indicates the boys attempted to cross into Israel on their own initiative.

Maiming and Injuries

In 2019, the UN verified a total of 1,547 conflict-related injuries to 1,539 Palestinian and eight Israeli children (1,465 boys and 82 girls). Injuries to Palestinian children were attributed to Israeli forces (1,496), Israeli settlers (19), Palestinian armed groups (7) and accidents involving explosive remnants of war (17) while injuries to Israeli children were attributed to Hamas (3) and Palestinian perpetrators without a known affiliation (5). In the Gaza Strip, 37% of verified child injuries attributed to IF in the context of GMR demonstrations were due to live ammunition, compared to 48% in 2018. In the occupied West Bank, 61% of verified child injuries were a result of tear gas inhalation, the majority of which occurred in densely populated urban areas and while children were at or on the way to school, compared to 70% in 2018.

The UN also verified conflict-related injuries to eight Israeli children (three girls and five boys, aged 6 months to 17 years). In March, three Israeli children were injured by a rocket fired from the Gaza Strip which hit a residential building in central Israel, attributed to Hamas. Two children were injured in incidents in the Old City of Jerusalem; for example, in May, a 16-year-old Israeli boy was injured in a stabbing attack by a Palestinian man. One seven-year-old child was shot in the hand and injured in the Beit El settlement in Ramallah by an unknown perpetrator, and two children were injured in Qalqiliya including a 17-year-old Israeli boy injured in a stabbing incident in which the perpetrator was a 15-year-old Palestinian boy.

In the West Bank including East Jerusalem, of the 449 Palestinian children (26 girls and 423 boys) injured, 425 were attributed to IF. These children were injured by live ammunition (33), ammunition shrapnel (2), rubber-coated metal bullets (80), tear gas canisters (9), tear gas inhalation (273), sound grenades (1), physical assault (22), and five children were injured when IF fired a tear gas canister towards their car, causing it to overturn. Most incidents occurred in the context of demonstrations, clashes and IF operations. For example, on 12 July in Kafr Qaddum, a nine-year-old boy was shot in the forehead by IF with an unidentified ammunition¹⁰ fracturing his skull and causing a severe brain injury, while weekly demonstrations and clashes were taking place. The victim was in front of a house approximately 150 meters distance and downhill from where a smaller group of youth were throwing stones towards IF stationed on a hill, and far away from the main clashes. On 18 April in Tuqu' near Bethlehem, a 16-year old boy who had been detained, blindfolded and handtied by IF, was shot once in his right thigh with live ammunition when he tried to stand up from a kneeling position, and again in the back of his left thigh when he attempted to run away. Among the West Bank injuries, two Palestinian boys aged 14 and 15 years-old were injured while committing or allegedly attempting to commit stabbing attempts against IF.

A further 19 Palestinian children (18 boys and one girl) were injured by Israeli settlers in Hebron, Jenin, Ramallah and East Jerusalem in attacks with pepper spray, stones, and physical assault. For example, on 23 November in Hebron's H2 area, four adult settlers physically assaulted, tied the hands and pepper-sprayed the face a 10-year-old Palestinian boy, reportedly while an IF soldier deployed at the entrance to Kiryat Arba' settlement witnessed and did not attempt to stop the assault.

¹⁰ IF reported that the injury was caused by a rubber-coated metal bullet

Also in the West Bank, a further five Palestinian boys were injured by accidents involving explosive remnants of war, ordnances in two incidents in Bethlehem and Tubas. These injuries were not attributed to a party to the conflict.

In Gaza, the UN verified ¹⁹ 1,036 Palestinian children injured (39 girls and 997 boys) by IF and hospitalized in 2019 as a result of injuries in the context of the Great March of Return. Of these, 381 children were injured by live ammunition (37%), 302 by tear gas canisters (29%), 149 by rubber-coated bullets (14%), 119 by shrapnel (11%), and 85 seriously injured by tear gas inhalation (8%). Several of these children have disabling injuries and are still undertaking treatment, including at least 10 children who had limbs amputated in 2019. The UN could not verify all reported injuries in 2019 nor the circumstances due to the magnitude of the caseload, immediate response needs, and time required to identify and follow up with injured children following their release from hospital.

Outside the context of demonstrations, one 15-year-old boy was verified to have been shot by IF with live ammunition, after crossing the fence into Israel at night along with two other boys, one of whom was killed. The bullet fractured his right femur before exiting the back of his leg. The child was treated in Israel before being returned to Gaza. Eight months after the incident, he continued to have difficulty walking and required follow-up surgeries to treat the injury.

Also in Gaza, 34 Palestinian children (22 boys and 12 girls) in Gaza were verified injured during IF airstrikes on 12-14 November, while seven children (six boys, one girl) were injured by rockets fired by Palestinian armed groups that landed inside Gaza.²⁰

A further 12 children (eleven boys and one girl, aged 8-16) were injured in Gaza in accidents involving explosive remnants of war. These injuries were not attributed to any party to the conflict.

Detention of children

A high number of Palestinian children were arrested and detained by IF for alleged security related offences, though the total number detained in the occupied West Bank could not be independently verified by the UN.²¹ According to Israel Prison Services (IPS) data, between January and December there was a monthly average of 198 Palestinian children in detention from the West Bank including East Jerusalem,²² with a total of 186 children detained at the end of December, including four children held in administrative detention (2%)²³, 127 children held in pretrial detention and/or during trial (68%), and 55 serving a sentence (30%). More than half (53%) of these children were detained in facilities inside Israel, outside the occupied West Bank. Most children whose testimony was received and analyzed by the UN were accused of throwing stones and some for throwing Molotov cocktails, offences which can carry a penalty of up to 20 years' imprisonment.

¹⁹ A total of 1,889 children (61 girls and 1,828 boys) injured in the context of demonstrations and hospitalized in 2019 were reported to the UN in 2019. While 1,037 cases were verified during 2019, verification of additional cases is ongoing.

²⁰ Palestinian Islamic Jihad appears to have been responsible for the vast majority of rockets fired towards Israel during the 12-14 November escalation, however this incident could not be conclusively attributed to a PIJ rocket.

²¹ Israel Police data on arrests of minors, provided in response to Freedom of Information requests by non-governmental organizations, indicated that 855 Palestinian children (6 girls) were arrested in the West Bank and 547 Palestinian children (2 girls) were arrested in East Jerusalem in 2019. Note, data is not disaggregated according to children arrested on suspicion of "security" offences vs regular criminal offences.

²² According to 2019 IPS data, on a monthly basis between 21% and 37% of detained Palestinian children were serving a sentence, while between 63% and 79% were held in pre-trial detention, during proceedings, or on administrative detention orders.

²³ I.e., detained on security grounds and without being charged, for periods ranging from three to six months, after which an administrative detention order may be renewed for the further term or the child is released.

The Government of Israel informed the UN of amendments made in 2019 to military orders pertaining to arrest and detention of Palestinian children in the West Bank. These amendments were related to changes to the statute of limitations for offences committed by minors²⁴; establishing that hearings involving minors are to be held behind closed doors as a default practice to protect the privacy of minors; and allowing the military court to request a probation officer report to inform proceedings.

The UN supported the provision of legal assistance to 374 children (including one girl) aged between 12 and 17 years-old who were arrested in East Jerusalem, including 169 children detained in Issawieh.²⁵ The UN also documented five cases of administrative detention (i.e. detention without charges) in 2019, compared to four cases in 2018 in the West Bank, as well as eight cases of children aged between 13 and 15 years from East Jerusalem under open-ended house arrest.

Palestinian Children in Israeli Detention Facilities (Source: IPS)

| Year | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec | Avg |
|------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 2010 | 314 | 338 | 337 | 328 | 300 | 287 | 281 | 280 | 264 | 251 | 226 | 210 | 285 |
| 2011 | 221 | 216 | 224 | 217 | 211 | 207 | 201 | 176 | 162 | 150 | 159 | 132 | 190 |
| 2012 | 166 | 183 | 203 | 218 | 231 | 220 | 210 | 194 | 189 | 164 | 177 | 193 | 196 |
| 2013 | 219 | 234 | 236 | 236 | 223 | 193 | 195 | 180 | 179 | 159 | 173 | 154 | 215 |
| 2014 | 183 | 210 | 202 | 196 | 215 | 202 | 192 | 201 | 182 | 163 | 156 | 151 | 188 |
| 2015 | 163 | 182 | 182 | 164 | 163 | 160 | 153 | 156 | 171 | 307 | 407 | 422 | 219 |
| 2016 | 406 | 438 | 444 | 414 | 332 | 300 | 343 | 319 | 271 | 285 | 284 | 275 | 343 |
| 2017 | 301 | 297 | 289 | 303 | 331 | 318 | 304 | 297 | 325 | 318 | 313 | 352 | 312 |
| 2018 | 351 | 356 | 304 | 315 | 291 | 273 | 251 | 239 | 230 | 220 | 217 | 203 | 271 |
| 2019 | 209 | 205 | 215 | 205 | 201 | 210 | 210 | 185 | 188 | 185 | 182 | 186 | 198 |

Ill-treatment, including breaches of due process, during arrest, transfer, interrogation, and detention by Israeli Defense Forces (IDF), Israeli Police, the Israeli Security Agency, and the IPS continued to be reported by a substantial proportion of interviewed children. The UN documented 166 cases (165 boys and one girl aged between 12 and 17 years old in the West Bank (132) and East Jerusalem (34), of which 113 (68%) reported being subject to at least ten different forms of ill-treatment and breaches of due process, including the following:

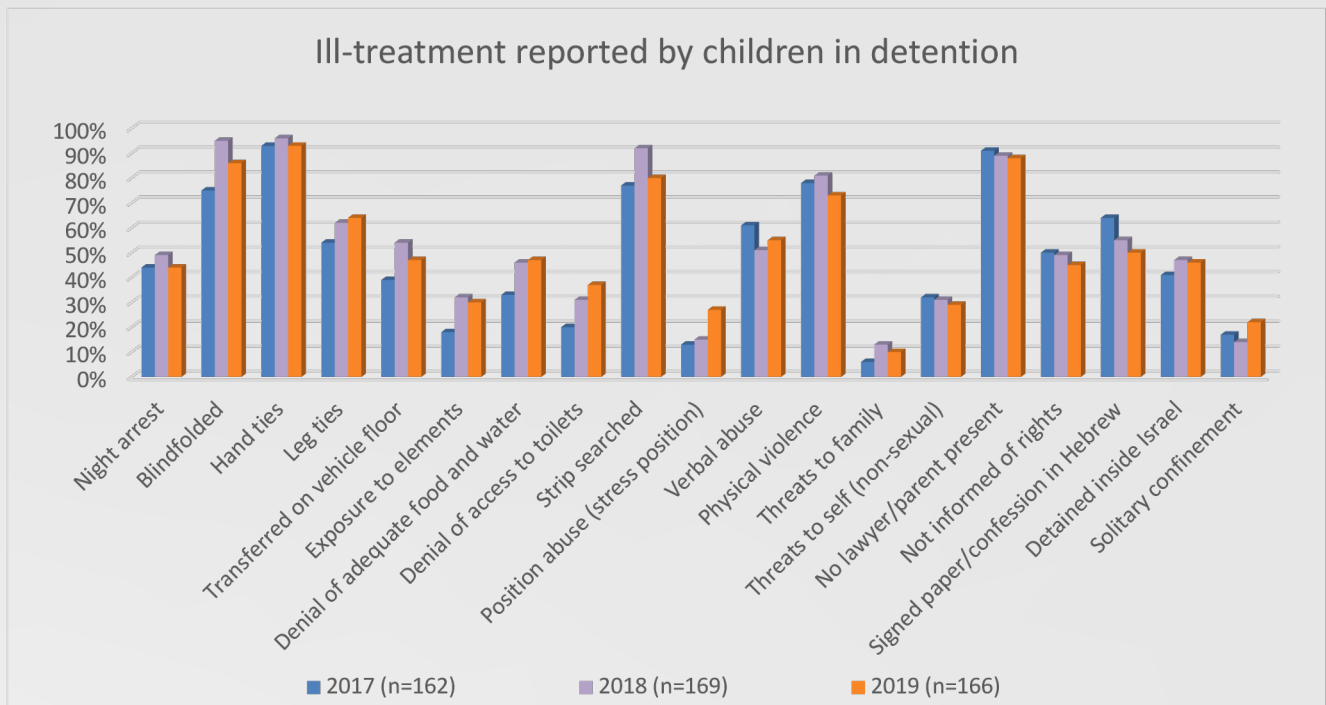
²⁴ Specifically, that minors will not be indicted if one year (minor offences) or two years (severe offences) have passed since the alleged offence.

²⁵ Six additional boys aged between 7 and 11 years – below the age of criminal responsibility under Israeli civil law – were also verified to have been detained, all of whom received legal aid services.

- 73 children (44% of those who provided testimonies) were arrested from home at night during planned arrest operations.
- 83 children (50% of those who provided testimonies) reported that they had to sign a document in Hebrew, a language that they do not understand.
- 143 children (86% of those who provided testimonies) reported that they had been blindfolded during transfer from the place of arrest and that they remained blindfolded sometimes even during interrogation.
- 155 children (93% of those who provided testimonies) reported that they were handtied upon arrest, including 121 children (68%) who reported that a painful method of hand-tying was used, 107 children (64%) reported being leg-tied, and 78 (47%) that they were transferred on the floor of a vehicle.
- 121 children (73% of those who provided testimonies) reported that they endured physical violence, including slapping, punching and kicking during arrest, transfer, interrogation and/or detention.
- 92 children (55% of those who provided testimonies) reported that they were verbally abused and intimidated during arrest, transfer, interrogation and/or detention.
- 74 children (45% of those who provided testimonies) reported not being adequately notified of their legal rights, in particular the right to counsel and the right to remain silent.
- 36 children (22% of those who provided testimonies), between 15 and 17 years, reported that they had been held in solitary confinement during interrogations, i.e. held in a cell alone for periods ranging between six and 28 days, without daylight, and purposely no access to other children simultaneously held in detention, family or lawyer.²⁶
- 146 children (88% of those who provided testimonies) reported that neither a parent nor a lawyer was present during their interrogation.
- 78 children (47% of those who provided testimonies) reported that they were not provided with adequate food or water and 61 children (37% of those who provided testimonies) reported that they were not given access to toilets during the initial stages of detention, particularly at stages of arrest, transfer and interrogation.
- 50 children (30% of those who provided testimonies) reported that they were exposed to outside elements during the initial stages of detention, particularly at stages of arrest, transfer and while being held prior to interrogation. This includes children being arrested and forced to stay outside during cold or hot weather for prolonged periods of time, including sometimes on their knees and/or hand-tied.
- 48 children (29% of those who provided testimonies) reported that they had been threatened in order to confess, during transfer and /or interrogation.
- 17 children (10% of those who provided testimonies) reported threats of harm to their family members during interrogation.

One detained 17-year-old Palestinian boy also reported that IF attempted to recruit him as an informant. Another child reported being threatened with sexual violence during his interrogation by the ISA – in addition to being beaten, punched in the face and body, kicked ‘between the legs’, and beaten over the head with a cord. The same child reported that he told a police interrogator that he had only confessed because of the threats and ill-treatment – and that the ISA interrogator subsequently made threats against his family to coerce him to retract his complaint to the police.

²⁶ This includes cases in which children were held in solitary confinement while undergoing an interrogation by the Israel Security Agency (ISA, or “Shabak”)



The UN also documented two Palestinian boys (aged 16 and 17) from Gaza detained by the de facto authorities in Gaza on charges of undermining national security, who remained in detention as of the end of 2019. The children were held at a facility for adults, and their case raised concerns as to the violation of fair trial guarantees, including access to a lawyer and family visits.²⁷

Education-related incidents²⁶

In 2019, 257 education-related incidents were documented by the UN in the occupied West Bank including East Jerusalem (227) and the Gaza Strip (30). In particular, children’s access to education was significantly hampered by clashes and the use of tear gas and other weapons in and around schools, search and arrest operations, restrictions of access to schools, settler violence incidents affecting schools, arrest and intimidation of school children and teachers, as well as a climate of fear and tension in and around some schools due to military presence. Conflict escalations including airstrikes and rocket fire also hampered safe access to education for children in Gaza and southern and central Israel during the reporting period.

In the West Bank, 15 incidents entailing threats and intimidation by Israeli forces (8 incidents) and Israeli settlers (7) against teachers and/or pupils were verified. For example, in September while children were leaving an Area C school two IF jeeps with approximately seven soldiers parked in front of the school entrance, blocking students’ way out. When the school headmaster requested the forces to move to allow children to leave, two soldiers grabbed two of the students by their hands and another soldier pointed a rifle towards the headmaster’s face and threatened to enter the school and physically assault children and school personnel. Investigation of this incident by the Government of Israel is ongoing.

²⁷ Palestinian children are also detained by forces of the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank and de facto authorities (Hamas) in the Gaza Strip for alleged criminal offences. Those detentions are not covered in the UN Children and Armed Conflict reporting since these are not on security grounds or related to conflict-activity. Regardless of the scope of the CAAC Bulletin, juvenile justice and the detention of children is a core part of UNICEF’s global mandate as defined in the CRC. UNICEF advocates with all parties for respect of the CRC, whereby detention of children should be only as a measure of last resort. UNICEF has supported the development of legislation in Palestine which commits the state to alternatives to detention and specialized services for children in contact with the law, while working with partners to document issues around detention of children and provide services to detained children

²⁶ Education-related violations are reported here in accordance with UNSCR 1998 and subsequent guidance note (2014) available under: <https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/publications/AttacksOnSchoolsHospitals.pdf>. The Guidance Note explains that: “The general notion of attacks on schools and hospitals will be further disaggregated for monitoring and reporting purposes into “education-related” and “health care-related” incidents” while noting that “not all acts affecting education and health care during armed conflict are violations of international law”. The Note further suggests the following breakdown for education-related incidents: attacks on schools; attacks on educational personnel; threats of attacks; military use of schools; and other interferences with education.

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A further 242 incidents of other interferences with education by IF (229 violations) and Israeli settlers (13 violations), affecting 48,016 Palestinian children, were verified in the West Bank (212) and the Gaza Strip (30). This included four verified incidents of military use of a school by IF in the West Bank.

More than half of all verified interferences with education in the West Bank involved IF firing live ammunition, tear gas, or sound grenades in and around schools, mostly in the context of clashes or military operations (117 incidents). Forty-eight per cent of all interference incidents in the West Bank took place in the H2 area of Hebron governorate (101 incidents²⁹), of which 37 incidents affected in a single school. In addition, the United Nations verified 13 incidents in which students lost school time as a result of military closures, mainly in Salfit and Hebron Governorates. Schools continued to face threats of demolition and/or confiscation by IF, with four (4) incidents verified of schools in the West Bank receiving demolition orders and/or stop-work orders, and a partial demolition of a school in Area C of Hebron governorate.

The Urif Secondary School in Nablus Governorate, where education-related incidents have been verified by the UN since 2012, continued to be impacted with 13 verified interferences during 2019 by Israeli settlers (4) from the nearby Yitzhar settlement and IF (9)³⁰.

IF detention of children while commuting to/ from school and within school premises remain of concern, with 37 verified incidents during the reporting period. On 19 March 2019, armed IF forcibly entered Ziad Jaber elementary School in H2 to detain two students, aged seven and nine, over alleged stone-throwing. After a prolonged stand-off and physical altercations between the teachers and the IF, the Israeli forces detained the nine-year old, unaccompanied, and held him for one hour. Israeli authorities have reported steps taken to regulate the presence of military in and around schools and to regulate the use of weapons in these areas. The UN welcomes more information and details on such regulations and the chance to continue dialogue on this issue to reduce the negative impact on children's education.

Conflict escalations again caused significant disruptions to children's education in Gaza and Israel when schools were closed for the safety of students and educators³¹. Rocket fire by Palestinian armed groups, on the one hand, and air strikes by Israeli forces on Gaza, on the other, each caused preventive school closures for five days, affecting 1.3 million children respectively.

In 2019, social media of the Gaza National Security Forces (Hamas) and website of the Gaza Ministry of Interior on several occasions published photos of uniformed personnel conducting visits to schools in the Gaza Strip to observe implementation of the "al-Futuwwa" youth program, while male students conducted physical exercises, which included students holding wooden mock rifles and standing in formations, marching and assuming firing positions. The UN reiterated calls for children not to be exposed to violence and for schools in particular to be always protected from entry of military personnel.

²⁹ Compared to 35 interferences affecting H2 schools verified in 2018.

³⁰ See for example, Children and Armed Conflict: Report of the Secretary General, S/2013/245, 15 May 2013, paragraph 118.

³¹ In the Israel-SOP Situation of Concern, precautionary closures of education facilities by relevant authorities have been widely reported but not counted as education-related violations in past reporting cycles. The above examples are included here for context on how armed conflict impacts education of children in The Gaza Strip and southern Israel, however these figures are not included in overall count of education related violations or affected children.

Health-related incidents

The UN verified one incident of an attack on health in Gaza, in which the main ambulance station of the Ministry of Health was damaged by IF airstrikes on a nearby residential building, which also resulted in damage to four ambulances. The health facility was not directly struck. In three other incidents, IF fired tear gas at medical points set up near demonstration sites in Gaza, resulting in interruption of delivery of services due to gas inhalation injuries among staff, or complete evacuation of the medical point. A total of 274 medical personnel were injured by IF in 164 incidents whilst providing medical services to persons injured during demonstrations at the fence. The injuries were due to live ammunition (4) and ammunition shrapnel (6), rubber bullets (44), tear gas canisters (62), and tear gas inhalation (158).

The UN also verified 23 incidents in which Israeli forces attacked health personnel in the occupied West Bank, affecting 33 personnel³², including the killing in March of a 17-year-old first responder working with the Palestinian Medical Relief Society, who was shot in the stomach with live ammunition by IF following an IF arrest operation and ensuing clashes in Dheisheh refugee camp in Bethlehem governorate³³.

A further 18 incidents in the West Bank were recorded, in which IF delayed or prevented the delivery of healthcare but in which there was no documented impact on children.

Denial of humanitarian access for children

Four incidents of denial of humanitarian access by Israeli forces were verified in the occupied West Bank including East Jerusalem, in which medical and other emergency services were prevented from reaching injured and fatally injured children. Three incidents involved IF preventing ambulances and paramedics from reaching injured children, one of whom was an 18-month old child injured by settler violence in Hebron's H2 area; and two of whom were children injured while carrying out alleged stabbing attempts. In the fourth incident IF delayed emergency vehicles attempting to respond to a house fire in the H2 area, in which three children under the age of five (one girl, two boys) died³⁴. A Palestine Red Crescent Society ambulance and firefighters were delayed for at least 20 minutes at the Giv'Avot checkpoint, where IF threatened to shoot one firefighter if his vehicle proceeded past the checkpoint.

Children in need of specialized medical care outside of the Gaza Strip continued to face delays and denials when accessing health services. Children's access to health services may also be affected by Israeli authorities' delay or denial of permits for accompanying adult relatives to cross into or through Israel, and the non-approval of financial support from the Palestinian Authority.

³¹ In the Israel-SOP Situation of Concern, precautionary closures of education facilities by relevant authorities have been widely reported but not counted as education-related violations in past reporting cycles. The above examples are included here for context on how armed conflict impacts education of children in The Gaza Strip and southern Israel, however these figures are not included in overall count of education related violations or affected children.

³² All incidents occurred while personnel were carrying out their duties as health workers. Full disaggregation of verified incidents: health personnel were shot with live ammunition (2 incidents/ 2 personnel), rubber bullets (5 incidents/ 5 personnel), tear gas canisters (two incidents/ two personnel); affected by tear gas inhalation inside an ambulance at which tear gas was directly fired (one incident/ three personnel); physically assaulted (two incidents / three personnel); detained by IF while attempting to responding to injuries (two incidents affecting two personnel).

³³ Incident was also reported under Killing and Maiming.

³⁴ Incident was not reported under Killing and Maiming as the fire which caused the death of the children was not a conflict-related incident.

- Erez: In 2019, the Israeli District Liaison Office approved without delay 5,460³⁵ out of 7,564 applications (72%) for children to cross through the Erez terminal for medical treatment outside of the Gaza Strip (compared to 5,732 out of 7,604 applications (75%) in 2018), with the approval rate declining over the course of 2019, from 78% in Q1 to 65% in Q4. 1,747 (23%) applications were delayed (affecting 1,049 boys and 698 girls)³⁷ while 357 (5%) were denied (affecting 224 boys and 133 girls), compared to 104 denied child applications in 2018. Permit applications for 20 children injured during Gaza demonstrations were approved at a rate of 15% compared to 72% for other children³⁶, while five applications were denied (25%) and 12 applications were delayed (60%).
- Rafah: Between January and December 2019, the Egyptian side of the Rafah border with the Gaza Strip was open in both directions for 200 days, allowing at least 8,904 patients³⁹ to cross into Egypt for health care (no disaggregated data available for children). This is compared to 1,513 patients in 2018.

Demolition and displacement

In 2019, the UN verified 579 demolitions and seizures of Palestinian-owned structures by Israeli authorities in the occupied West Bank including East Jerusalem, displacing 781 people including 373 children. Another 65,434 persons, including 29,837 children, were also affected by the demolitions, through reduced access to basic services and impact on their livelihood. Of the 579 demolished and seized structures, including 127 donor-funded structures, 401 (69%) were in Area C, 154 (27%) were in East Jerusalem, and 14 structures were punitively demolished (2%) in Area A and Area B of the West Bank. A further ten structures were demolished after Israel's High Court ruled in favor of demolishing structures within a buffer zone of 100-300 meters from the separation wall. Most demolitions occurred on the grounds of lack of building permits, which are nearly impossible for Palestinians to acquire. Out of the 579 demolished structures, 145 structures were Palestinian inhabited residencies and 434 other structures, which included uninhabited residential, agricultural and livelihood structures. A further 61 structures were self-demolished by Palestinian owners due to the threat of extremely high fines and cost of demolition imposed on Palestinians for demolitions carried out by Israeli authorities.

Children were also displaced as a result of armed conflict incidents in Gaza. On 26 March, IF airstrikes which damaged residential buildings displaced 83 individuals, including 44 children. During the 04-05 May escalation, IF airstrikes destroyed more than 30 residential buildings and displaced 52 families comprising 327 people, including 65 children under five. During the 12-14 November escalation, IF airstrikes destroyed 12 residential buildings and displaced 24 families comprising 135 people, including 48 children under five.

³⁵ Approvals were for 3,198 boys and 2,262 girls. According to information provided separately by the Government of Israel, 5,682 children from Gaza were treated in hospitals in the West Bank and Israel in 2019, while the GOI issued 100 permits for East Jerusalem based medical personal to enter Gaza to provide medical assistance. The UN could not independently verify these figures.

³⁶ i.e., receiving no definitive response from authorities by the time of their hospital appointment

³⁷ In some cases, delayed applications received approval after a hospital appointment was lost due to delay. In 2019, 367 of the delayed cases subsequently received approval within the 25 days following their missed hospital appointment.

³⁸ The 15% approval rate for injured children declined from 2018, when 22% of such applications were approved.

³⁹ Note, data on patient crossings was not available for January-March 2019.