

## **Watchlist statement on events in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory**

*October 18, 2023*

Watchlist condemns in the strongest terms all violations and abuses of international law committed against civilians, in particular children, in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory and calls on all parties to uphold their obligations under this legal framework, including the respect of the principles of distinction, proportionality, and precaution. Children must be protected in situations of armed conflict and their rights respected.

We are deeply concerned by United Nations-cited [figures](#) that at least 853 children in Gaza have been killed, with the number of children killed in Israel not yet confirmed, that thousands more have been injured in both Israel and Gaza since October 7, 2023, and that Palestinian armed groups have abducted children from Israel into Gaza. The UN also [reported](#) that as of October 16, 2023, at least 167 education facilities have been struck in Gaza, including 20 UNRWA schools, as well as 140 Palestinian Authority schools.

Before the escalation beginning on October 7, 2023, the United Nations had verified thousands of grave violations committed against children in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory through the framework of the Children and Armed Conflict (CAAC) agenda. In particular, the UN has reported consistently high numbers of killing and maiming of children, as well as attacks on schools and hospitals and related personnel and the denial of humanitarian access, in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Concerns about the protection of children in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory have featured in every annual report of the Secretary-General on CAAC since the establishment of the UN's Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM) in 2005.

In the latest annual report of the Secretary-General on CAAC ([S/2023/363](#)), published in June 2023, Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory was the situation with the second-highest number of grave violations globally. The UN verified 3,133 grave violations against 1,139 Palestinian children and 8 Israeli children between January 1 – December 31, 2022. Despite high rates of documented violations, the Secretary-General has never listed Israeli government forces nor Palestinian armed groups in his “list of shame” of parties to armed conflict responsible for grave violations against children.

“Once again, children in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory are being subjected to grave violations,” says Watchlist’s Director, Dr. Ezequiel Heffes. “Children must always be protected, and parties should take measures to prevent them from being affected by violence. Authorities, everywhere, must ensure that civilians, in particular children, have access to basic services. This should never be questioned.”

All parties to the conflict should:

- Fully uphold their obligations under international law, including international humanitarian and human rights law, taking all feasible precautions to avoid, and in any event minimize, harm to

civilians and civilian objects, including objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population, as reiterated by the United Nations [SCR 2573 \(2021\)](#);

- Immediately cease all attacks on objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population, as well as schools, health facilities, and protected personnel, and ensure that such actions are investigated and the perpetrators are duly prosecuted;
- Take all feasible measures to protect the civilian population, in particular children, and civilian objects under their control against the effects of attacks;
- Urgently facilitate immediate, safe, and unimpeded access, particularly for medical treatment and delivery of humanitarian aid, to children and other civilians in need.

The Security Council should:

- Unequivocally condemn all violations and abuses committed against civilians, including grave violations against children and call on all parties to immediately end such abuses and violations, and call for accountability for all perpetrators, including at the domestic level and before the International Criminal Court;
- Urge respect for obligations under international law, including international humanitarian law, international human rights law, and all relevant resolutions of the Security Council regarding the protection of civilians and civilian objects and children and armed conflict.

The Secretary-General should:

- List Israeli government forces and Palestinian armed groups, as appropriate, in the annexes of his next annual report on children and armed conflict, based on UN-verified grave violations against children.