

Dear SG Guterres,

We are alarmed by the escalation of hostilities in Israel and Gaza, and its unconscionable toll on Israeli and Palestinian children. As you noted on November 6, Gaza is becoming a “graveyard for children.” We are writing to urge you to add the Israel Defense Forces, the Qassam Brigades (Hamas), and Islamic Jihad to your list of perpetrators of grave violations against children in armed conflict (the so-called “list of shame”) with immediate effect and to prioritize the protection of children in your response to the conflict.

Israeli forces and Palestinian armed groups have committed serious abuses amounting to war crimes during the current hostilities. About [1200 people](#) in Israel, including at least [31 children](#), have been killed, according to Israeli authorities, largely during the October 7 attack by Hamas-led fighters. They also took more than 240 individuals hostage, including at [least 30 children](#).

Between October 7 and November 7, [4,237 Palestinian children have been killed](#), according to Gaza’s Health Ministry, amid intensive bombardment by Israeli forces, representing more than 40 percent of total fatalities. The [number of children killed](#) in Gaza in the three weeks following October 7 exceeded the total number of children recorded as killed annually in global conflict zones since 2019. Prior to the current hostilities, it has also been the deadliest year on record for Palestinian children in the West Bank, where [86](#) have been killed by Israeli forces and settlers.

Israeli attacks have also damaged at least [278 educational facilities and 120 health facilities](#). Cuts to power, fuel, and electricity and the deliberate denial of all but grossly insufficient humanitarian aid—acts that amount to war crimes—have also put children’s lives at risk. This has been complicated by the inability of almost any sick and wounded children to leave to seek medical care outside of Gaza.

UN OCHA has [expressed](#) concerns regarding allegations of military installations in the close vicinity of hospitals and the request by Israeli authorities for hospitals to be evacuated, stating that ‘there is nowhere safe for these patients to go, and for those on life support and babies in incubators, moving would almost certainly be a death sentence’.

Killing and maiming of children, abduction of children, attacks on schools and hospitals, and the denial of humanitarian access are all grave violations against children in armed conflict, according to Security Council resolutions 1612 and subsequent resolutions on Children and Armed Conflict (CAAC).

Before the current escalation, the United Nations had verified thousands of grave violations committed against children in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory through the framework of the CAAC agenda. In your [2022 annual report](#) on children and armed conflict, you expressed concern regarding a significant increase in cases of violence against Palestinian children as a result of Israeli airstrikes in 2021, and warned that should the situation repeat itself, Israel should be added to your list. That year, 86 Palestinian children were killed and 1,121 were injured. You were also concerned by the increase in the killing and maiming of children by Palestinian armed groups and stated that they would be listed in 2022 if there was a high number of violations against children in that year. To date, however, neither Israel nor Palestinian groups have been included in your annual list of perpetrators of grave violations against children.

The dramatic escalation of hostilities in Israel and Gaza in recent weeks and skyrocketing child fatalities demand urgent action. Specifically, we urge you to:

- add immediately Israeli forces, the Qassam Brigades (Hamas), and Islamic Jihad to your “list of shame” for their grave violations against children,
- include explicit references to the respect and protection of children’s rights when advocating for action by parties to the conflict;
- emphasize the imperative for all parties to strictly adhere to international humanitarian law in the course of their hostilities, end unlawfully indiscriminate and disproportionate attacks and to consider the best interest of the child in every decision they make;
- leverage your good offices with the relevant warring parties and their allies to strongly advocate for concrete action to protect children and end the ongoing grave violations against them.

We count on your unequivocal commitment to ensure the safety and well-being of children affected by this conflict.

Sincerely yours,

1. Lloyd Axworthy, former Canadian Foreign Minister and Chair of the World Refugee and Migration Council
2. Ishmael Beah, best-selling author and UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador
3. Carol Bellamy, former Executive Director of UNICEF (1995-2005)
4. Agnès Callamard, Secretary General, Amnesty International
5. Lt-Gen. (retired) Roméo Dallaire, founder of the Dallaire Institute for Children, Peace and Security, former Force Commander of the UN Assistance Mission for Rwanda
6. Tiffany Easthom, Executive Director, Nonviolent Peaceforce
7. Tirana Hassan, Executive Director, Human Rights Watch
8. Ezequiel Heffes, Director of Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict
9. Anthony Lake, former Executive Director of UNICEF and former US National Security Advisor
10. Yanghee Lee, former Chairperson of UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, President of International Child Rights Center
11. Achaleke Christian Leke, Executive Director of Local Youth Corner (LOYOC) Cameroon, AU Youth Ambassador for Peace
12. Stephen Lewis, former Deputy Director UNICEF, former UN Special Representative on AIDS in Africa
13. Rosemary McCarney, former Canadian Ambassador to the United Nations and the Conference on Disarmament
14. Benyam Dawit Mezmur, former Special Rapporteur on children and armed conflict of the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, Professor of Law at the University of the Western Cape
15. Mikiko Otani, former Chairperson of UN Committee on the Rights of the Child
16. Savita Pawnday, Executive Director of the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect
17. Allan Rock, former Canadian Ambassador to the United Nations and President Emeritus of the University of Ottawa
18. Shelly Whitman, Executive Director of the Dallaire Institute for Children, Peace, and Security