

December 15, 2019

**Supplemental Submission of the Institute for NGO Research for the
Review of “State of Palestine” at the 83rd Session of the Committee on the Rights of the
Child**

NGO Monitor, a project of the Institute for NGO Research,¹ brings this supplemental submission in advance of the review of “State of Palestine” and its compliance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child at the Committee’s 83rd Session. We hope that this submission will aid the Committee in its preparation of its final report to the Palestinian Authority.

This submission provides supplemental information on issues related to the rampant campaign of incitement and recruitment and use of children within the Palestinian Authority. This campaign of incitement is endemic throughout Palestinian society and has damaged many generations of Palestinian children. This campaign undergirds the on-going armed conflict with Israel and is responsible for countless deaths of both Palestinians and Israelis. Any review of the PA’s compliance with the CRC must address this issue in depth. Failure to do so would be a lack of commitment in evaluating the PA’s adherence to and compliance with the CRC. Moreover, given that more than 95% of the Palestinian population falls under the control of the Palestinian Authority, it is important that the PA not be given a pass on compliance with its obligations under the CRC because of a claim of “occupation.” Excuses for noncompliance by the PA should not be indulged. If the PA considers itself an entity that is capable of joining an international human rights treaty, then it must accept the responsibilities and obligations that come with being a member.

In its List of Issues, the CRC called for additional information regarding measures taken to (13.c) “combat the use and exploitation of children for political purposes” and (17.d) “The number of children involved in the armed conflict by both State and non-State actors.”

Our supplemental submission highlights additional examples relating to the exploitation of Palestinian children by the Palestinian Authority and Palestinian armed groups:

Incitement of Children

¹ Members of the Institute’s Advisory Board include Elliott Abrams, Senior Fellow for Middle Eastern Studies at the Council on Foreign Relations; former Canadian Ambassador to Israel, Amb. Vivian Bercovici; Amb. John Bolton, US National Security Advisor and former US Permanent Representative to the UN; Hon. Michael Danby, MP, senior member of the Australian Labor Party; Harvard Professor Prof. Alan Dershowitz; Canadian Senator, Hon. Linda Frum; best-selling author and commentator and British journalist and international affairs commentator, Tom Gross; Colonel Richard Kemp, former commander of British forces in Iraq and Afghanistan; Douglas Murray, Director of the Centre for Social Cohesion, best-selling author and commentator; former Member of Italian Parliament, Hon. Fiamma Nirenstein, UCLA Professor and President of the Daniel Pearl Foundation, Prof. Judea Pearl; US Jurist and former Legal Advisor to the State Department Judge Abraham Sofaer; Dr. Einat Wilf, former member of Knesset with the Israel Labor Party and advisor to Shimon Peres; Harvard Professor Prof. Ruth Wisse; R. James Woolsey, former US Director of Central Intelligence; and Israeli Supreme Court Justice, Justice Elyakim Rubinstein.

On May 26, 2018, [the Dar al Huda kindergarten](#) in Gaza held a graduation ceremony that included the mock killing and kidnapping of Israelis by children dressed as combatants. The simulation included sophisticated equipment such as drones, body cameras, military fatigues, body armor, and sniper camouflage. Children wore headbands representing Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), designated as a terrorist organization by the US, [EU](#), and others. According to the Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, Dar al Huda held similarly exploitative military-style events in in [2017](#) and [2016](#).

These celebrations both highlight the rampant incitement to violence and indoctrination of children by Palestinian educational institutions beginning at the youngest ages, as well as the failure of international donors and UN actors to adequately examine grantees and project partners. The relationship between the funders and the kindergarten where incitement takes place adds to the resources available for this indoctrination and gives the terrorist organization international legitimacy.

On July 25, 2018, the Al Bustan Center published on Facebook [pictures of a youth camp ceremony](#) in which young Palestinians wore flags on their T-shirts to represent various countries. The teenagers representing Israel and the United States brandished guns and proceeded to conduct a [mock execution](#) of “Palestine.”

In a 2017 [article](#) published on her blog, Sara Qaraein, project “[coordinator](#)” for Al Bustan, explained that “for the fifth year in a row, the Al Bustan Society in the town of Silwan held a week of steadfast activities,” including visits to “a group of the prisoners’ families, who were sentenced for a long term in order to support them.” In 2017, Al Bustan featured [visits to such prisoners’ families](#) on its own Facebook account, including visits made by children. Al Bustan [Chairman of the Board of Directors](#), Kutaybah Odeh, took part in these visits and “declared that these family visits, and particularly to those [of prisoners] with extended prison sentences, have great meaning and importance for introducing the steadfast generation to the suffering of the prisoners in jail.”

Qaraein has also [published a photo](#) featuring children wearing military uniforms, including a child wearing what appears to be Hamas paraphernalia and holding a rocket.

A December 11, 2019 article in the *Jerusalem Post* notes that [a plaque of a 17-year-old female suicide bomber](#) has been placed “in her honor” at the entrance to a Bethlehem High School for Girls. The text of the plaque reads that ““This memorial was established in cooperation between the Education Directorate [a branch of the PA Ministry of Education] and the Fatah Shabiba [Youth Movement] organization, in order to commemorate the Martyrs of the Al-Aqsa Intifada at the Bethlehem High School for Girls for the anniversary of the outbreak of the Palestinian revolution Jan. 1, 2003 Martyr Ayyat Al-Akhras. Martyr Nida Al-Izz.” The teenage suicide bomber was responsible for killing two and injuring 28 individuals, near a supermarket in Jerusalem in March 2002.

On August 14, 2019, a “young Palestinian” was arrested by the IDF after he [broke through the Gaza-Israel security fence](#). On December 11, 2019, children participated in a Hamas Al-Qassam Brigades rally in Gaza:



Source: Joe Truzman, December 11, 2019: <https://twitter.com/Jtruzmah/status/1204829567283650560>

Recruitment and Use of Palestinian Children

Since March 30, 2018, Hamas and other Palestinian terror groups have organized violent confrontations along Gaza’s border with Israel under the label of the “March of Return.” The marches comprised violent protests, including organized armed attack on the Israeli border and military positions, attempts to destroy and breach the border fence, and sustained arson, rocket and mortar attacks on Israel’s civilian communities, as well as the exploitation of children to perpetrate these acts.

A [July 2019 report by the UN Secretary-General](#) highlights the recruitment and use of children as soldiers by Palestinian armed groups and mentions incidents where Israeli children were targeted. The Secretary-General urged “**all Palestinian actors to refrain from encouraging children’s participation in violence. I call upon the al-Quds and al-Qassam Brigades to immediately cease the recruitment and use of children, and I further request my Special Representative to further examine recruitment and use by armed groups**” (emphasis added). The UN verified “the recruitment and use of three 17-year-old boys in Gaza (two) and the West Bank (one) by the Palestinian Islamic Jihad’s al-Quds Brigades, Hamas’ al-Qassam Brigades and an unidentified Palestinian armed group (one each).” (It should be noted that, based on publicly-available materials [gathered by NGO Monitor](#) and others, there are many more examples of such recruitment and use by Palestinian actors in Gaza and the West Bank.) The report further acknowledges that “Three boys were injured while committing or allegedly attempting to commit stabbing attacks against Israelis.”

Indeed, in 2019, there were a number of documented instances of recruitment and use of Palestinian minors by armed groups, such as [Hamas](#) and the [PFLP](#). For example, at least five Palestinian minors carried out terrorist attacks against Israelis in 2019. These included a 14-year-old boy who [stabbed](#) a woman at a bus stop, a 16-year-old girl who was shot trying to [stab a soldier](#) at a checkpoint, a 16-year-old who attempted to [stab](#) a border police officer in Jerusalem’s Old City, a 15-year-old who was caught by police near Hebron’s Cave of the Patriarchs [brandishing a knife](#), and a 15-year-old who [stabbed](#) an Israeli father and his 17-year-old son visiting a dentist in a West Bank village, after asking the victims if they were Jewish.

As noted in NGO Monitor's original submission, Palestinian children were encouraged to participate in the March of Return riots.²

Unfortunately, Palestinian child recruitment is underreported and virtually unstudied by the UN agencies, Palestinian NGOs, and the human rights community. In a [bulletin](#) published on December 22, 2017, UNICEF acknowledged that it was “**not in a position to document cases of child recruitment and use of children**” (emphasis added) by armed groups in Gaza, even though many of its NGO partners ([PCHR](#), [World Vision](#), [Save the Children](#), UNRWA, and WHO) have a presence there. This disingenuous claim was then echoed in the 2017 UN Secretary-General's [report on Children and Armed Conflict](#), which states that “The United Nations did not receive reports of the recruitment and use of children in 2016; however, **this violation is difficult to document, particularly in Gaza**” (emphasis added). No explanation was provided as to why it is difficult to document, nor were proposed solutions offered to remedy this failure.

Palestinian Terrorism Targeting Children

In 2019, a number of Israeli minors were injured and killed in terror attacks, including a 9-year-old boy who was injured in a [shooting attack](#) and a 16-year-old who was [stabbed](#) in the upper torso in Jerusalem's Old City. On August 23, 2019, 17-year-old Rina Shnerb was murdered in a [bombing](#) that injured her father and brother carried out by a PFLP terror cell commanded by Samer Arbid. According to the Israel Security Agency (Shabak), Arbid prepared and detonated the explosive device. Arbid had previously worked for [PFLP-linked NGOs](#) [Addameer](#) and the [Union of Agricultural Work Committees \(UAWC\)](#).

Israeli children in the Gaza border region suffer psychological effects of years of rocket barrages. In 2018 65% of [callers](#) to the NATAL — Israel Trauma and Resiliency Center hotline reporting PTSD symptoms were from southern Israel, the area hit hardest by rockets from Gaza. NATAL reports that a quarter of all calls were from Israeli children affected by Gaza violence. A viral video of a 5-year-old girl shaking and cowering in fear from these attacks [epitomizes the travesty of this Palestinian campaign](#).

In November 2019, Palestinian armed groups launched more than 450 rockets and mortars at Israeli population centers including the cities of Ashdod, Ashkelon, Be'er Sheva, and Tel Aviv. These indiscriminate attacks on civilians, each one a war crime, [forced schools throughout southern and central Israel](#) to be closed for several days [impacting more than 1million children](#).

Children in southern Israeli are also put in physical and psychological danger by incendiary balloons, kites, and other airborne devices with explosives attached that are launched from Gaza. Many of these devices are designed to appear as toys to attract children, placing children in southern Israel in physical danger and creating a “[severe psychological effect](#).”

² According to Hamas interior minister [Fathi Hamad](#), “We will teach our children, starting from kindergarten to school age, how they must move forward to liberate our land. Young people of Gaza; after you finish your advanced courses in the March of return, you must join the (military arms of Hamas). After one year we managed to recruit all the young people of Gaza.”