

# Disturbing Photos Show Militarization of Israeli Children

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An Israeli boy wearing a military vest throws a mock grenade during a traditional military weapon display to mark the 66th anniversary of Israel's "independence" at the occupied West Bank settlement of Efrat on 6 May 2014. ([Gali Tibbongali](#) / [AFP](#))

On 6 May, Israelis celebrated their "independence day," which they mark according to the Jewish lunar calendar.

Traditionally Israeli Jews hold public celebrations and picnics, especially in "national parks" [typically built over the ruins](#) of ethnically cleansed and destroyed Palestinian villages.

Meanwhile, with [broad support from the Israeli Jewish public](#), Palestinian public commemorations of the [Nakba](#) - the ethnic cleansing of Palestine - can be [punished by law](#).

Many of the Israeli festivities are celebrations of the so-called "Israel Defense Forces," better known to Palestinians as the army that occupies them, arrests and kills their children with [impunity](#) and helps settlers to steal their land.



An Israeli child holds a rocket launcher as another holds her doll during a traditional military weapon display to mark the 66th anniversary of Israel's "independence" at the occupied West Bank settlement of Efrat on 6 May 2014. ([Gali Tibbongali](#) / [AFP](#))

Some of these disturbing images of Israeli children being put through military-style training displays at [Efrat](#), an illegal Israeli colony in the occupied West Bank, have been circulating widely online and were published [in Haaretz](#) and [other media](#).

A repeated theme of pro-Israeli, anti-Palestinian propaganda is to circulate [images of Palestinian children taking part in such militarized displays](#) in order to advance the belief that Palestinian culture is inherently violent and "teaches children hate" and that therefore Israeli violence is a justified defensive response.

But these pictures are remarkable because they reveal the extent to which Israeli culture has been militarized and how Israeli children are not immune to this - a key theme in [Max Blumenthal's book Goliath](#).

There is no doubt that both Israeli and Palestinian children have been subjected to this kind of brutalization by adults. It is horrifying whenever children are given guns and encouraged to imagine themselves as killers.

Such activities are arguably in violation of the [UN Convention on the Rights of the Child](#), which states that member countries “shall refrain from recruiting any person who has not attained the age of fifteen years into their armed forces.”

As I wrote on a [previous occasion](#) when such disturbing images of Israeli children appeared:

Children live with the consequences of Israel’s violent occupation and oppression of the Palestinian people, whether it is Israeli children indoctrinated to continue this oppression as adults, or Palestinian children brutalized and traumatized by the organized violence of occupation, colonialism and apartheid that pervades their lives.

This is never a reflection on the children, but on the adults who subject them to such ugliness.



An Israeli boy wearing a military vest crawls on the sand during a traditional military weapon display to mark the 66th anniversary of Israel’s “independence” at the occupied West Bank settlement of Efrat on 6 May 2014. ([Gali Tibbongali](#) / [AFP](#))



An Israeli man shows his son how to work a machine-gun during a traditional military weapon display to mark the 66th anniversary of Israel’s “independence” at the occupied West Bank settlement of Efrat on 6 May 2014. ([Gali Tibbongali](#) / [AFP](#))

### Indoctrinating children

Rela Mazali is the founder of [New Profile](#) ([newprofile.org](#)), an Israeli organization that supports conscientious objection and advocates for individual [refusers](#).

In this video with [The Real News’ Lia Tarachansky](#), she explains how Israeli culture normalizes military conscription so that people do not even regard militarization as a policy choice but rather as a natural feature of life. The report also includes an interview with refuser Alex Cohn who discusses how Israeli Jewish children are indoctrinated through popular media to look forward to their conscription into the army and to disparage skepticism and refusal.

Mazali also discusses sexual violence in the Israeli military and how the culture has managed to make sexual harassment and assault invisible to its victims.

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