

# Situation of Concern: Israel and the State of Palestine

## CAAC Bulletin 2021

### Semi-Annual Children and Armed Conflict (CAAC) Bulletin, January to June 2021

The data included in this Bulletin is based on UN monitoring and verification of grave violations against children in Israel and the State of Palestine during the first half of 2021. Another Bulletin covers the second half of 2021. The CAAC Bulletins are prepared to provide specific information on trends and the impact of conflict-related violence on children and to inform UN dialogue with parties to the conflict on measures to prevent and end grave violations of children's rights<sup>1</sup>, in line with recommendations included in the UN Secretary General's Annual Reports on Children and Armed Conflict: *"I reiterate my call upon all parties to continue to engage with my Special Representative and the United Nations, including at the country level, to end and prevent grave violations against children and to better protect children and respect international humanitarian law and international human rights law"*<sup>2</sup>.

### Major developments and Context

During the first six months of 2021 children continued to be affected by ongoing armed conflict, including Israel's military occupation, the closure of Gaza, and recurrent escalations of hostilities. This included increased violence and tensions in East Jerusalem and the rest of the occupied West Bank from April 2021, and the most serious escalation of armed conflict since 2014 between Gaza armed groups and Israeli forces, between 10 and 21 May 2021.

During the escalation of hostilities, Palestinian armed groups, including Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad, launched more than 4,300 rockets and mortars, most of which were fired towards Israeli communities, including from highly populated civilian neighbourhoods, without aiming at a specific military target, resulting in Israeli children killed and injured, and significant damage to civilian objects including schools. Palestinian children were also killed and injured by rockets fired by armed groups which landed in Gaza. Israeli forces (IF) conducted more than 1,500 airstrikes in the Gaza Strip as well as shelling from land and sea; IF stated that it targeted members of armed groups and their military infrastructure, and in some instances adopted precautions including warnings<sup>3</sup>. IF strikes resulted in children killed and injured, as well as large-scale destruction and damages to civilian objects and infrastructure, including hospitals and schools.

The increased violence in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, also resulted in Palestinian children killed, injured, and detained, including cases raising concerns of excessive use of force, as Palestinians demonstrated against Israel's occupation and related settlement expansion, as well as clashes between IF and Palestinians.

### Killing and Maiming

Between January and June 2021 at least 915 Palestinian children were killed (77) and maimed (838) and eight Israeli children were killed (2) and maimed (6). These incidents were in Gaza (704), the occupied West Bank including East Jerusalem (214), and Israel (5).

#### Gaza

In Gaza, during the escalation of hostilities between 10 and 21 May, 60 Palestinian children (39 boys and 21 girls) were killed by Israeli forces<sup>4</sup>, raising concerns regarding Israeli forces' observance of IHL principles of distinction, precautions and proportionality<sup>5</sup>. One 17-year-old child killed in an IF strike was a member of an armed group (see Recruitment and Use of Children below), although it was not confirmed if he was participating in hostilities at the time he was killed. Another 538 Palestinian children were seriously injured in IF strikes during the escalation.

<sup>1</sup> Data and information included in this bulletin is aligned with the 2021 Annual Report of the Secretary General on Children and Armed Conflict (A/76/871-S/2022/493, 23 June 2022). In addition to summary data reflecting trends of grave violations, the Bulletin includes specific emblematic examples of incidents verified by the UN, in order to trigger dialogue on measures to prevent the recurrence of such incidents.

<sup>2</sup> A/76/871-S/2022/493, paragraph 92.

<sup>3</sup> According to a document published online by the IF in relation to its 10-21 May operation, dubbed "Operation Guardian of the Walls": "The IDF took all possible precautions to avoid harming civilians during operational activities. Some of the advance warning methods that the IDF uses include messages to civilians, 'roof knocking' and phone calls."

<sup>4</sup> Including one child shot with live ammunition and killed while farming near the Gaza-Israel fence.

<sup>5</sup> For example, on 16 and 17 May, approximately around 30 IF strikes without prior warning, on al-Wehda street and its surroundings (a densely populated area in central Gaza City), killed 47 people including 19 children (8 boys and 11 girls, aged 6 months to 17 years); the IF stated via Israeli media that the strikes were intended to target underground Hamas military infrastructure.

Also during the escalation of hostilities, six Palestinian children (5 boys, 1 girl) were killed and eighteen children seriously injured by rockets fired by Palestinian armed groups including al-Qassam Brigades which fell short and landed in the Gaza Strip, raising concerns regarding precautions taken by armed groups in Gaza to protect civilians during hostilities<sup>6</sup>.

In another incident during the escalation of hostilities, one killing of a child and serious injury of 58 children in Gaza were verified but could not be attributed to a specific party<sup>7</sup>.

Three children in the Gaza Strip were killed (1) or injured (2) in accidents involving explosive remnants of war<sup>8</sup> (ERW)<sup>9</sup>. Also in the Gaza strip, prior to the May escalation of hostilities, 20 Palestinian children (12 girls, 8 boys, aged one to 17) were seriously injured in incidents attributed to Palestinian armed groups, due to storage of weapons<sup>10</sup> and conducting military training<sup>11</sup> in the vicinity of populated areas, raising concerns regarding measures and precautions by armed groups to protect civilians.

### Israel

In Israel, during the May escalation of hostilities, two Israeli children (one boy and one girl, aged 5 and 16) were killed in separate incidents in Lod and Sderot on 12 May, when rockets fired by Palestinian armed groups (2) struck their homes. At least three more Israeli children in Israel (2 girls and 1 boy, aged 4-12) were injured in other incidents of rocket fire by Palestinian armed groups that landed in Israel. These attacks failed to distinguish between military and civilian targets, raising concerns regarding armed groups' violation of the IHL principle of distinction. Another two Israeli children were reportedly<sup>12</sup> injured by rocket fire, which the UN could not verify.

### West Bank

In the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, nine Palestinian boys (aged 13 to 17) were killed by IF in the first six months of 2021. Of these, seven children were killed in the context of IF operations in West Bank towns, or in context of demonstrations against occupation and settlement expansion. In verified incidents, Palestinian children were killed by IF while posing no apparent threat to the lives of security forces or civilians, raising concerns of excessive or unwarranted use of force<sup>13</sup>. In particular, two boys were killed by IF in June 2021 near Beita, south-east of Nablus, where daily Palestinian demonstrations were held following the establishment on 03 May and rapid growth of a new settlement outpost<sup>14</sup>.

<sup>6</sup> For example, a rocket fired by armed groups fell short exploded in a crowded square in a densely populated area in the northern Gaza Strip, killing eight people including two children, and injuring many more.

<sup>7</sup> In the incident in question, a six-year-old girl with disabilities was killed in northern Gaza, reportedly after armed groups' rockets fired from the area were intercepted by Israeli "Iron Dome" missiles and shrapnel fell in the yard outside her house.

<sup>8</sup> ERW accidents are not attributed to any party to the conflict.

<sup>9</sup> For example, following the escalation, in June, one 9-year-old boy was killed (1) and his 16-year-old brother injured (1) after they mishandled an ERW item found in an open area near their home in Gaza.

<sup>10</sup> For example, a total of 18 children were injured in the northern Gaza Strip, when munitions stored on the roof of a residence belonging to a PIJ member exploded.

<sup>11</sup> For example, two girls aged 8 and 9 were seriously injured by live ammunition in their arms and chest in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip, in an incident linked to a Palestinian armed group's military training in the vicinity.

<sup>12</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, incidents included in this bulletin are verified by the UN according to standards outlined in the global Guidelines and Field Manual for monitoring and reporting grave violations. Information that is not verified is referred to as "reported", "alleged" or "subject to verification".

<sup>13</sup> The Secretary General's Annual Report on Children and Armed Conflict for the year 2021, highlighted excessive use of force by among the Developments and Concerns for Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory: "I am shocked by the number of children killed and maimed by Israeli forces during hostilities, in air strikes on densely populated areas and through the use of live ammunition during law enforcement operations, and by the persistent lack of accountability for these violations. I express serious concern regarding the excessive use of force and reiterate that security forces must exercise maximum restraint and use lethal force only when it is strictly unavoidable in order to protect life and put in place preventive and protective measures to end and prevent any excessive use of force against children. I note the existing procedures, which have been shared with my Special Representative, and I urge Israeli authorities to review and strengthen their procedures to prevent any excessive use of force" (A/76/871-S/2022/493, 23 June 2022).

<sup>14</sup> For example: On 11 June 2021, IF shot a Palestinian 16-year-old boy in the chest during protests against the Evyatar settlement outpost in Beita. The 16-year old boy was with his 19-year old cousin in a group of 5-10 youths around 500 meters west of the outpost where they threw stones and tear gas canisters back at IF, who were positioned on higher ground 50-100 meters away. While the 16-year old and his cousin rested under a tree and other youths continued throwing stones, IF shot both boys in the chest, as they were reportedly not posing any threat, then fired tear gas canisters as villagers were trying to evacuate the injured boys to an ambulance. The incident raises serious concerns that the boy was intentionally killed by IF in the absence of an imminent threat.

Two Palestinian children were also killed following attempted stabbing attacks on Israeli soldiers or civilians in Salfit and in East Jerusalem. In both cases, video or witness testimony indicated that IF used force after the child had been shot and was no longer presenting a threat<sup>15</sup>. In both cases, the children's bodies were subsequently withheld by IF; and as of the end of June Israel was withholding the bodies<sup>16</sup> of seven Palestinian children killed while perpetrating or allegedly perpetrating attacks.

Another 202 Palestinian children (191 boys and 11 girls, aged nine months to 17 years), were seriously injured in conflict-related incidents in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem.

Of these, 183 injuries were attributed to Israeli forces, which occurred mostly during demonstrations, clashes and during search and arrest operations, with most children injured by live ammunition (79), tear gas inhalation (47); rubber-coated metal bullets or other kinetic impact projectiles<sup>17</sup> (25); and physical assault (22)<sup>18</sup>. In a number of verified incidents, children sustained serious injuries in circumstances that raised concerns of excessive or unwarranted use of force by IF<sup>19</sup>.

Also in the West Bank, 16 Palestinian children (12 boys and 4 girls) were injured in incidents attributed to Israeli settlers<sup>20</sup> (16).<sup>21</sup> The recurrence of such incidents and their increased severity in 2021 raises concerns regarding the requirement under international law<sup>22</sup> that IF ensure protection of Palestinians and prevent settler violence.

Three other Palestinian children in the West Bank (3) were injured in accidents involving explosive remnants of war (ERW), in the Jericho, Hebron, and Tubas governorates.

Also in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, at least three Israeli children (3 girls, aged seven months to 14 years) were injured in stone-throwing incidents by Palestinian perpetrators<sup>23</sup>. One other injury to an Israeli child was reported in Israeli media, which the UN could not verify.

**Table I. Killing and Maiming trends: Reporting period compared to prior six months**

Killing and Maiming of children	July-Dec 2020	Jan-June 2021
# of Palestinian children killed	4	77
# of Israeli children killed	1	2
# of Palestinian children maimed, including serious injuries	115	838
# of Israeli children maimed, including serious injuries	1	6

<sup>15</sup> For example, a 17-year-old boy was shot by an Israeli police officer multiple times, including after he had already been neutralized on the ground with no signs of movement, after running from the location of the stabbing at a light rail station in East Jerusalem.

<sup>16</sup> On 9 September 2019, Israel's High Court of Justice (HCJ) ruled that Israeli authorities could withhold the bodies of Palestinians killed by Israeli forces as a tool for bargaining.

<sup>17</sup> Such as the 40mm "sponge-tipped" bullets used by Israeli police in East Jerusalem.

<sup>18</sup> The remaining injuries attributed to IF involved children shot with tear gas canisters (4); live ammunition shrapnel (3), sound grenade shrapnel (2), and one boy was pepper sprayed in his face.

<sup>19</sup> For example: a 16-year-old boy was shot five times with live ammunition in the legs and pelvic area by IF in the vicinity of the Israeli separation wall, injuring his thighs, bladder, and right testicle, which subsequently was removed in surgery. In another incident in Hebron, a 14-year-old boy was struck in the eye with by a rubber-coated metal bullet fired by IF, resulting in loss of his eye, while the victim stood in front of the shop where he worked while IF clashed with youth in the area. IF stated that an internal examination of the incident by the division's commander, found that soldiers did not fire directly at the store or those inside it. In another incident, a 16-year-old girl was shot in the back at close range with a 40mm "sponge-tipped Bullet" by IF at the front door of her house in East Jerusalem, as she and other members of her family complied with a police instruction to go inside, causing a fractured vertebra. Israel Police regulations reportedly only permit aiming "sponge bullets" at the lower body, while prohibiting their use on children and at close range.

<sup>20</sup> In this report, 'Israeli settlers' refers to Israeli civilians, confirmed or believed to be residing in Israeli settlements established in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem.

<sup>21</sup> For example, an 11-year-old girl was attacked with stones by a group of approximately 20 masked settlers outside her family's house in Nablus, during which she was knocked unconscious and sustained broken teeth and other injuries to her face and nose and gum bones. According to information provided by the Government of Israel, in response to this incident an IDF force dispersed the settlers and transported the child to hospital.

<sup>22</sup> See: *Israel/OPT: UN experts warn of rising levels of Israeli settler violence in a climate of impunity*, 14 April 2021.

<sup>23</sup> For example, a 14-year-old girl was badly cut on her head by stones, paint bottles and broken glass thrown at her family's car near the Tekoa settlement in Bethlehem governorate.

### Recommendations from Secretary General's annual reports on CAAC

*I express serious concern regarding the excessive use of force and reiterate that security forces must exercise maximum restraint and use lethal force only when it is strictly unavoidable in order to protect life and put in place preventive and protective measures to end and prevent any excessive use of force against children. I note the existing procedures, which have been shared with my Special Representative, and I urge Israeli authorities to review and strengthen their procedures to prevent any excessive use of force. I further urge Israel to continue to investigate each case where live ammunition was used, as required by procedure, and to pursue accountability for violations against children. (A/76/871-S/2022/493, 23 June 2022)*

*I call upon Palestinian armed groups to cease all indiscriminate launching of rockets and mortars from densely populated areas in Gaza towards Israeli civilian population centres. (A/76/871-S/2022/493, 23 June 2022)*

*I urge the Israeli forces and Palestinian armed groups to abide by their obligations under international humanitarian and international human rights law, including by ensuring that operations are conducted in line with the principles of distinction, proportionality and precaution, and to immediately correct and reinforce existing measures to ensure the protection of children affected by armed conflict.. (A/76/871-S/2022/493, 23 June 2022)*

### Recruitment and Use of Children

The recruitment of a 17-year-old boy by the al-Mujahideen Brigades in the Gaza Strip was verified<sup>24</sup>. The child was killed in an Israeli airstrike on 13 May; it was not confirmed if he was participating in hostilities when killed. One other incident prior to the reporting period was monitored, involving reported recruitment of a 17-year-old boy by the al-Qassam Brigades in the Gaza Strip in 2019. The incidents raised concerns regarding armed groups' measures to prevent recruitment or use of children under 18 in any capacity.

**Table II. Recruitment and Use trends: Reporting period compared to prior six months**

Recruitment and Use of Children	July-Dec 2020	Jan-June 2021
# of Palestinian children recruited or used	1	1

As in past years, the military wings of Palestinian factions in the Gaza Strip, including the Palestinian Islamic Jihad's al-Quds Brigades and Hamas' al-Qassam Brigades, announced large-scale 'summer camps' for thousands of participants, including children under 18 and young adults<sup>25</sup>, involving political/ideological themes, physical training, and military-style drills. The mass participation of children in military-style activities organized by members of armed groups raised concerns regarding exposure of children to violence or military content, and possible future recruitment. The UN used direct and indirect contacts to remind relevant parties and duty bearers of the need to do more to protect children from exposure to conflict and violence, including refraining from encouraging children to participate in violence.

### Recommendations from Secretary General's annual reports on CAAC

*I call upon Palestinian armed groups to cease the recruitment and use of children and to abide by their domestic and international legal obligations... I urge all Palestinian armed groups to protect children, including by preventing them from being exposed to the risk of violence or by abstaining from instrumentalizing them for political purposes. (A/76/871-S/2022/493, 23 June 2022)*

<sup>24</sup> The al-Mujahideen Brigades identified the boy as a member of the group and issued obituary notices following his death.

<sup>25</sup> Al-Qassam Brigades announcements referred to camps divided for "the preparatory stage, the secondary stage, and the university stage, in addition to the adult stage" while al-Quds Brigades announcements stated that its camps were for children aged 14-17. Photographs published online by both groups appeared to show children under 14 participating in the camps. Both groups began the first "phase" of their camps, lasting five days, on 26 June, with subsequent phases continuing into July and August 2021.

### Arrest and Detention of Children for alleged security related offences<sup>26</sup>

According to Israel Prison Services (IPS) data, between January and June 2021 there was a monthly average of 148 Palestinian children in IPS detention from the West Bank including East Jerusalem for alleged security related offences, with a total of 167 children still detained at the end of June, including 124 children held in pretrial detention and/or during trial (78%), eight children in administrative detention<sup>27</sup> (1%) and 35 serving a sentence (21%). Two-thirds (68%) of these children were detained outside the occupied Palestinian Territory.

Official data on the total number of Palestinian children arrested by Israeli forces in the reporting period was not available. Documentation by NGOs reported at least 563 children were arrested in the occupied West Bank, including 394 in East Jerusalem. The UN supported the provision of legal assistance to 312 children (four girls) aged between 12 and 17 years old arrested in East Jerusalem for security related offences. Most of the arrested children were from the al-Issawiya (75 arrests), Silwan (75) and Tur (59) neighbourhoods.

Additionally, in several instances, Israeli forces detained at least nine children under the age of criminal responsibility (12 years), including at least four children in East Jerusalem<sup>28</sup>.

The number of children arrested and detained, and particularly those held in pre-trial detention, detained during proceedings, or held under administrative detention without charge, raised concerns regarding the CRC principle that detention of a child should be a measure of last resort and for the shortest appropriate period of time.

**Table III. Detention of trends: Reporting period compared to prior six months**

Detention of Children	July-Dec 2020	Jan-June 2021
# Palestinian children in detention for alleged security offences (at end of reporting period, IPS)	131	167
# Palestinian children in administrative detention (at end of reporting period, IPS)	1	8
# Palestinian children arrested in East Jerusalem	142	312

Ill-treatment, including breaches of due process, during arrest, transfer, interrogation, and detention by Israeli Defense Forces (IDF), Israeli Police, the Israeli Security Agency (ISA), and the IPS continued to be reported in testimony by a substantial proportion of interviewed children. The UN documented 51 cases of boys (aged 12-17 years old) in East Jerusalem (8) and elsewhere in the West Bank (43), who reported different forms of ill-treatment and breaches of due process, including the following:

- 25 children (49% of those who provided testimonies) were arrested from home at night during planned arrest operations.
- 29 children (57%) reported that they had to sign a document in Hebrew, a language that they do not understand.
- 46 children (90%) reported that they had been blindfolded during transfer from the place of arrest and that they remained blindfolded sometimes even during interrogation.
- 49 children (96%) reported that they were handtied upon arrest, including 41 children (84%) who reported that a painful method of hand-tying was used, 33 children (65%) reported being leg-tied, and 29 (57%) that they were transferred on the floor of a vehicle.

<sup>26</sup> The UN Children and Armed Conflict monitoring and reporting includes children detained by all parties on security-related grounds, in the context of armed conflict. Although not covered in the reporting, Palestinian children are also detained for alleged regular criminal offences by forces of the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank; by de facto authorities (Hamas) in the Gaza Strip; and by Israeli forces in the occupied West Bank including East Jerusalem. Regardless of the scope of reporting, the UN advocates with all parties for respect of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), whereby detention of children should be only as a measure of last resort and for the shortest appropriate period of time.

<sup>27</sup> 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. Child administrative detainees from the reporting period included a 17-year-old boy with a rare medical condition, who had previously been granted bail due to health considerations by the Israeli Military Court in December 2020, but was re-arrested in January 2021 by IF and placed under administrative detention without charges, based on secret evidence neither he nor his lawyer had access to. The IDF commander of the West Bank initially approved a six-month administrative detention order for the child, which was upheld by the Israeli military court. In March, the military court of appeals upheld the administrative detention order, while reducing the first detention period to four months. On 20 May, the child's administrative detention was extended for another four months, and he remained detained without charge as of the end of the reporting period.

<sup>28</sup> For example, in February, IF detained two brothers aged 8 and 10 in Hizma, holding them on site in the cold weather for four hours, during which time they were handcuffed, denied food and water, and asked to identify boys throwing stones. In another example, IF detained five children aged 9-13 years old, including three boys under the age of 12 after they were accused by Israeli settlers of trespassing in the Havat Ma'on settlement in south Hebron.

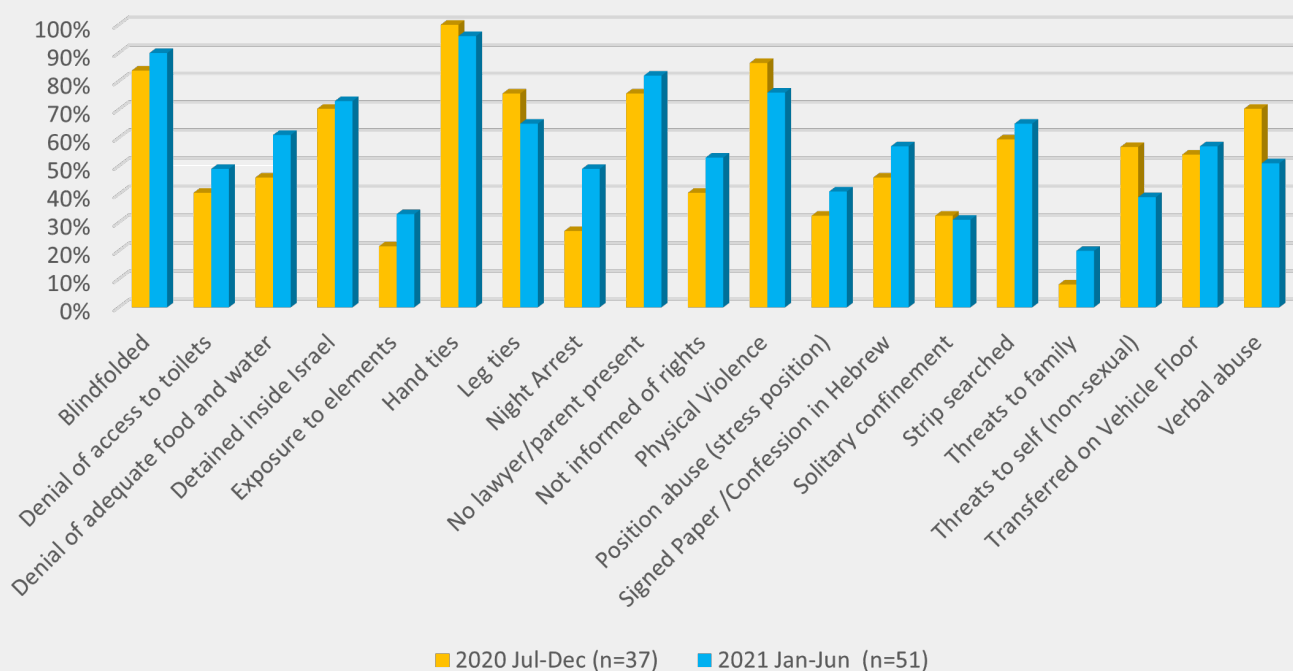


- 39 children (76%) reported that they endured physical violence, including slapping, punching and kicking during arrest, transfer, interrogation and/or detention.
- 26 children (51%) reported that they were verbally abused and intimidated during arrest, transfer, interrogation and/or detention.
- 27 children (53%) reported not being adequately notified of their legal rights, in particular the right to counsel and the right to remain silent.
- 16 children (31%), aged between 16 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 29 days, without daylight, and purposely no access to other children simultaneously held in detention, family or lawyer.
- 42 children (82%) reported that neither a parent nor a lawyer was present prior to their interrogation.
- 31 children (61%) reported that they were not provided with adequate food or water and 25 children (49%) reported that they were not given access to toilets during the initial stages of detention, particularly at stages of arrest, transfer and interrogation.
- 17 children (33%) 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 arrested children forced to stay outside during cold or hot weather for prolonged periods of time, including sometimes on their knees and/or hand-tied.
- 20 children (39%) reported that they had been threatened in order to confess, during transfer and /or interrogation, and 10 children (20%) reported threats of harm to their family members during interrogation.

One detained 15-year-old Palestinian boy also reported that he was sexually assaulted by IF during his interrogation. Of concern, several children arrested in East Jerusalem reported severe violence during arrest and interrogation<sup>29</sup>.

**Figure I. Ill-treatment trends: Reporting period compared to prior six months**

### Ill-treatment reported by children in detention



### Recommendations from Secretary General's annual reports on CAAC

*I reiterate my call upon Israel to uphold international juvenile justice standards, including the use of detention as a measure of last resort and for the shortest appropriate period of time, to end the administrative detention of children, and to prevent any violence and ill-treatment in detention. (A/76/871-S/2022/493, 23 June 2022)*

<sup>29</sup> For example, a 15-year-old arrested in January reported ill-treatment during a seven-day period of detention and interrogation, which included kicking, slapping, and being made to hold stress positions. The child reported that he confessed to throwing stones stop the violence; while an Israeli court subsequently cleared him of the allegations against him. In another example, in May, a 17-year-old boy from Jerusalem reported being physically assaulted by IF during his arrest and interrogation, including being tased multiple times during his interrogation to coerce him to identify people in photographs.

## Education related incidents<sup>30</sup>

A total of 21 attacks against education facilities (20) and education personnel (1) were verified.

Among these, 17 attacks were attributed to Israeli forces (17), and included one threat against a school principal in the West Bank, and 16 attacks in which schools in the Gaza Strip were severely damaged by IF strikes during the May escalation of hostilities. Another 286 schools sustained moderate or minor damage during the escalation. In most incidents, facilities were not directly hit and sustained partial damage.

Another attack was attributed to Palestinian armed groups (1) in which a school in Israel was severely damaged by a rocket fired during the May escalation of hostilities.<sup>31</sup>

Another three attacks, prior to the escalation, were attributed to Palestinian Islamic Jihad (3), in which schools in the Gaza Strip were damaged by an explosion of stored munitions in a residence in the vicinity of the schools.

One incident involving the existence of a tunnel underneath a school in Gaza by Palestinian armed groups (1) was verified. UNRWA announced that a detailed assessment revealed *“a cavity, and a possible tunnel”* at the location of IF missile strikes in the school's inner compound, without entry or exit of the tunnels in the school premises,<sup>32</sup> and in a subsequent statement condemned *“the existence and potential use of such underground structures, including tunnels, in the strongest possible terms”*, noting the agency sent letters of protest to de facto authorities in Gaza.<sup>33</sup>

Forty-six incidents of other interferences with education by Israeli forces (46) were verified, affecting 3,368 children in the West Bank including East Jerusalem. More than half of incidents took place in Nablus (27). In 32 of the 46 incidents, IF intimidations and denial of teachers' and students' access through checkpoints in five governorates<sup>34</sup> of the West Bank resulted in compromised functioning or partial closure of schools. In six other incidents, IF fired tear gas canisters and stun grenades at and around schools, affecting their functioning.<sup>35</sup> Palestinian schools continued to face threats of demolition and/or confiscation by IF, with four verified incidents, including three (3) incidents of schools receiving demolition or stop-work orders, and one incident of confiscation of building machinery for a school in Area C of Nablus governorate. Five incidents were verified in which IF detained children while commuting to/ from school.

Rocket fire on Israel and airstrikes on the Gaza Strip during the May escalation also disrupted education for some 591,599 children school-aged children throughout the Gaza Strip, and some 1,122,914 kindergarten and school-aged children in central and southern Israel, when schools closed for the safety of students and teachers.<sup>36</sup>

**Table IV. Education-related Incidents trends: Reporting period compared to prior six months**

Education-related Incidents	July-Dec 2020	Jan-June 2021
# attacks on schools or related personnel	4	21
# Military use of schools	0	1
# other interferences with education	26	46

<sup>30</sup> Education-related violations are defined in line 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.

<sup>31</sup> Of these, 95 sustained “moderate” and 191 sustained “minor” damage. “Moderate” damage is considered where damage occurred to the building's body and infrastructure, but the building remains usable; while “minor” damage is where damage occurred to windows, doors and similar facilities of a school, but the building is (easily) usable.

<sup>32</sup> <https://www.unrwa.org/newsroom/official-statements/neutrality-and-inviolability-unrwa-installations-must-be-respected-all>.

<sup>33</sup> <https://www.unrwa.org/newsroom/official-statements/unrwa-reiterates-inviolability-its-installations-must-be-respected-all>

<sup>34</sup> Jenin, Qalqilya, Bethlehem, Nablus, and Hebron governorates

<sup>35</sup> For example, in June, IF fired tear gas canisters and stun grenades around a school in Hebron governorate, interrupting the education of 456 pupils. The Government of Israel stated that on a weekly basis in Hebron's H2 Israeli forces pursue students and fire riot control weapons in the vicinity of schools in response to stone-throwing towards IF personnel at Checkpoint 160.

<sup>36</sup> The above examples of precautionary closures 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 attacks or other interferences with education.

<sup>37</sup> Health-related violations are defined in line with UNSCR 1998 and its guidance note (2014). See footnote 30.

## Recommendations from Secretary General's annual reports on CAAC

*I exhort Israel to better protect schools. (A/76/871-S/2022/493, 23 June 2022)*

*I reiterate my call upon all parties to continue to engage with my Special Representative and the United Nations, including at the country level, to end and prevent grave violations against children and to better protect children and respect international humanitarian law and international human rights law. (A/76/871-S/2022/493, 23 June 2022)*

### Health-related incidents<sup>37</sup>

A total of 100 attacks on health facilities (53) and health personnel (47) were verified in January – June 2021.

Of these, 51 attacks<sup>38</sup> were attributed to Israeli forces' strikes in the Gaza Strip during the May escalation of hostilities, resulting in damage to 50 health facilities,<sup>39</sup> and five health personnel injured. In most incidents, facilities were not directly hit and sustained partial damage. Administrative offices (not directly providing health services) of the Ministry of Health, the UN and health NGOs were also damaged, and the road leading to the main hospital in Gaza City was heavily bombed, obstructing access to the facility during the escalation.<sup>40</sup>

Also in Gaza, prior to the escalation, two attacks on health facilities were attributed to Palestinian Islamic Jihad, in which one hospital and one clinic were damaged in the northern Gaza strip in January 2021, due to an explosion of munitions stored in a residence in the vicinity of the facilities.

The 47 attacks on health personnel in the West Bank including East Jerusalem were attributed to IF, and resulted in injury to 72 health workers<sup>41</sup>. The majority of incidents occurred in East Jerusalem (70% - 33 incidents). For example, during the period from 07-11, at least 18 health workers were injured by IF, while responding to injuries during clashes around East Jerusalem, particularly in the Old City.

Forty (40) other interferences with health the delivery of health were also verified in the West Bank including East Jerusalem, attributed to IF (37) and Israeli settlers (3). Most incidents (34) involved Israeli forces firing live ammunition, rubber-coated metal bullets, sound grenades and tear gas at health facilities (4) or at ambulances and paramedics while responding to injuries (30)<sup>42</sup>.

**Table V. Health-related Incidents trends: Reporting period compared to prior six months**

Health-related Incidents	July-Dec 2020	Jan-June 2021
# attacks on hospitals or related personnel	7	100
# other interferences with health	4	40

## Recommendations from Secretary General's annual reports on CAAC

*I reiterate my call upon all parties to continue to engage with my Special Representative and the United Nations, including at the country level, to end and prevent grave violations against children and to better protect children and respect international humanitarian law and international human rights law. (A/76/871-S/2022/493, 23 June 2022)*

<sup>38</sup> Note, some incidents affected more than one facility, while some facilities were hit more than once. A subsequent assessment by Gaza Health authorities reported a further 65 facilities partially damaged; these reportedly included private clinics, diagnostic centers, pharmacies, medical warehouses and laboratories

<sup>39</sup> For example, the Hala al-Shawa primary health clinic in Beit Hanoun, was stuck on three occasions, and almost completely destroyed. Other affected facilities also included Gaza's main COVID-19 testing laboratory and vaccination center; and a quarantine center in Rafah.

<sup>40</sup> These incidents are not counted in the 51 attacks and 50 facilities affected, as the affected locations were not 'health facilities' providing services. Information is included here for information on the impact of the escalation on health.

<sup>41</sup> These health workers were injured by physical assault (26), rubber-coated metal bullets (25), sound grenades (7); tear gas canisters (2); and tear gas inhalation (12).

<sup>42</sup> For example, at 3:30 am, Israeli forces fired approximately 10 stun grenades into the yard and reception area of government hospital in Tulkarem, causing panic and distress among 81 patients, including 15 children, and 39 medical staff present in the facility during the incident; no personnel or patients were reported to have been physically injured.



## Denial of humanitarian access for children

One incident of denial of humanitarian access by Israeli forces was verified in the occupied West Bank including East Jerusalem, in which a Palestinian ambulance was prevented for more than an hour from reaching a child fatally injured by live ammunition.

In another verified incident, on 18 and 19 May, Palestinian armed groups fired mortars at crossings between Israel and the Gaza Strip, preventing the entry of humanitarian shipments including medical supplies. On 10 May Israel had closed both the Kerem Shalom and Erez crossings<sup>43</sup>, banning passage of goods and people from and into Gaza, including humanitarian cases and patients in need of medical care, and humanitarian personnel<sup>44</sup>. Between January and June 2021, Israeli authorities received 1,664 applications for children in need of specialized medical care to cross the Erez terminal to access health services outside of the Gaza Strip, of which 1,009 (61%) were approved, while 2 (0.1%) were denied and 653 (39%) were delayed<sup>45</sup> by Israeli authorities, affecting 655 children (261 girls and 394 boys)<sup>46</sup>. The rate of permit approvals for children declined from 72% in the first quarter of 2021 to 51% in the second quarter; and during the period from 23-31 May, immediately following the cessation of hostilities between Israel and armed groups Gaza, just 9% of permit applications for children were approved by Israeli authorities while 91% were delayed<sup>47</sup>. A one-year-old girl with a heart disease died while waiting for her permit to be processed.

**Table VI. Denial of Humanitarian Access trends: Reporting period compared to prior six months**

Denial of Humanitarian Access	July-Dec 2020	Jan-June 2021
# (%) approved child permits to exit Gaza for health	(%74) 393	(%61) 1,009
# (%) delayed or denied child permits to exit Gaza for Health	(%26) 138	(%39) 655
Other incidents of attacks or denial of humanitarian assistance	1	2

## Demolition and displacement

The UN verified 390 demolitions and seizures of Palestinian-owned structures by Israeli authorities<sup>48</sup> in the occupied West Bank including East Jerusalem, despite the continuing COVID-19 pandemic, compared to 494 demolitions and seizures in Q3 and Q4 2020. The demolitions displaced 550 people, including 298 children. Another 4,079 persons, including 1,976 children, were also affected by the demolitions, through reduced access to basic services and impact on their livelihood. Of the 390 demolished and seized structures, including 130 donor-funded structures, 353 (90%) were in Area C, 35 (9%) were in East Jerusalem and two structures were in Areas A&B (1%). Two structures were demolished as punishment for the actions of a relative, and all other demolitions occurred on the grounds of lack of building permits, which are nearly impossible for Palestinians to acquire. The 390 demolished structures included 99 Palestinian-inhabited residences and 291 other structures, which included uninhabited residential, agricultural, water, and livelihood structures. A further 35 structures were self-demolished by Palestinian owners in East Jerusalem (32) and Area C (3), to avoid costly Israeli demolition fees and related fines<sup>49</sup>. These self-demolitions displaced another 25 children and affected a further 68 children.

Following IF demolition and confiscation of 82 structures, including 65 donor-funded structures, in the Palestinian community of Humsa Al Bqai'a between 1 and 16 February, which displaced 238 people including 138 children, the UN's Humanitarian Coordinator issued a statement calling on Israeli authorities to halt further demolitions and allow the humanitarian community to support the vulnerable community, in accordance with international law.<sup>50</sup>

<sup>43</sup> The Government of Israel stated that the closure of the crossings was for security reasons, due to the threat of rocket fire, and was not intended to be a punitive closure.

<sup>44</sup> Some UN and INGO staff entered Gaza on 21 May following the ceasefire, and Erez crossing was reopened more fully on 25 May for patients in need for life-saving treatment, international organizations' employees, and foreign journalists. Kerem Shalom was opened for passage of fuel and humanitarian aid on 25 May 2021, while other imports and exports remained heavily restricted. The Government of Israel reported that restrictions were also eased on agricultural exports from Gaza, and imports of iron and other materials outside of the Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism (GRM).

<sup>45</sup> I.e. receiving no definitive response from Israeli authorities by the time of (and consequently missed) their hospital appointment

<sup>46</sup> Additional children may be denied access via delay or denial of permits for accompanying adult relatives or the non-approval of financial support from the Palestinian Authority.

<sup>47</sup> In total 6/68 permit applications for children during this period were approved while 62 were delayed. These are included above within the totals of approved and delayed permits during the reporting period.

<sup>48</sup> Demolitions were carried out by Israeli Civil Administration, Jerusalem Municipality, and the Ministry of Interior, under guard of Israeli forces.

<sup>49</sup> Further information on fees and fines related to structures ordered to be demolished by Israeli authorities is available at: <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/peak-demolitions-and-confiscations-amidst-increasing-denial-right-justice>

<sup>50</sup> See: <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/statement-lyn-hastings-humanitarian-coordinator-occupied-palestinian-territory-demolitions>. The Government of Israel has stated that the area where the community of Humsa al-Bqai'a is located was designated as a Firing Zone by the Israel military in 1972 and this is the reason for the prohibition on civilian presence and the execution of the demolition orders.

**Table VII. Demolition and Displacement trends: Reporting period compared to prior six months**

Demolition and Displacement	July-Dec 2020	Jan-June 2021
# Palestinian children displaced by demolition and seizure, incl. self-demolition	318	232
# Palestinian children affected by demolition and seizure, incl. self-demolition	1,974	2,044