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**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development**

Written statement* submitted by United Nations Watch, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[1 February 2021]

* Issued as received, in the language(s) of submission only.



Palestinian Child Soldiers

United Nations Watch is deeply concerned by Palestinian Authority (PA) and Hamas recruitment and use of Palestinian child soldiers in violation of international law, including inter alia the Geneva Conventions and Additional Protocols, the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and its Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict, which the Palestinians joined in 2014, and the Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC), which they joined in 2015.

The CRC obligates states “to ensure the protection and care of children affected by armed conflict” and provides for a minimum age of recruitment of 15 (Article 38). The Optional Protocol encourages states to increase the minimum recruitment age to 18 and adds that children under 18 should not take direct part in hostilities or be compulsorily recruited into the armed forces (Articles 1 and 2). Similarly, non-State armed groups should not recruit or use in hostilities children under age 18 (Article 4). Under the ICC Statute, “conscripting and enlisting children” into armed forces constitutes a war crime (Article 8).

Both the PA and Hamas routinely indoctrinate Palestinian children to aspire to martyrdom through armed confrontations with Israel. According to Palestinian Media Watch (PMW), “the PA operates a systematic and institutionalized policy and program to recruit child soldiers/terrorists.”¹ In its reports to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) on this issue, PMW accused the PA of indoctrinating Palestinian children to admire and emulate terrorists and noted that “The PA openly admits, that the child terrorists are not acting in a vacuum, but rather they consider them to be the PA’s soldiers who the PA has sent to carry out a mission.”²

Examples of Palestinian and Hamas incitement include:

- PA television (TV) broadcast quizzes children on songs with “value and meanings” which PA considers expression of Palestinian “national identity.” One of the songs depicts Israel as the “enemy” and encourages armed attacks: “I’m coming with my rifle... I’m coming towards you, my enemy... with cleavers and knives.” (January 2021).³
- Official PA TV children’s program commemorated cartoonist Naji al-Ala, by sharing several cartoons encouraging violence among children, including one where Fatima (Palestinian woman cartoon character) presents an AK47 to Handala (the Palestinian refugee cartoon character) and one of her handing rocks to children. (August 2020).⁴
- Fatah Facebook page promotes child soldiers by sharing video of Jordanian boy in military uniform holding slingshot and rifle. He wants to “shoot Jews” who killed terrorist Omar Abu Laila (killed Israeli soldier, stole his weapon and shot to death Israeli father of 12). (February 2020).⁵
- Hamas TV children’s program interviews young children dressed in military fatigues. One child says he wants to be an engineer when he grows up “so that I can blow up the Jews.” The child host responds “Keep waging Jihad...when you grow up you will wage resistance against the Jews...” (September 4, 2015).⁶

¹ Yonah Jeremy Bob, UNICEF ignores PA recruitment of kids to violence, Jerusalem Post (December 29, 2020), <https://www.jpost.com/arab-israeli-conflict/unicef-ignores-pa-recruitment-of-kids-to-violence-653643>.

² Maurice Hirsch and Itamar Marcus, PMW submission to UNICEF, PMW (February 24, 2020), <https://palwatch.org/page/17470>.

³ Nan Jacques Zilberdik, Which songs define Palestinian “cultural and...national identity?” PMW (January 24, 2021), <https://palwatch.org/page/18520>.

⁴ Nan Jacques Zilberdik, AK47s and rocks for kids promoted on PA TV, PMW (August 4, 2020), <https://palwatch.org/page/18146>.

⁵ Nan Jacques Zilberdik, Child abuse: Fatah Facebook promotes child soldiers and child martyrdom! PMW (February 19, 2020), <https://palwatch.org/page/17461>.

⁶ Children on Hamas TV: we want to wage Jihad and blow up the Jews, MEMRI (September 4, 2015), <https://www.memri.org/tv/children-hamas-tv-we-want-wage-jihad-and-blow-jews>.

In addition, PA and Hamas educational programs routinely portray terrorists as role models and incite children to violence. For example, every year Hamas runs summer camps in which it trains children in military tactics and weapons use.⁷ Likewise, summer camps run by Fatah and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) teach children to venerate famous Palestinian martyrs like Abu Jihad, who was responsible for terror attacks in which 125 Israelis were killed.⁸

Therefore, it is no surprise that Palestinian children perpetrate violent attacks against Israelis and participate in violent confrontations with the goal of harming Israeli soldiers and civilians.

The 2019 report of the United Nations (UN) Commission of Inquiry on the March of Return border confrontations condemned Israel for using “lethal force against children who did not pose an imminent threat of death or serious injury to its soldiers.”⁹ The report then proceeded to list the names of 17 children, aged 11-17 who were killed during the confrontations. However, at least nine of them were documented to be affiliated with terrorist groups. Many of these expressed a desire to die as martyrs and directly participated in violent incidents close to the security fence.¹⁰ For example:

- M. H. (16): Photos and videos show him at the front lines, sabotaging and breaching the fence. He also was a member of the tire burning unit whose job was to create a smokescreen to help rioters breach the fence and attack Israel Defense Forces (IDF) soldiers.
- Y. A. N. (13): Member of known Hamas family whose father is senior member of Hamas’s al-Qassam Brigades. He was with a group of youth attempting to sabotage the border fence. Hamas Supreme Leader Ismail Haniyeh and Hamas Gaza leader Yahya Sinwar attended his funeral.
- I. S. (13): Son of senior Hamas terrorist who was documented throwing stones with a sling shot towards IDF soldiers. According to his mother, the day before his death, he said “I want to go to the [border] and to return as a martyr in the path of Allah.”
- W. S. K. (14): Fatah activist who was documented at the front line of the riots. A day before her death, she told her sister “Maybe this is the last time I have with you. I may return tomorrow as a martyr in the path of Allah.”
- H. J. (14): Participated in Friday border confrontations and told his mother “Allah willing, I’ll become a martyr [shahid] fighting in the path of Allah.”
- M. S. (15): Body was wrapped in Hamas flag at the funeral. According to a Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-linked non-governmental organization, he was

⁷ COGAT: Hamas summer camp trains kids to ‘commit acts of terror,’ Jerusalem Post (June 11, 2020), <https://www.jpost.com/middle-east/cogat-reports-hamas-summer-camp-back-in-session-595804>; Hamas opens registration for annual summer camp, I24 News (July 15, 2019), <https://www.i24news.tv/en/news/international/middle-east/1562832005-hamas-launches-annual-summer-camp>; As party of Hamas summer camps, children and youths undergo military and paramilitary training at the military wing’s outposts and facilities, The Meir Amit Intelligence And Terrorism Information Center (August 9, 2018), <https://www.terrorism-info.org.il/en/part-hamas-summer-camps-children-youths-undergo-military-paramilitary-training-military-wings-outposts-facilities/>.

⁸ Itamar Marcus and Nan Jacques Zilberdik, Fatah and PLO summer camp teaches children to honor arch-terrorists who murdered hundreds, PMW (July 9, 2019), <https://palwatch.org/page/15920>.

⁹ Report of the independent international commission of inquiry on the protests in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, UN Document A/HRC/40/74 (February 25, 2019), https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/CoIOPT/A_HRC_40_74.pdf.

¹⁰ See, e.g., The Great March of Return: Palestinian War Crimes Against Their Own Children, Shurat Hadin (2019), <https://www.israellawcenter.org/activity/palestinian-war-crimes-against-their-own-children/>; Inconvenient Truths for the UN: Analysis of Information Ignored by the 2019 Commission of Inquiry on Gaza, Ngo Monitor (March 7, 2019), <https://www.ngo-monitor.org/reports/inconvenient-truths-for-the-un-analysis-of-information-ignored-by-the-2019-commission-of-inquiry-on-gaza/>.

shot at “approximately 20 meters from the barbed wire fence and 50 meters from the main fence.”

Outside of Gaza, Palestinian children also regularly engage in violent clashes with the Israeli army and perpetrate terror attacks against Israelis. Some recent examples include:

- 13-year-old Palestinian is shot and killed by Israeli soldiers in violent riots in which rioters threw stones at IDF troops and rolled boulders and burning tires into nearby road.¹¹ A number of Israelis have been killed by Palestinian rock throwers, including soldiers Amit Ben Yigal and Ronen Lubarsky, 64 year-old Alexander Levlovitz and three-year-old A. B..
- 15-year-old Palestinian is killed in clashes with IDF troops during arrests in Al Furwar refugee camp near Hebron (May 2020).¹²
- 17-year-old Palestinian stabs and injures 22-year-old Israeli (January 2020).¹³
- Two teenage Palestinians stab and injure Israeli police officer near Old City of Jerusalem (August 2019).¹⁴
- 16-year-old Palestinian hurling rocks at passing Israeli vehicles is shot dead by Israeli army (January 2019).¹⁵
- 17-year-old Palestinian stabs to death 45-year-old Israeli Ari Fuld (September 2018).¹⁶

UN Watch calls on the Human Rights Council as well as UN human rights officials, including High Commissioner Michelle Bachelet and Rapporteur Michael Lynk, to publicly condemn Palestinian recruitment of child soldiers.

¹¹ Judah Ari Gross and Aaron Boxerman, Military police launch probe after Palestinian teen said shot dead by soldier, TOI (December 6, 2020), <https://www.timesofisrael.com/military-police-launch-probe-into-palestinian-teen-said-shot-dead-by-soldier/>.

¹² Jack Khoury, Palestinian Teen Killed in Clashes with Israeli Forces During Arrests Near Hebron, Haaretz (May 13, 2020), <https://www.haaretz.com/middle-east-news/palestinians/.premium-palestinian-teen-killed-in-clashes-with-israeli-forces-during-arrests-near-hebron-1.8842056>.

¹³ Hagar Shezaf, John Breiner, Nir Hasson, Israeli stabbed in West Bank stabbing attack; Palestinian suspect arrested, Haaretz (January 18, 2020), <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/israeli-man-stabbed-near-hebron-palestinian-suspect-arrested-1.8411017>.

¹⁴ Judah Ari Gross, Cop injured in Jerusalem stabbing attack; 2 assailants shot, TOI (August 15, 2019), <https://www.timesofisrael.com/cop-injured-in-stabbing-attack-in-jerusalem-old-city-2-assailants-shot/>.

¹⁵ Palestinian teen throwing rocks at Israeli cars in West Bank shot dead by army, TOI (January 25, 2019), <https://www.timesofisrael.com/palestinian-teen-rock-thrower-shot-dead-by-israeli-army-in-west-bank/>.

¹⁶ Adam Rasgon, Judah Ari Gross, Terrorist’s parents say they alerted PA, Israel before deadly stabbing of Fuld, TOI (September 16, 2018), <https://www.timesofisrael.com/terrorists-parents-say-they-alerted-pa-israel-before-deadly-stabbing/>.