

*Permanent Observer Mission  
of the State of Palestine  
to the United Nations*



البعثة المراقبة الدائمة  
لدولة فلسطين  
لدى الأمم المتحدة

Ref. SGC.158/15

1 May 2015

Excellency,

I write to draw your attention to the critical situation ongoing in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and more specifically, to the grave reality faced by Palestinian children as a direct result of the Israeli military occupation.

The vulnerability of Palestinian children is deepening as they continue to bear the brunt of increasingly oppressive, violent and illegal Israeli policies and practices being systematically perpetrated against the Palestinian people. For nearly 50 years, Palestinian children have suffered at the hands of Israeli occupying forces and will tragically continue to suffer as long as Israel, the occupying Power, remains immune from consequences for their human rights violations and crimes. In this regard, we are of the firm conviction that only accountability can remedy the prevailing culture of impunity and compel respect for international law and human rights.

Every single day and in countless ways, Palestinian children are victims of Israeli human rights violations, with no child considered too young to be spared the oppression being meted out by the Israeli occupying forces and extremist settlers. One recent incident involved a 7 year-old child, Ahmad Zaatari, and his cousin, 12 year-old Mohammed Zaatari, who were detained by occupying forces on 29 April in Occupied East Jerusalem, taken from their neighborhood and endured hours of interrogation. 7 year-old Ahmad was reportedly interrogated for nearly eight hours, a horrifying and traumatic ordeal for a child of any age. Moreover, Ahmad and Mohammed's families were not immediately informed of where their children were taken, only learning of the location where their children were being held three hours after they were taken. Four hours after that, around 2:30 am, Ahmad was released, terrified and hungry. Mohammed remained detained until the following day, also deprived of food and water during his interrogation. Also, two other family members, Ala'a Zaatari and Mehdi Zaatari, both children and both age 15, had been detained a day earlier.

According to Ayed Abu Eqtaish, Accountability Program Director for Defense for Children International-Palestine, the arbitrary detention of children under 12 years of age is illegal as they are below the age of criminal responsibility. By arresting children as young as Ahmad, Israel is grossly flouting international standards for the treatment of children as well as its own legal code. Moreover, Israel's systematic use of excessive force against the Palestinian civilian population, causing death and injury to civilians, including children, violates numerous other provisions of international humanitarian and human rights law.

H.E. Ms. Raimonda Murmokaite  
The President of the Security Council of the United Nations  
The United Nations  
New York

In this regard, yet more child casualties have been caused by Israel's use of force against civilians. On 27 April, 18-year-old Mohammed Murad Yahiyawas was shot and killed by Israeli occupying forces in Al-Araqa village in western Jenin on his way back from a family wedding. On 26 April, 17-year-old Mohammed Abu Ghnem, was shot and killed at a checkpoint in Occupied East Jerusalem. Also, on 28 April, 14-year-old Fadi Abu Mandil was shot by an Israeli fire at his home in the central Gaza Strip when occupying forces opened fire on Palestinian farmers, and he remains in critical condition. On the same day, 6-year-old, Zakariya Mahmoud Al-Umour, was injured after being run over by an Israeli truck in the village of Yatta, and on 20 April, 9 year-old Mohammed Al-Qatuni was injured after being run over by an Israeli occupying force jeep on the Nablus-Huwwara road. On 22 April, a 17-year-old boy was physically assaulted by Israeli settlers near Al-Ibrahimi Mosque in Al-Khalil and on 23 April, occupying forces raided Al-Sawiya girls school in Nablus and fired tear-gas and stun grenades at students resulting in 200 Palestinian students suffering from tear-gas inhalation.

These are only a few examples in the recent period of illegal policies and practices by the occupying Power in complete disregard for the safety and well-being of children and for the applicable humanitarian and human rights laws. These crimes committed against our children are intolerable and unacceptable. We demand Israel, the occupying Power, to immediately end all its violations and abuses against Palestinian children and to comply with its obligations under international law, including, *inter alia*, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict.

We call on the international community to uphold its responsibilities and provide the necessary assistance and protection to Palestinian children and hold accountable the violators of international law, especially those laws meant to protect children's rights. There are international standards for the treatment of children and Palestinian children are no exception. The international community must not spare any effort to safeguard our children. In the relevant words of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon at the Security Council Open Debate on Children and Armed Conflict, "*We agree that we cannot tolerate a world in which children are killed and maimed... and where schools and hospitals are attacked*".

In this regard, we recall the findings of the Board of Inquiry (BOI), which were shared with the Security Council on 26 April, following an investigation into a number of incidents affecting during the last Israeli war against the Gaza Strip in which United Nations personnel, premises and operations, as well as innocent civilians were affected. The BOI found, *inter alia*, that 44 Palestinian civilians were killed and 227 were injured, among them many children, as direct result of Israeli assaults on UNRWA schools where Palestinians civilians had sought safety and shelter during the conflict. Here, we reiterate our call for accountability for these crimes committed against the Palestinian people, including our innocent children, who are being traumatized daily by the Israeli occupation and whose futures are in jeopardy of being completely lost if such Israeli impunity is not brought to a halt. We will spare no effort to hold the perpetrators accountable and ensure justice for the victims.

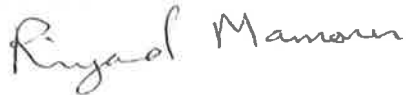
In this connection, we reiterate our call on the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Ms. Leila Zerrougui, and the Secretary-General requesting the addition of the Israeli occupying forces in the list that is annexed to the Annual Report of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict due to the grave and systematic violations that are perpetrated by the Israeli occupying forces against Palestinian children. We believe this to be an important and necessary step towards holding the perpetrators of crimes against children responsible for their actions, contributing to the efforts to end impunity, and protecting children in all situations of armed conflict without exception.

This letter is in follow-up to our 541 letters regarding the ongoing crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, which constitutes the State of Palestine. These letters, dated from 29 September 2000 (A/55/432-S/2000/921) to 17 April 2015 (A/ES-10/677 S/2015/260) constitute a basic

record of the crimes being committed against the Palestinian people, Israel, the occupying Power, must be held accountable and the perpetrators must be brought to justice.

I should be grateful if you would arrange to have the text of the present letter made available to the members of the Security Council for their valuable consideration.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Riyad Mansour". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'R'.

Dr. Riyadh Mansour  
Ambassador, Permanent Observer  
of the State of Palestine to the United Nations