

# Israel's War Crimes Record: Killing and Maiming Children in Armed Conflicts

A Criminal Offender at Large, UN Listing or Not

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*Reports have come out that the UN was considering adding Israel to the list of "grave violations against children in armed conflict." As detailed below, Israeli army and Israel's state policies are systematically violent against Palestinian children.*

*A recent [Independent](#) article noted that [Special Envoy for Children and Armed Conflict Leila]*

*"Zerrougui's draft report cited IDF attacks on schools and hospitals during the 2014 war in the Gaza Strip..."*

Even though the UN has historically not taken strong action against any of Israel's war crimes over the decades, let alone those specifically against Palestinian children, Israel has reportedly exerted pressure to be de-listed from the draft list, with seeming success.

The Independent wrote,

*"UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, however, is said to be leaning towards not including Israel in the list, amid what several diplomatic sources anonymously said was intense lobbying from Israel."*

Apparently, Israel thinks such call for its joining the list is *"a heinous and hypocritical attempt to besmirch the image of Israel and it is doomed to fail,"* Foreign Ministry spokesman Emmanuel Nahshon reportedly said.

In fact, the UN should have listed Israel from at least 2009 when, as the UN website [notes](#), *"the Security Council decided to also list armed forces and groups who kill and maim children, commit sexual violence against children, and attack schools and hospitals."*

[#UN](#) should include [#Israel](#), [#Hamas](#), others in annual children and armed conflict report [@hrw](#) <http://t.co/uQvyrtYB1u>

— Rita Nehme (@ritajnehme) [June 4, 2015](#)

Does Israel violate the six [areas](#) detailed?

Five out of six, most definitely:

- Killing or maiming of children; [See below]
- Sexual violence against children; [The Israeli army routinely threatens and enacts [sexual abuse](#) of Palestinian children]
- Attacks against schools or hospitals; [The Israeli army routinely fires ammunition and [tear gas](#) at Palestinian schools; it has repeatedly bombed schools and hospitals in Gaza]
- Abduction of children; [See below]
- Denial of humanitarian access for children. [Israel's blockade on Gaza strangles the medical sector; Israel routinely denies exit to Palestinians ( including children) for medical care outside of Gaza; the illegal wall Israel has constructed throughout much of the West Bank prevents Palestinians (including children) from accessing [medical care](#).] [[see also](#): Al Mezan Releases Factsheet on Gazan Children's Access to Medical Care]
- Recruitment or use of children by armed forces and groups; [This is the one point which strictly speaking doesn't apply. However, the Israeli army has used [Palestinian](#) children as human shields]

Members of the Israeli army themselves have admitted various crimes. A Breaking the Silence [report](#) "Children and Youth – Soldiers' Testimonies 2005-2011" noted: *"This booklet reveals how physical violence is often exerted against children, whether in response to accusations of stone-throwing or, more often, arbitrarily."* Further [testimonies](#) following the the July/August 2014 war on Gaza highlight the brutality meted out on Palestinians (including children).

## **Killing or maiming of children**

Having between November 2008 and March 2013 lived a cumulative three years in the Gaza Strip, including during two Israeli waged massacres of Palestinians in Gaza, I present three (of too many) cases of Israel targeting children, of which I have personal knowledge. On January 4, 2009, Shahed Abu Halima lay cradled in her mother's arms, the family terrorized like Palestinians all over Gaza by incessant Israeli bombing. Their area, al-Atatra, west of Beit Lahiya in northern Gaza, was particularly hard-hit, and had been invaded by Israeli tanks.

Of the two shells that hit baby Shahed's home, at least one was white phosphorous, raining clumps of the chemical weapon down on the family. The flames which enveloped Shahed's body were not extinguishable, nor could her mother Sabah see through the smoke and flames to reach the infant. Shahed's dog-eaten, charred corpse was only found days later when Palestinian medics were finally allowed to enter the area. [[see](#):Next Time It Will Hurt More]



Farah Abu Halima, 3, severely burned by Israeli-fired White Phosphorus, January 4, 2009 (Photo by Eva Bartlett)

Also on January 4, 2009, Shireen Abu Helou continued nursing her dying baby, Farah (“joy” in Arabic), in a futile effort to bring the infant comfort while her family took cover from Israeli fire behind a bulldozed dirt mound in the Zeitoun district just south of Gaza City (infamous for the herding of entire families from the Samouni clan into one building and repeatedly bombing it; infamous for the point blank shootings of individuals, including 4-year-old Ahmed shot dead after crying about his father’s execution). One-year-old Farah did not survive the Israeli sniper’s bullet to her abdomen, her intestines falling out as she bled to death over the course of a few hours. [see: They Killed Me Three Times] On November 21, 2012, a 14-year-old boy asked his father for 10 shekels, to go to the small store up the road to buy food for his siblings who hadn’t eaten anything but bread for the past five days of Israeli bombing. The bombing had not quite stopped, but Nader Abu Mghaseeb believed he was safe, a ceasefire due to be enforced in just under two hours. He was incorrect. Minutes after the precision drone strike hit Nader, his father rushed out to find the dying, tangled mass of flesh that had been his son. In Deir al-Balah’s al-Aqsa hospital, I saw the teen’s mangled corpse brought in.

His stunned father stood outside trying to comprehend that Israeli-fired, precision drone

technology had obliterated his clearly unarmed 14-year-old son. [[see](#): Killing before the Calm: “Israeli” Attacks on Palestinian Civilians Escalated before Cease-fire] Two years and many Palestinian child martyrs and maimings later, during the July/August 2014 Israeli massacre of Gaza, four small boys ran for their lives across an empty Gaza beach as the Israeli navy chased them with shelling, eventually hitting their prey. The [shelling](#) of the Bakr boys, aged nine to 11, was recorded by a number of Palestinian and foreign journalists camped out at the nearby Deira hotel, many of whom broke down at witnessing this savagery.

Of the July/August Israeli massacre of Gaza, Defense for Children International-Palestine’s (DCI-Palestine) April 16, 2015 [report](#) noted: *“DCIP independently verified the deaths of 547 Palestinian children among the killed in Gaza, 535 of them as a direct result of Israeli attacks. Nearly 68 percent of the children killed by Israeli forces were 12 years old or younger. Those who survived these attacks will continue to pay the price for many years. More than 1,000 children suffered injuries that rendered them permanently disabled, according to OCHA.”*

The assault on Palestinian children is, of course, not merely limited to its times of bombing Gaza. Almost daily in Gaza’s [border regions](#) and [on the sea](#), children are machine-gunned and shelled by the genocidal bully of the region, under the pretext of “security.” Having witnessed this on countless occasions, myself under fire with the brave [farmers](#), I can say one hundred percent affirmatively that they posed no security threat to the well-armed Israeli army (nor navy). In the rest of occupied Palestine, whether during the criminal routine Israeli army invasions and lock-downs of West Bank and Jerusalem areas, or during demonstrations against the illegal Wall stealing yet more Palestinian land, or merely randomly,

Palestinian children are targeted by Israeli live ammunition, tear gas canisters, and hands-on brutality, not only by the so-called “most morale army” but also the unspoken of proxy soldiers: those vile, racist, illegal Jewish colonists who (claiming God’s approval) abuse Palestinians of all ages, without consequences. Early in the morning of July 2, 2014, Mohammed Abu Khdeir went [missing](#) while going to mosque for morning prayers in occupied Jerusalem. His slight body was found a few hours later charred and beaten. Before his Jewish colonist tormentors poured gas down his throat and lit him alive, they beat he the 16 year old with a blunt object to his head. The autopsy [report](#) *“showed soot in the victim’s lungs and respiratory tract, indicating he was alive and breathing while he was being burnt.”*

The systematic brutality of Israel’s colonists and Israeli soldiers against Palestinians is met with virtually no reprimand by Israel. On their “Settler violence: Lack of accountability,” rights group B’Tselem [noted](#) in 2011 (updated January 2013):

“When Israelis harm Palestinians, the authorities implement an undeclared policy of forgiveness, compromise, and leniency in punishment. Israeli security forces have done little to prevent settler violence or to arrest offenders. Many acts of violence have never been investigated; in other cases, investigations have been drawn out and resulted in no action being taken against anyone.”

In November 2013, Palestinian rights group Al Haq issued a new [report](#) (“Institutionalised Impunity: Israel’s Failure to Combat Settler Violence in the Occupied Palestinian Territory”) and [noted](#): *“According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian*

Affairs, the number of settler attacks resulting in Palestinian casualties and property damage increased by over 144 percent in 2011, compared to 2009. In 2013, the report of the United Nations International Fact-Finding Mission on Settlements highlighted the failure of the Israeli authorities to enforce the law by investigating such incidents and taking measures against their perpetrators. The Fact-Finding Mission came to the “clear conclusion that there is institutionalised discrimination against the Palestinian people when it comes to addressing violence. Acts of settler violence are intended, organised, and publicly represented to influence the political decisions of Israeli State authorities.” Throughout the West Bank and Jerusalem, Jewish colonists [routinely run over](#) Palestinian children. Two examples include an October 2014 hit and run near Ramallah of two 5 year old Palestinian girls, one of whom—Inas Shawkat Khalil—died from her injuries.



Reham Nabaheen, 4, killed by Israeli shrapnel to her head, November 21, 2012 (Photo by Eva Bartlett)

## **Child abduction and imprisonment**

According to Addameer Prisoner Support and Human Rights Association’s [April 2015 update](#), 182 Palestinian children are imprisoned by Israel, including 26 under the age of 16. They [note that](#) “8,000 Palestinian children have been arrested since 2000.” DCI-Palestine [notes](#): “Israel is the only country in the world that automatically prosecutes children in military courts that lack basic and fundamental fair trial guarantees. Interrogations tend to be coercive, including a variety of verbal abuse, threats and physical violence that ultimately result in a confession.”

They further note that most Israeli-imprisoned Palestinian children are nabbed in the middle of the night, something youths from Resistance villages like Bil’in are well-familiar with. Bil’in, known for its popular demonstrations against the illegal, land-grabbing Wall, has lost

many a martyr, including children to Israel's brutal attempts at stifling dissent (On that note: to all the media that leapt on the false, "*Bashar is killing unarmed protesters band-wagon*," Israel is actually doing so). That the UN is even considering not including Israel on the list speaks further volumes to the uselessness of this institution, a body that serves only to put the odd band-aid on the seeping Palestinian wound and to [endorse](#) criminal bombings of sovereign nations. In any case, Israel need not worry that anyone is trying to "besmirch" its reputation.

It has proven quite adept at doing that all on its own. Every blown-off Palestinian child's head, every Palestinian child behind Israeli bars, every Mohammed Abu Khdeir tortured and killed by Jewish colonists, and every colonists' intentional running over of Palestinian children "besmirches" what is left of the racist, genocidal state's reputation, with or without UN recognition.

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