
Submission of the Institute for NGO Research for the 83rd Pre-sessional Working Group Review of the “State of Palestine”

Introduction

The Institute for NGO Research¹ brings this submission in advance of the 83rd Pre-sessional Working Group (3-7 June 2019) meeting for the review of “State of Palestine” and its compliance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child. We hope that this submission will aid the Committee in its preparation of the List of Issues to the Palestinian Authority.

This submission focuses on the rampant campaign of incitement targeting children within the Palestinian Authority (PA). This campaign of incitement is endemic throughout Palestinian society and has damaged many generations of Palestinian children. Palestinian incitement undergirds the ongoing armed conflict with Israel and is responsible for countless deaths of both Palestinians and Israelis. It also underlies the extensive recruitment and use of Palestinian children as combatants. Any review of the PA’s compliance with the CRC must address this issue in depth. Failure to do so will represent a significant lapse in evaluating the PA’s adherence to and compliance with the CRC.

We are also highly disturbed that the PA’s report to the Committee and several NGO submissions appear to excuse or diminish the PA’s obligations under the CRC due to the ongoing armed conflict with Israel and control of Gaza by Hamas. More than 95% of the Palestinian population falls under the control of the Palestinian Authority and therefore under its jurisdiction and responsibility pursuant to the CRC. This jurisdiction and responsibility also includes Gaza. It is important, therefore, that the Committee does not give the PA a pass on compliance with its obligations under the CRC while shifting blame onto others. The Committee is tasked with upholding the human rights of children as specified by the CRC. It should not indulge excuses for noncompliance by the PA.

The CRC Explicitly Demands Children Be Protected from Incitement Campaigns

The vulnerability of children and the need to protect them from incitement and violence is a cornerstone of the CRC.

The Preamble of the CRC states that

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; 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.

Recognizing that the United Nations has, in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in the International Covenants on Human Rights, proclaimed and agreed that everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth therein, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status,

Recalling that, in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the United Nations has proclaimed that childhood is entitled to special care and assistance,

Convinced that the family, as the fundamental group of society and the natural environment for the growth and well-being of all its members and particularly children, should be afforded the necessary protection and assistance so that it can fully assume its responsibilities within the community,

Recognizing that the child, for the full and harmonious development of his or her personality, should grow up in a family environment, in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding,

Considering that the child should be fully prepared to live an individual life in society, and brought up in the spirit of the ideals proclaimed in the Charter of the United Nations, and in particular in the spirit of peace, dignity, tolerance, freedom, equality and solidarity,

Under Article 17 of the CRC, States parties must ensure that children have access to media and information

from a diversity of national and international sources, especially those aimed at the promotion of his or her social, spiritual and moral well-being and physical and mental health.

To this end, States Parties shall:

- (a) Encourage the mass media to disseminate information and material of social and cultural benefit to the child and in accordance with the spirit of article 29;
- (e) Encourage the development of appropriate guidelines for the protection of the child from information and material injurious to his or her well-being, bearing in mind the provisions of articles 13 and 18.

Government promotion of incitement, violence, and discriminatory materials is incompatible with this provision.

Similarly, Article 19.1 requires State Parties to protect children from violence and exploitation, including private facilities, schools, and other institutions that have responsibility for children:

1. States Parties shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child.

Article 29 requires State Parties to ensure that education promotes:

(b) The development of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and for the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations;

(c) The development of respect for . . . civilizations different from his or her own;

(d) The preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin;

Under Article 36, States Parties “shall protect the child against all other forms of exploitation prejudicial to any aspects of the child's welfare.”

Article 38 mandates that States Parties observe the rules of international humanitarian law (IHL) relevant to children including barring recruitment and use of child soldiers and protecting children impacted by armed conflict:

2. States Parties shall take all feasible measures to ensure that persons who have not attained the age of fifteen years do not take a direct part in hostilities.

3. States Parties shall refrain from recruiting any person who has not attained the age of fifteen years into their armed forces. In recruiting among those persons who have attained the age of fifteen years but who have not attained the age of eighteen years, States Parties shall endeavour to give priority to those who are oldest.

4. In accordance with their obligations under international humanitarian law to protect the civilian population in armed conflicts, States Parties shall take all feasible measures to ensure protection and care of children who are affected by an armed conflict.

The Palestinian Authority has extensively violated all of these CRC provisions.

The Palestinian Authority Targets Children with Violent Incitement

Despite the clear obligations mandated by the CRC, the PA has routinely ignored the protection of children. Not only does the PA fail to protect its children from incitement, it has fully adopted and implemented a program targeting children, flooding them with racist and

antisemitic messages, encouraging children to participate in violence, and heroicizing those who engage in antisemitism and extreme violence. This program emphasizes the targeting of civilians. **The PA also rewards via its “pay to slay” policy those who commit violence (including children) with cash payments. The greater the crime and the more victims injured or killed, the more money received. More than \$300 million of humanitarian aid intended for social programs is diverted annually for this perverse scheme.**

The campaign targeting children begins from birth and continues throughout childhood and the teenage years. It takes place through state media, schools (including those run by UNWRA), youth groups and centers, and sporting and cultural events in both the West Bank and Gaza.

This campaign has been extensively documented by NGOs, governments, and international institutions. This submission highlights only a few examples of thousands of cases. **The Institute for NGO Research hopes it can share this material and additional cases with the Committee in person during the Pre-sessional Working Group.**

One such group examining PA incitement is the organization, IMPACT-se, a “research, policy and advocacy organization that monitors and analyzes education.” IMPACT-se conducts in-depth reviews and analyses of the Palestinian educational curriculum and textbooks. Its studies have documented significant incitement of Palestinian children. For example, IMPACT-se’s 2019 report, [“Wasatia Education: Exploring the Palestinian Curriculum,”](#) details this campaign. Palestinian students are taught that “those who die as martyrs while fighting their enemies receive seventy-two virgin brides, among other rewards in paradise.” IMPACT-se explains that this idea does not exist in the Qur’an but “is falsely tied to the Qur’an’s Surah Muhammad [47], taught in a textbook on Islamic education.” Moreover, “no historical context or explanation is given to students.”

The Palestinian curriculum emphasizes “jihad” and singularly defines it as warfare. According to IMPACT-se, “The title, image and six Qur’anic verses are selected to support this interpretation without context. The content covers the psychological and practical dimensions of war. In this lesson students are encouraged to discuss the goals of militant jihad and the wonders of martyrs. No other interpretation of the meaning of jihad is offered.”

IMPACT-se’s report further details how the Palestinian curriculum uses “subliminal violent messaging” in math, science, and other subjects. For example, Newton’s Second Law is taught “through the image of a boy with a slingshot targeting soldiers. In other words, to explain power, mass and tensile strength, circular motion and elastic energy are taught through the use of such slingshots.”

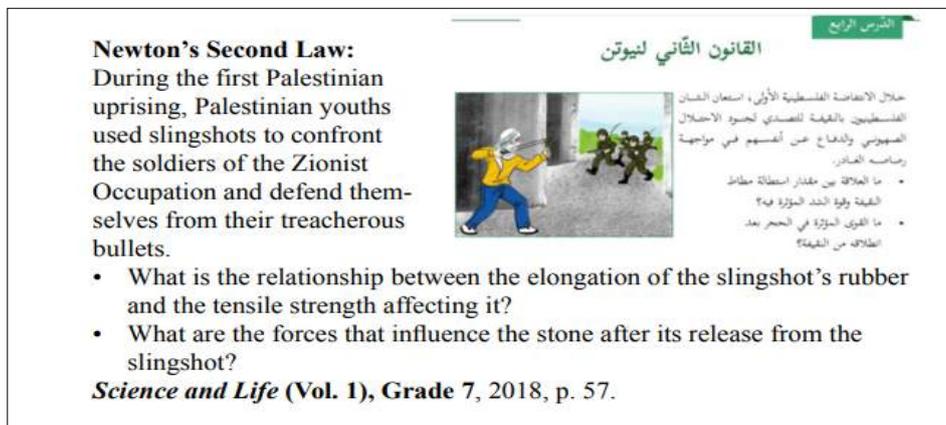


Figure 1: Source: IMPACT-se, “Wasatia Education: Exploring the Palestinian Curriculum,” 2019: http://www.impact-se.org/wp-content/uploads/WASATIA-IMPACT-Booklet_Digital-Format-A5.pdf

Palestinian Media Watch (PMW) is “an Israeli research institute that studies Palestinian society from a broad range of perspectives by monitoring and analyzing the Palestinian Authority through its media and schoolbooks.” It has documented hundreds of examples of official media promoting antisemitism, discrimination, and violent incitement and targeting such messages towards children.

For instance, on March 18, 2019, on the official PA TV station, a Fatah official referred to two murderers who killed four Israelis as “[the role models for the children](#).” On May 29, 2017, the [Al-Huda Kindergarten YouTube Channel](#) featured a video of the graduation ceremony of the kindergarden in Gaza, which is affiliated with the Palestinian Islamic Jihad terror group. The children in the performance are seen “armed with toy weapons and wearing military uniforms and Islamic Jihad headbands. They simulate killing other children playing Israeli soldiers dressed as ultra-Orthodox Jews and abducting their bodies, after the ‘Israeli soldiers’ attacked children playing Palestinian civilians.” A Hamas song in Hebrew is playing in the background, with lyrics including “O Zionist, a rocket will reach you where you live... I will make you drink the cup of death.”

PMW also shows that [official PA media regularly posts pictures of children with assault rifles](#).

The PA also [glorifies child terrorists](#), encouraging other youth to follow their example. For example, Ahmad Manasrah, a 13-year-old who “stabbed and almost killed a 13-year-old Israeli boy. Manasrah had a school football tournament named after him, in which many PA schools participated. Such a tournament gives Palestinian children of the same age as the terrorist a clear idea of who their role model should be and who they should imitate.”

On April 6, 2018, the PA [celebrated the “participation” of a six-month-old baby in the violence along the Israel-Gaza border](#). The Official Fatah Facebook page posted a picture of the infant in a pile of tires with the caption “a child no older than six months was among participants in the demonstrations today (Friday) and in the March of Return events on the eastern border of the Gaza Strip.”



PMW also reported that in March 2019, the [Beitunia Upper Elementary School for Girls hosted a sports festival that was named after Dalal Mughrabi](#), a terrorist who murdered 37 Israeli civilians, including 12 children, in a 1978 terror attack. The school’s Facebook page featured a picture of girls at the event wearing t-shirts with an image of the terrorist. The photo’s caption read “With considerable creativity, the events of the Dalal Mughrabi Sports Festival took place today [March 13, 2019] in the presence of Director of the Education Directorate, brother Bassem Erekat, District Governor of Ramallah and El-Bireh Laila Ghannam, and Beitunia Mayor brother Ribhi Dawla.”

PMW further explains that the PA has named [32 schools after Dalal Mughrabi](#). A PA schoolbook also refers to her as a hero:

“Heroes have an important position in every nation... Every nation is prouder the more heroes it has, and the people – even if they are divided over many things – they all agree regarding the pride in their heroes, because without them the nation would be degraded... We are proud of them, sing their praise, learn the history of their lives, name our children after them, and name streets, squares, and prominent cultural sites after them... every one of us wishes to be like them... Thus they created a glorious history for the nation – they are the heroes. Who among us has forgotten... Dalal Mughrabi, Yasser Arafat, and others among those moons that never set [but] illuminate the darkness of our dark nights? Our great homeland embraces all of them... These heroes are the crown of their nation, they are a symbol of its glory, they are the best of the best, the best of the noble people. They took their lives in their hands and threw them at the dangers... Therefore they are worthy of being heroes, commemorated by history, and their memory will remain as a musk perfume that spreads its scent. Bravo to the heroes, and scorn to the cowards!” [PA 5th Grade Arabic Language Textbook, Part A, (August 2017), pp 13 -14]

In January 2017, Official PA TV featured a young [boy reciting a poem encouraging the “slaughter” of Israelis and glorifying death](#). [PMW’s website](#) contains countless other examples of Official PA media glorifying child soldiers and inciting Palestinian youth.

The PA Promotes the Recruitment and Use of Children as Combatants

The CRC explicitly forbids the recruitment and use of child soldiers. Yet, the recruitment and use of Palestinian children by the PA is endemic.

The ruling Fatah party’s Tanzim and the Al-Aqsa Martyrs’ Brigades recruit and use children as combatants. Many other organizations in and members of the PA, the Palestinian Legislative Council, and the Palestine Liberation Organization are part of Palestinian terror groups such as Hamas, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), the DFLP, and others. The PA routinely allows armed groups to recruit on school campuses under the guise of carrying out “social programs.” Such activity allows vulnerable children to be placed in contact with violent actors, placing them at risk for recruitment.

Children have been recruited and used throughout the history of the Palestinians’ war with Israel. Violence on the Israel-Gaza border, which began in March 2018, is the latest example of this phenomenon. From the outset, children were recruited by PA-affiliated and other Palestinian armed groups. A Facebook post written by the organizers of the border riots, for instance, calls on [youth to participate in terror](#), stating:

“Rebelling young people, Treat seriously and do not take lightly the requests to bring a knife, dagger, or handgun, if you have one, and to leave them under your clothes and not use them or show them, except if you identify one of the [Israeli] soldiers or settlers. Do not kill Israeli civilians, instead hand them over to the resistance immediately, because this is the point that Israel fears, as it knows that the capturer can set any condition he wants.”

Another example is a music video broadcast numerous times on official PA TV, which highlights as a role model 17-year-old [female suicide bomber](#) Ayyat Al-Akhras, and promotes death as a Martyr for Al-Aqsa: ‘God, grant us Martyrdom... A million grooms and brides... have written the marriage contract in blood.’”

In April 2017, a PA TV show featured a girl instructing other kids to aim to kill and be killed, stating, “Shoot, shoot, in the name of God. The path of the [Martyrs](#) is above all.”

Furthermore, according to PMW, “the official PA news agency Wafa lauded dead [teenage terrorists](#) for achieving ‘Martyrdom’ (Shahada) rather than graduating with a matriculation exam certificate (also in Arabic Shahada).”

Incitement, Recruitment and Use by Palestinian Armed Groups Allowed by the PA

Not only does the PA extensively participate in recruitment and use, it also does nothing to prevent incitement campaigns and recruitment and use by Hamas, Islamic Jihad, PFLP, and other Palestinian armed groups. Failure to stop recruitment and use of children by armed groups is also a grave violation of the PA's obligations under the CRC.

The following are only a few of the many examples of incitement and child recruitment and use by Palestinian armed groups.

For instance, in August 2014, the PFLP terror group launched the "[we are all resistance](#)" campaign to provide "psychosocial support for children in shelters and distribution of aid to displaced people" in Gaza." Members of the campaign visited UNRWA schools, with the PFLP "volunteers" working to support a collective vision of resistance." This campaign placed vulnerable children in proximity to terror operatives and was clearly aimed at recruiting children to the PFLP.



Figure 2: Source: PFLP, "We are All Resistance" campaign supports families and children," August 12, 2014: <http://pflp.ps/english/2014/08/12/we-are-all-resistance-campaign-supports-families-and-children/>

In August 2017, the PFLP linked student organization, the Progressive Student Labor Front (PSLF), organized a "mass rally to salute outstanding students in public high schools in an event called 'Planting and Building,' [in honor of the martyrs Ghassan Kanafani and Basil al-Araj.](#)" According to the PFLP terror group, the event was attended by "large numbers of students, teachers and professors, comrades of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, cadres of the Progressive Student Labor Front in addition to representatives of the Palestinian factions and civil society organizations." Far from being positive role models for children, Kanafani, a leader of the PFLP, was involved in the planning the Lod Airport Massacre that killed 26 civilians, and al-Araj, head of a terror cell, was killed while shooting at police during an arrest attempt.



Figure 3: Students at the event dressed in PFLP garb. Source: PFLP, “Progressive Student Labor Front salutes outstanding students in mass festival in Gaza,” August 7, 2017: <http://pflp.ps/english/2017/08/07/progressive-student-labor-front-salutes-outstanding-stu>

The PFLP has repeatedly praised, glorified, and encouraged children to participate in the Palestinian “stabbing intifada” against Israeli civilians.

In March 2016, the PFLP praised the “[heroic successive resistance actions carried out by Palestinian young people in the uprising](#).” The PFLP terror group added that “the youth of the intifada, with their blood, sacrifice, will and determination in their ability to penetrate the Zionist security system inside the occupying entity, are escalating their resistance against the heinous crimes of the occupation against our people.”

In October 2015, the PFLP posted an article “[Palestinian Progressive Youth Union: The rising intifada and revolution of the youth](#),” encouraging young Palestinians to:

1. Joining with the heroes of the Palestinian resistance to confront the enemy forces with all forms of weapons and resistance.
2. The formation of committees and popular protection groups, as a popular response to the crimes of the settlers for the protection of our people, villages and farms; not only to defend, but to attack the fascist cowardly settler hordes.
3. Launch the battle in the streets to liberate the occupied West Bank, it is unacceptable that we are banned from our streets while the settlers invade our communities with massive violence.

4. Rallying and demonstrating in Jerusalem, Nablus and everywhere to break the siege on our proud capital and the steadfast Mountain of Fire.

5. Sending our support to the families of the heroes and the martyrs and rally around their families and protect them by all means against attempts by the enemy to demolish their homes.

6. We call on our brothers in the Palestinian security services to join with the resistance and popular committees to defend our people and confront the crimes of the settlers and disobey all orders that call upon them to carry out political arrests and security coordination with the occupation.

7. Universities, schools, institutions, youth centers, women's unions, neighborhood and popular committees in the villages and camps, sports clubs and our entire people in the camps and in diaspora, one people with one cause, are called upon to join the activities of the popular uprising, to mobilize and harness all of their capacities in support of the uprising and its continuation.

In August 2017, the PFLP posted an article "[Palestinian youth honor Naji al-Ali with Leila Khaled in Ein el-Helweh refugee camp](#)," discussing how Palestinian "youth organizers" invited "Comrade Leila Khaled, icon of resistance and member of the Political Bureau of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine to open the exhibition" in Lebanon. Leila Khaled participated in armed hijackings of TWA Flight 840 in 1969 and El Al Flight 219 in 1970.

In July 2012, the PFLP posted an article about how a youth camp honored "[the martyr and great Palestinian writer and national leader, Comrade Ghassan Kanafani](#)." According to the PFLP, "The camp included over 100 boys and girls for 12 days, in which they participated in cultural and educational activities about the life of Ghassan Kanafani, Palestinian literature, and the history and future of Palestine."

An August 2015 PFLP post "UNRWA crisis is being manufactured to liquidate refugees' rights," features young children holding PFLP posters.



Figure 4: Source: PFLP, “UNRWA crisis is being manufactured to liquidate refugees’ rights,” August 9, 2015:

Hamas regularly recruited and used children in the context of the violence on the Israel-Gaza border that began in March 2018. For example:

- March 25, 2018: [Hamas sent a 7-year-old girl to the Gaza security fence during protests](#). The IDF ensured that she returned to her parents safely.
- April 23, 2018: YNet News published an article “IDF: [Hamas sending children](#) at us.” The IDF is quoted stating that “ [Hamas encourages young children](#), some of them aged no more than 10, to take part in riots on the Gaza border fence—using them as glorified human shields with the knowledge that the IDF will refrain from shooting at them.” The article features numerous photos of children throwing rocks, using slingshots, and collecting tires (to be burnt along the fence). The article also includes video footage of [children participating in the demonstrations](#).
- April 24, 2018: An article in Israel Hayom “ [Hamas uses children as human shields](#),” features a photo of children participating in the violent demonstrations.
- July 25, 2018: The IDF stated that “deadly violence” that took place on the [Gaza border](#) on July 25 began with a “bait” riot staged by children, which lured IDF soldiers into Hamas and other terror groups’ sniper range.

In the midst of the border operations, Hamas also held “summer camps” for Palestinian children to indoctrinate and provide military training:

Most of the activity is devoted to basic military training. The youths are trained by instructors wearing uniforms bearing the insignia and badges of Hamas’s Izz al-Din alQassam Brigades. In addition to summer camps held in Hamas facilities, summer camps are held in schools throughout the Gaza Strip. Most of them are organized by Hamas on a wider scale (tens of thousands of participants). The summer camps in schools are also devoted primarily to military training and ideological indoctrination by Hamas.[1] Training during these summer camps is a supplement to the military training, both theoretical and practical, undergone by high school students during the school year.⁶⁴

The slogan for the 2018 summer camps was “I am returning to my homeland,” referring to the ultimate objective of the border attacks of “return” – a euphemism for the destruction of the State of Israel. The [camps also included specific military training](#) for the “marches” such as “launching balloons, throwing stones, collecting tires and glorifying the shaheeds killed during the ‘marches.’” Simulating and training for the abduction of Israeli soldiers was a significant component.

In May 2018, a [16-year-old was killed during the violence along the Israel-Gaza border](#). Palestinian Islamic Jihad posted a death notice for the individual including a photo of him wearing military uniform.

Recommendations

This submission has highlighted only a small portion of the extreme campaigns of incitement, violence, and recruitment and use actively carried out by the Palestinian Authority and Palestinian armed groups targeting Palestinian children. Fully documenting this destructive campaign would require providing thousands upon thousands of pages to the Committee.

Rather than promoting a positive supportive environment for Palestinian children to thrive, this campaign fosters hatred, antisemitic discrimination, prolonged armed conflict, and endemic societal violence. This poisonous campaign is not only a violation of the PA’s obligations under the CRC but is the primary obstacle to peace with Israel.

We therefore recommend the Committee address the following at its 83rd Pre-sessional Working Group and include the following on its list of issues:

The Committee must ask the PA to address the issue of incitement in its reporting to the Committee.

The Committee must ask the PA what it is doing to combat campaigns of antisemitism, racial discrimination, and violent incitement by Palestinian armed groups, including Hamas.

The Committee must ask the PA what it is doing to combat the recruitment and use of child soldiers by itself and other Palestinian armed groups.

The Committee must confront the PA about its “pay to slay” program and the eligibility of children to receive this perverse funding.

In addition, the Institute for NGO Research also requests a meeting with the Committee so that it can present this material and additional cases during the Pre-sessional Working Group.

Respectfully submitted,

Anne Herzberg
Legal Advisor, NGO Monitor
UN Liaison, Institute for NGO Research