



Save the Children

UK

Child Rights in the Occupied Palestinian Territory

2010 Review

Save the Children presents the major trends of 2010 that affected the rights of children in the occupied Palestinian territory to live, learn and play in freedom and safety.

In 2010, Palestinian children continued to face poverty, violence and threats to basic rights such as education and health. Economic growth obscured widespread aid dependency, particularly in Gaza, and the lack of economic horizons. The ongoing blockade of Gaza has prevented recovery after Israel's 2008/09 offensive, with housing and infrastructure only nominally rebuilt and children continuing to report the psychological effects of the military operation two years later. In the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, children were displaced and their lives disrupted by a rise in demolitions of homes and other structures. Communities in the West Bank and in East Jerusalem faced continued isolation as a result of the Separation Wall and its related permit regime, internal checkpoints inside the West Bank and other movement and access restrictions.

There were 4.05 million Palestinians living in the occupied Palestinian territory (OPT) as of mid-2010—62.1% in the West Bank and 37.9% in Gaza.¹ An estimated 1.97 million, or 48.6% of the total population, were under the age of 18 (or an estimated 1.22 million children in the West Bank and 746,630 children in Gaza).² Over 44 percent (44.4%) of children were refugees.³ In the West Bank, 29% of children were refugees; in Gaza, the percentage was much higher at 67%.⁴

- The Palestinian **economy** continued to grow in 2010 (9.3% growth in real GDP up from 6.8% in 2009). Gaza saw significant economic growth (15% up from 1% in 2009) while growth in the West Bank was less dramatic (7.6% down from 8.5% in 2009). The opening of crossings into Gaza allowed for goods to flow to the manufacturing and agricultural sectors. Nevertheless, this economic growth was primarily **driven by donor assistance** and not viewed as sustainable under current conditions.⁵
- **Unemployment** rates went down marginally (23.4% at end 2010, down from 24.8% at end 2009). Unemployment remained higher in Gaza at 37.4% (39.3% in 2009) compared with 16.9% in the West Bank (18.1% in 2009).⁶
- In 2010, 31.9% of households in Gaza suffered from **poverty** compared with 16% of households in the West Bank. Nearly 27 percent (26.9%) of children in the OPT were poor (living in households with income below the national poverty line)—38.4% in Gaza and 19% in the West Bank.⁷ In Gaza, households that remain above the poverty line are highly vulnerable to becoming poor.⁸
- 52% of households in Gaza faced **food insecurity** and an additional 13% were vulnerable to food insecurity during the first half of 2010 (compared with 61% in 2009). In rural areas of Gaza, 69% of households faced food insecurity.⁹ This translates to more than 90,000 children at risk of food insecurity in Gaza.¹⁰
- Similar to 2009, 71% of families in Gaza received at least one form of **social assistance**, mostly in the form of food assistance, which plays a crucial role in alleviating poverty.¹¹ Still, almost one-third of households did not maintain a diet with varied and nutritious foods.¹²



Children participate in a play activity at a summer camp supported by Save the Children UK in Susiya village in the South Hebron Hills. Here, children face daily threats of settler and military violence and are at risk of displacement. More than 100 children benefited from recreational, educational and psychosocial activities organized during summer recess as part of Save the Children's emergency support to villages in Area C.
Photo credit: Save the Children UK

- In Gaza, 17.8% of primary school students and 12.2% of preparatory school **students work** to help support their families or pay for school expenses, reported a UN psychosocial study.¹³

The Right to Education

Palestinian children faced numerous barriers to the right to education. The education system in the occupied territory suffers from sub-standard school infrastructure and a chronic shortage of classrooms due to the blockade on Gaza, lack of investment in East Jerusalem schools and difficulties in obtaining building permits from the Israeli authorities for the construction, expansion or rehabilitation of schools in Area C of the West Bank. Children faced difficulties getting to and from school due to long distances between communities and their schools and lack of affordable transportation, road closures, delays and harassment at checkpoints and settler and military violence. Inside their schools, children learned in overcrowded classrooms and lacked protection from the risks of settler and military violence. At the same time, children missed out on education because they were working to help their families earn income, were held in Israeli detention and denied an education or were displaced from their homes and communities.

- In Gaza, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) **turned away** 40,000 eligible children in 2010/11 due to an acute classroom shortage. Currently, most students study in two shifts, in classrooms or oversized metal containers used as classrooms of up to 50 students, with three children seated at desks designed for two.¹⁴
- In the 2010/2011 school year, nearly 80% of government schools (311 out of 392) serving more than 230,000 students in Gaza operated on a **double shift** meaning that a single school building was put to use in the morning and afternoon to house two separate schools.¹⁵

- Officials estimated that 105 new governmental schools and 100 new schools operated by UNRWA **must be built** in the coming five years to accommodate the OPT's growing student population.¹⁶
- Despite the need, **investments** in educational infrastructure **have stalled in Gaza due to the four-year blockade** on the movement of people and goods. Less than half (32 out of 68) of UNRWA's requests to Israeli officials to implement education projects have been approved. Still, the cumbersome bureaucracy required to move goods has delayed progress. Of the 32 projects approved, only two projects have been completed and 14 are underway.¹⁷
- Nearly 95% of primary school students and 95.8% of preparatory school students in Gaza had **insufficient electricity at home to complete their homework** either some or most of the time.¹⁸
- In Area C of the West Bank, which falls under complete Israeli control, almost 38,000 students in grades 1-12 attended 135 government schools and 12 UNRWA schools.¹⁹ Because **permits to invest** in educational infrastructure are **nearly impossible to obtain** from Israeli authorities, the humanitarian community reported that 18% of government schools (24 out of 135) were **unsafe**, among them tents, caravans, crude cement buildings and tin shacks. Thirty-one percent of schools had inadequate water and sanitation facilities.²⁰
- In addition, schools in Area C are **far from the communities they serve**—up to 25 kilometres in some areas—meaning high and sometimes insurmountable transportation costs or very long walks for school children.²¹ Girls are at greater risk of dropping out of school in such circumstances.
- Schools are **vulnerable to attack** as a result of the armed conflict and are in need of greater protection. In 2010, there were 24 documented cases of attacks on schools in the OPT including demolition orders issued against schools, demolition of schools, military raids on school premises, use of schools for military purposes, and damage to educational infrastructure as a result of military activity and settler violence. One-third of the attacks took place in Areas A and B of the West Bank, underscoring the vulnerabilities in these areas in addition to Area C and the Gaza access restricted areas.²²
- Students experience **anxiety, sadness and hopelessness** because of the ongoing military violence and blockade in Gaza, resulting in difficulty learning, reported a UN psychosocial study.²³ Among primary school students surveyed, 59.4% did not feel safe going to and coming home from school some or most of the time. Among preparatory students, this number increased to 69%.²⁴
- More than half of teachers at every level reported that students consistently exhibited **lower academic performance** after the Gaza offensive of winter 2008/09.²⁵
- In Area C of the West Bank where house demolitions and settler violence affect children, 75% of schools reported having **no teachers trained** to recognize the signs of psychological distress among children; 40% reported having no follow-up support in cases where symptoms were recognized and identified; and 40% lacked a referral system for students identified as being severely distressed.²⁶

Recurrent Attack on Khirbet Tana School

At least 22 girls and boys lost their school twice in 2010 when Israeli forces destroyed the school in Khirbet Tana (located in Area C, southeast of the city of Nablus), once in January 2010 and again in December 2010.

Since July 2005, Khirbet Tana has suffered four wide-scale demolitions of homes and other structures. Families rely on the land to graze livestock and earn a living. The village school allows families to give their children an education while they maintain their livelihoods. Efforts to rebuild the school have been thwarted by the issuing of yet another demolition order by Israeli authorities, placing the school at risk of demolition for a third time.

Source: Incident data provided by Israel/OPT Working Group on Grave Violations Against Children. See also, OCHA Fact Sheet, "Khirbet Tana: Large-scale demolitions for the third time in just over a year", February 2011.

The Right to Health

Deepening poverty and rising food insecurity compromised the health of Palestinian children. A lack of access to safe, clean drinking water and proper sanitation services further undermined children's health.



States Parties shall strive to ensure that no child is deprived of his or her right of access to [the highest standard of] health care services.”—Article 24 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child

- **Anaemia** affected 19.4% of children under five in the OPT in 2010—25.6% in the West Bank and 13.4% in Gaza.²⁷ Nearly 27% of pregnant women between the ages of 15-49 had anaemia—15.4% in the West Bank and 39.1% in Gaza.²⁸
- Across the OPT, 11 out of 100 children under five years of age suffered from **chronic malnutrition** ('stunting') in 2010, up from 10.2% in 2006 to 10.6% in 2010. In the West Bank, stunting affected 11.3% of children under five compared with 9.9% in Gaza.²⁹
- 3.7% of children under five in the OPT were **underweight** in 2010—3.8% in the West Bank and 3.5% in Gaza. This rate increased from 2.9% in 2006.³⁰
- 27.3% of primary school students and 39.1% of preparatory school students in Gaza **arrived at school hungry** either some or most of the time, reported a UN psychosocial study.³¹

Gaza Blockade: Greatest Challenge to Children's Rights

In June 2010, Israel said it would 'ease' its blockade on Gaza. The new measures resulted in a significant increase in imports (mostly food) and other consumer goods, but the flood of cheap imports actually hurt local production. The import of raw materials needed for industry remained largely restricted. Construction materials for approved international projects were allowed in theory but the complex approval and monitoring system continued to hamper development. Exports remained largely banned and the movement of Palestinians in and out of Gaza remained restricted to medical and humanitarian cases.

By early 2011, the UN reported that the easing of restrictions had not resulted in significant improvements in livelihood and quality of services for Gaza's families.³²

- A July-September 2010 survey of Gaza's businesses found that 38% of companies had received none of the **raw materials** they need, 44% received some and only 18% of companies had received all needed materials.³³
- At the end of 2010, 65% of industrial businesses in Gaza were **shut down** and the rest operated at only partial capacity. The number of individuals employed in this sector was down by more than 80%.³⁴
- In 2010, four children, all under the age of three, **died** in Gaza while waiting for permission to travel abroad for specialized medical treatment. In 2009, this figure was nine.³⁵
- Internal political tensions between the Ramallah and Gaza-based authorities also exacerbated the already difficult conditions of the blockade. One hundred and sixty-five **essential drugs** (34%) and 144 medical disposables (21%) required to provide government health services in Gaza were at **zero stock level** (meaning less than one month supply) by the end of 2010—the gravest shortage that year. By early 2011, medication used to treat asthma in children was completely out of stock and unavailable at all primary health care centres in Gaza.³⁶
- One-third (875 of the 2,796) of **houses** that sustained major damage in Israel's 2008/09 Gaza offensive had been **repaired** by end 2010. Less than one percent of houses completely destroyed had been rebuilt (six out of 3,487).³⁷ More than 37,000 individuals³⁸ were affected by this damage and destruction, the vast majority of whom are still unable to rebuild.

- The ‘easing’ of restrictions has had minimal effect on much-needed **water and sanitation** development. By the end of 2010, only one quarter of the water sanitation and hygiene materials requested by Palestinian officials had been granted entry.³⁹
- Glass, materials to make doors and windows, and **construction** ‘finishing’ items such as plumbing and electrical fittings all became more available with Israel’s ‘easing’ of the blockade. At the same time, vital building materials such as steel, aggregate and cement remain restricted for import.⁴⁰

Access Restricted Areas in Gaza

The access restricted areas (also known as the ‘buffer zone’) in Gaza span up to 1.5 kilometres from the land border with Israel and beyond three nautical miles at sea encompassing some of the most productive agricultural land and fishing waters. The Israeli military enforces restrictions with warning or direct fire, placing the lives of Palestinian civilians at risk and negatively impacting livelihoods and access to services. Frequent land levelling and destruction of private property in this area further compound losses for Palestinian families placing them at greater risk of forced displacement.

Thirteen schools serving 4,497 girls and boys and employing 326 faculty members are located within the access restricted areas. In 2010, the UN reported that lessons are often disrupted by clashes between the Israeli military and armed Palestinian groups in the nearby vicinity.⁴¹

These schools are also at high risk of being damaged by fighting, placing students and faculty in danger of injury or death. Getting to school is also dangerous, as Israeli forces fire warning or direct shots upon individuals within the access restricted areas. All 13 schools sustained damage during Israel’s Gaza offensive in winter 2008/09.⁴²

More than half of houses completely destroyed in Israel’s 2008/09 offensive were located in the access restricted areas.⁴³

A UN study on the impact of access restrictions on land and at sea found that 35% of Gaza’s farmland and 85% of maritime areas for fishing are blocked to Palestinians, affecting the livelihoods of an estimated 178,000 people—12% of the population.⁴⁴

Children working in the access restricted areas are putting their lives at risk. A shortage of construction materials as a result of the ongoing blockade has created a market for gravel and scrap metal collected by young boys and sold to builders. Given the access restrictions in these areas, these children are in danger of being shot as they work. Twenty-three cases of children being shot collecting building material or grazing livestock were reported in 2010. Most were shot in the leg, however children have also been shot in the arm, torso and in the head.⁴⁵

Forced Displacement

In 2010, children and their families continued to be displaced across the OPT. In Area C of the West Bank, demolitions of houses, water cisterns and sources of livelihoods sharply increased, affecting thousands of children and their families. In East Jerusalem, demolitions of homes and other structures continued apace while Israeli settlers continued to take control over Palestinian properties, forcibly evicting their residents. At the same time, lack of access to services forced families to leave their communities.

Revocation of identity cards of Jerusalem residents placed more children and families at risk of displacement while thousands of unregistered children reside in East Jerusalem illegally and without services. In Gaza, Israeli military activity and land levelling in border areas has destroyed homes and livelihoods and forced families to leave the area because the threat to safety and lack of security was too great.

- At least 594 Palestinians, including 299 children, were **forcibly displaced** due to the **demolition of their homes** carried out by Israeli authorities in East Jerusalem and Area C in 2010, compared with 619 Palestinians, 316 of them children, in 2009.⁴⁶
- Israeli authorities demolished at least 431 Palestinian **structures** (including 137 residences) in East Jerusalem and Area C of the West Bank. This was an increase of nearly 60% from 2009 when Israel demolished 271 structures (including 113 residences) in these areas.⁴⁷
- In addition, at least 14,136 Palestinians, 7,902 of them children, in East Jerusalem and Area C of the West Bank were **affected** in 2010 by demolitions, losing a source of income or part of a home. This compared with 758 affected Palestinians, including 414 children, in 2009.⁴⁸
- Seventy Palestinians, half of them children, were **forced from their East Jerusalem homes by Israeli settlers** in 2010, up from 53 Palestinians, including 20 children, forced out in 2009.⁴⁹
- An estimated 10,000 **children are unregistered** in East Jerusalem, meaning they do not have an identity number because only one parent is a permanent resident of the city. The process that would allow these children to become registered has been frozen since 2003. Without an identity number, a child cannot access services such as education or health care.⁵⁰
- In Gaza, more than 30,000 Palestinians and thousands of children **remained displaced nearly two years** after the end of the military offensive in which they lost their homes, the UN estimated. This has caused overcrowding, raising the spectre of domestic and gender-based violence and early marriage of girls.⁵¹
- Eighteen homes have been completely destroyed and 67 partially destroyed as a result of **ongoing Israeli military activity and land levelling operations in Gaza** since the 2008/09 offensive. As a result, 160 Palestinians and 52 children lost their homes completely and another 762 Palestinians including 356 children partially lost their homes.⁵²



Photo credit: Save the Children UK

“Before the start of the project, my mother refused to let me participate; she felt there was little benefit in my attending these sessions. But after I talked to her several times and insisted, she allowed me. Now, my mom is not only allowing me to come, but she has also asked me to address problems we face in the community to try and find a solution. She wants me to address the problem of garbage in the street in front of our home. After these sessions, many things have changed for me personally. The most important thing is that now I can express myself and my opinions in a better manner.”
— Rabab, 15, from Maghazi refugee camp in Gaza talks about how a Save the Children participation project changed her life

Detention and Ill-Treatment

On average, Israeli authorities arrested and detained fewer Palestinian children in 2010 than in 2009. However, more comprehensive monitoring and documentation systems are necessary to

determine the actual numbers of Palestinian children arrested and detained by Israeli authorities in a given month, which are thought to be much higher than reported averages. By the end of the year, one Palestinian child was being held in administrative detention (detention without charge or trial) and was released in early 2011.



“No child shall be subjected to torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.”— Article 37 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child

Palestinian children in detention continued to report ill-treatment sometimes amounting to torture by Israeli security and intelligence personnel. For the first time, children reported being given electric shocks during interrogation. The number of children arrested in Silwan in East Jerusalem, most of them for alleged stone-throwing, increased sharply.

- 289 children on average were **held in Israeli detention** per month in 2010 compared with 355 in 2009 (an 18.5% decrease) and 319 in 2008 (a 9.4% decrease).⁵²
- Similarly, there was a 31% **decrease in young Palestinians** (12-15 years old) held in Israeli detention in 2010 compared with 2009, representing on average 30 children per month compared with 44 in 2009 and 32 in 2008.⁵³
- Two Palestinian children were placed in **administrative detention** in 2010. One was released in late 2010 after being held for nine months without charge or trial and the other was released in early 2011, after almost one year of being held without charge or trial.⁵⁴
- A review of 40 **sworn testimonies** taken from Palestinian children detained by the Israeli military in the latter half of 2010 found that 70% were beaten or kicked, 60% were forced to hold uncomfortable or painful positions for a prolonged period (position abuse), 45% were verbally abused, and 22% were detained with adults.⁵⁵

Arrests in Silwan

The number of children arrested in the East Jerusalem neighbourhood of Silwan rose dramatically in the latter half of 2010, say human rights groups. Tensions continued between Palestinian residents at risk of losing their homes, Israeli settlers who increasingly control Palestinian houses and archaeological sites in the area, and Israeli security personnel hired to protect the settlers.

Between September and October 2010, 32 children were arrested by Israeli police and security forces. Investigations conducted by the Israeli human rights group B'Tselem indicated that Israeli security personnel broke domestic laws affording special protections for children as they carried out their law enforcement activities. These breaches included the arrest of children from their homes in the middle of the night; use of violence by special forces during arrest; interrogation of children in the absence of their parents; and the detention of minors below age 12, the age of criminal responsibility.

Thirteen sworn testimonies taken from Palestinian children detained by Israeli security forces in Silwan between October and December 2010 showed that 77% were exposed to physical violence, 69% were interrogated in the absence of a parent, 46% were verbally abused, and 31% were detained with adults.

Source: B'Tselem – The Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories, Caution: Children Ahead, The Illegal Behavior of the Police toward Minors in Silwan Suspected of Stone Throwing, December 2010.

- In 2010, there was one documented case of Israeli officials **sexually assaulting** a 15-year old boy during his detention and interrogation, compared with four documented cases of sexual assault in 2009. There were 13 documented cases of Israeli officials threatening Palestinian children (between the ages of 13 and 17) in detention with sexual assault in 2010 compared with five documented cases in 2009.⁵⁶ This rise is attributed to improved documentation.

East Jerusalem

In East Jerusalem, Palestinian children and their families faced a particularly difficult set of challenges. Families are being squeezed into crowded urban areas or forced out entirely to make way for rapidly growing Israeli settlements. They are also denied the most basic social services such as education and health care.

- Up to **48% of Palestinian residents** in East Jerusalem are at **risk of displacement** if Israeli city officials were to demolish all Palestinian structures in violation of Israeli zoning requirements, reported the UN in early 2011. 'Illegal' construction is widespread in East Jerusalem as only 13% of the land area is zoned for Palestinian construction and the proper permits are difficult to obtain.⁵⁷
- Some 55,000 Jerusalem residents live on the West Bank side of the Separation Wall Israel constructed through the city, and therefore **lack municipal services** such as water and waste collection and must cross a checkpoint to access services such as education and health care.⁵⁸
- 20% of 12,253 **students** in 38 free waqf schools (Islamic religious schools) in East Jerusalem, 20% of teachers and almost 40% of support staff **cross a checkpoint** on a daily basis to attend class, resulting in delays and absences.⁵⁹
- Israeli law entitles Palestinian children in East Jerusalem between the ages of five and 18 to free public education. Still, **only 48% of the school-age population was registered** in municipal schools in the 2009/10 school year due to acute classroom shortages and poor infrastructure.⁶⁰
- Two-thirds of 440 delays and denials of **passage to ambulances** in the OPT occurred at checkpoints accessing Jerusalem along the Separation Wall, according to the Palestinian Red Crescent Society.⁶¹

Right to Water

A rainfall shortage continued in 2010, with only 69% of rainfall averages registered in the West Bank by the end of January 2011. In Gaza, less than 33% of rainfall averages had been recorded by mid-January 2011.⁶² The lack of rainfall threatens Palestinian livelihoods and places them at greater risk of food insecurity and poverty. Lack of access to a clean and safe water supply and sanitation compromises the health of families and children and can lead to displacement or worsen its impacts.

In Gaza, the main source of drinking water is unsafe. The coastal aquifer, Gaza's sole source of fresh water, is being pumped at an unsustainable rate and is heavily contaminated by seawater, sewage and other waste that have entered the ground water supply. As a result, agricultural productivity is threatened and children's and families' health is at risk.

Demolition of Water Infrastructure

Israeli authorities demolished 14 cisterns (three of them more than 60 years old) in two Bedouin communities in the Hebron region in December 2010. The cisterns were a primary source of water for herders who graze their livestock in these remote areas. The total loss of 1,500 cubic metres of water storage directly affected more than 950 individuals and their thousands of sheep, placing greater pressure on already-scarce water resources.

Source: EWASH, WASH Cluster OPT Monthly Situation Report, Number 30, 31 December 2010. See also, Displacement Working Group oPt, Demolition Summary Table, 31 December 2010.



A Palestinian girl participates in a drawing activity at a summer camp in Susiya village supported by Save the Children. *Photo credit: Save the Children UK*

- 65% of water wells were **contaminated** with nitrates, 57% were contaminated with chloride and some wells showed indications of fluoride concentrations well above internationally-accepted standards. These contaminants are particularly dangerous for the health of bottle-fed infants and young children.⁶³
- The vast majority of residents in three major cities in Gaza **did not enjoy a continuous supply of water** in 2010. Aid agencies reported that 45% of the population in Jabalia, Gaza City and Rafah were receiving water for six to eight hours once every two days and 30% were receiving water for six to eight hours once every three days.⁶⁴
- In Area C of the West Bank, Israeli authorities **destroyed** in 2010 at least 40 **water cisterns, wells, pools and water storage** tanks for lack of building permits. These demolitions affected more than 13,000 Palestinians, including at least 7,500 children.⁶⁵
- An estimated 60,000 Palestinians living in Area C were **not connected to a water network** in 2010, aid agencies reported.⁶⁶
- **Access to water** for Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem remained inadequate, unreliable and expensive. The Israeli water provider charges Palestinians approximately double the rate per cubic meter of water it charges East Jerusalem settlements (12.6 NIS vs. 6.7 NIS).⁶⁷ A Palestinian water carrier is prevented from fully servicing East Jerusalem residents by Israeli checkpoints and rules limiting the amount of water it can provide them.⁶⁸
- Palestinian areas in Jerusalem lacked up to 50 kilometres of **sewage mains** due to the lack of public investment in Palestinian neighbourhoods. Ninety percent of the city's sewage pipes were located in West Jerusalem, while sewage overflows in Palestinian areas were a common occurrence.⁶⁹

Settler Violence

Palestinian children increasingly faced settler violence in their homes, schools and communities. In 2010, 320 Palestinians died and were injured in settler-related incidents, an increase over 204 deaths and injuries reported in 2009.⁷⁰ Settler violence is particularly high in the Hebron and Nablus districts of the West Bank, as well as in East Jerusalem.

- One Palestinian child was **killed** by Israeli settlers in 2010. Thirty-two (9.7%) of 331 Palestinian children injured in 2010 were injured by Israeli settlers. In 2009, 37 out of 237 (or 15.6%) of Palestinian children were injured as a result of settler violence and no children were killed.⁷¹
- In South Hebron, where an **Israeli military escort** has been tasked with accompanying Palestinian school children to and from school to prevent settler attacks, children missed almost 27 hours of morning class time (compared to 18 hours in the previous year) because the military escort was late or did not arrive at all. They waited about 53 hours at the end of the day (compared to 48 hours in the previous year) for the military to arrive to escort them home.⁷²

Settler Violence in the South Hebron Hills

Children in South Hebron were waiting for the Israeli military escort to accompany them home from school. It was one hour late, and as they waited, two settlers, one of them masked, approached on a farm tractor. The settlers drove to the children's usual meeting point and created a barrier of boulders across the road that the children walk. The children grew weary of waiting and decided to return home via a longer path around the nearby settlement and outpost. As they walked that path, three settlers emerged from the outpost and chased them. The Israeli military then appeared and detained the children for an hour, refusing to provide them safe passage around the settlement. Only after the soldiers had left were the children able to walk home, unaccompanied, arriving three hours after the end of school.

Source: Christian Peacemaker Teams and Operation Dove, The Dangerous Road to Education, Palestinian Students Suffer Under Settler Violence And Military Negligence, December 2010.

Key Issues Concerning the Protection of Children in Armed Conflict

Palestinian children continued to be at risk of **physical harm** in their homes, schools and communities as a result of the conflict.

- Nine Palestinian children were **killed** in 2010 as a **direct result of the armed conflict**. Of the five children killed in Gaza during this period, four were killed by Israeli forces in access restricted areas. No Israeli children were killed as a direct result of the conflict.⁷³ In 2009, 375 Palestinian children were killed (including 353 children killed during Israel's 23-day offensive in late 2008/09) and one Israeli child was killed.⁷⁴
- Five Palestinian children were **killed** as a result of Palestinian **factional violence**.⁷⁵ In 2009, eight Palestinian children were killed due to internal Palestinian conflict.⁷⁶
- 331 Palestinian children were **injured** as a **direct result of the armed conflict**. Of the 49 children injured in Gaza, 36 were injured by Israeli forces in access restricted areas.⁷⁷ Two Israeli children were **injured** as a **direct result of the armed conflict**, one in Israel and one in the OPT.⁷⁸ In 2009, 1,112 Palestinian children were injured (among them 860 children injured during Israel's offensive) and one Israeli child was injured.^{79/80}

The **recruitment and use of children by armed forces or armed groups** is difficult to monitor, however a number of cases have been documented in recent years. Since 2004, 15 cases of children being used as **human shields** by the Israeli military and three cases of children pressured to become **informants** for Israeli intelligence have been documented.⁸¹ Fourteen of these cases occurred after the Israeli High Court banned these practices in October 2005.⁸²

In 2010, three cases of Palestinian children used by Israeli security forces as human shields were documented in the West Bank, two in Nablus and one in Hebron.⁸³ In 2010, two Israeli soldiers were convicted for forcing a nine-year-old boy at gunpoint to search for explosives during the offensive in Gaza, the first time soldiers have been charged with using children in this practice. The military court demoted the soldiers and gave them three-month suspended sentences for "inappropriate conduct."⁸⁴ A lack of accountability persists for violations of the rights of children in armed conflict.

Anecdotal evidence exists that Palestinian summer camps have carried out military training exercises, and that Israeli settler leaders have encouraged settler youth to carry out violent acts against Palestinians, however these reports remain difficult to monitor or verify.

Other Protection Concerns

Child labour remains an ongoing concern. Economic stress on families means children are increasingly being forced to work to help earn income, absent or dropping out of school as a result. In Gaza in particular, teachers and headmasters at all grades reported a mean of 14.4 students having missed 10 or more days of class in the 2009/10 school year because they were working. In addition, a mean of 10.4 students were reported to have dropped out in order to work.⁸⁵

Economic stress on households has also led to **early marriage of girls**, who often subsequently **drop out of school**, a UN survey in Gaza reported.⁸⁶



In accordance with their obligations under international humanitarian law to protect the civilian population in armed conflicts, States Parties shall take all feasible measures to ensure protection and care of children who are affected by an armed conflict.”—Article 38 (4) of the Convention on the Rights of the Child

ENDNOTES

- ¹ Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), mid-2010 estimate. Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, Child Statistics Series (No. 14), Palestinian Children – Issues and Statistics Annual Report, April 2011.
- ² See Press Release, PCBS Issued Child Statistics Report on the Eve of Palestinian Children’s Day, April, 5 2011.
- ³ Ibid.
- ⁴ This is 2009 data. Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, Child Statistics Series (No. 14), Palestinian Children – Issues and Statistics Annual Report, April 2011.
- ⁵ World Bank, Building the Palestinian State: Sustaining Growth, Institutions, and Service Delivery – Economic Monitoring Report to the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee, 13 April 2011.
- ⁶ Ibid. See also PCBS Labour Force Survey Q4, Oct-Dec 2010.
- ⁷ Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, Child Statistics Series (No. 14), Palestinian Children – Issues and Statistics Annual Report, April 2011. See also World Bank, Building the Palestinian State: Sustaining Growth, Institutions, and Service Delivery – Economic Monitoring Report to the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee, 13 April 2011.
- ⁸ World Bank, Building the Palestinian State: Sustaining Growth, Institutions, and Service Delivery – Economic Monitoring Report to the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee, 13 April 2011.
- ⁹ OCHA Special Focus, Easing the Blockade – Assessing the Humanitarian Impact on the Population of the Gaza Strip, March 2011.
- ¹⁰ Rough estimate based on calculation of 219,200 households in Gaza with an average size of 6.5 people (PCBS Gaza Strip Census 2007) factoring in 48.6% of the population is children.
- ¹¹ World Bank, Building the Palestinian State: Sustaining Growth, Institutions, and Service Delivery – Economic Monitoring Report to the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee, 13 April 2011.
- ¹² OCHA Special Focus, Easing the Blockade – Assessing the Humanitarian Impact on the Population of the Gaza Strip, March 2011.
- ¹³ UNESCO, Psychosocial Assessment of Education in Gaza and Recommendations for Response, Report on the findings of an assessment conducted by Kathleen Kostelny, PhD and Michael Wessells, PhD of the Columbia Group for Children in Adversity, September 2010. Based on a sample of 3,355 students in 60 schools.
- ¹⁴ Gisha, “40,000 students turned away from UNRWA schools due to Gaza closure,” 15 September 2010. Available at <http://www.unrwa.org/etemplate.php?id=797> (last accessed 11 April 2011).
- ¹⁵ Ministry of Education and Higher Education – Gaza Strip, Statistics for the academic year 2010/11.
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