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RESEARCH GUIDE

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RESEARCH GUIDE

UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL

CHILDREN AND ARMED CONFLICT IN THE OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORY

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PREFACE

Dear Delegates,

We would like to begin this message by thanking you for participating in the 11th edition of the FACAMP Model United Nations (FAMUN) and joining the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) simulations.

The FAMUN 2024 UNSC Secretariat elaborated this Research Guide to help delegates prepare for the simulation sessions with useful resources on the UNSC mandate and history of discussion on Children and Armed Conflict. Furthermore, in our simulation, we will focus on Children and Armed Conflict in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, which includes the Gaza Strip, West Bank, and East Jerusalem.

The UNSC adopted its first resolution on Children and Armed Conflict in 1999, recognizing the severe and numerous effects that armed conflict has on children. To inform UNSC delegates on the topic, the Introduction will discuss the six grave violations perpetrated against children by parties in conflict: the killing and maiming, recruitment and use of children as soldiers, sexual violence, abduction, attacks against schools and hospitals, and the denial of humanitarian access. The Introduction will also discuss the violations against children committed in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, with a focus on the destruction of civil infrastructure, the interruption of the right to education, and famine and food insecurity.

Furthermore, this Research Guide presents essential UN documents and extra resources, as well as UNSC Member States' and Observers' views on the topic, to foster productive discussions and aim at a unanimous resolution that protects children's rights and stop the grave violations committed against them in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

Lastly, by participating in FAMUN 2024, you will be able to develop important negotiation, communication, and persuasion skills. FAMUN is also a space to meet new people and build friendships with fellow delegates, in an effort to see past our differences and find common ground through





teamwork. It is also an opportunity to significantly improve your foreign language proficiency, such as English and Spanish.

We hope that FAMUN 2024 will be an enriching experience that allows you to think beyond your reality on international issues, as well as debate and propose innovative solutions to pressing global matters. We invite you to act now and make a difference!

Warm regards,

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INTRODUCTION

The United Nations Security Council (UNSC), as one of the six main organs¹ of the United Nations (UN), was established in 1945 and convened its inaugural session in January 1946, in London. Its authority and operations are delineated in Chapters V, VI, VII, and VIII of the UN Charter, and its primary mandate is to uphold international peace and security, acting on behalf of the UN Member States and according to its purposes and principles (United Nations, 2024; United Nations Security Council, 2024).

The UNSC is composed of fifteen members: five permanent² alongside ten non-permanent members, elected by the UN General Assembly (UNGA) for two-year terms. In addition, the Council features a monthly rotating Presidency, following the English alphabetical order of the Member States' names (United Nations Security Council, 2024).

Unlike most UN bodies, the UNSC does not rely on consensus but rather on voting to adopt a resolution. Each Council Member holds one affirmative vote, requiring a minimum of nine positive votes, including those of the permanent members, to adopt a resolution. But Member States have the option to abstain if they choose to do so. Additionally, under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, UNSC resolutions are legally binding, and all 193 UN Member States agree to accept and carry out the Council's decisions (United Nations, 2024; United Nations Security Council, 2024).

The initial concerns on the topic of Children and Armed Conflict were brought to the UNGA by the Committee on the Rights of the Child in 1994, with Resolution 48/157³ (United Nations General Assembly, 1994). The resolution expressed deep concern over the situation of children in armed conflict around the world and was followed by the nomination of Graça

¹ The six main organs of the UN are the General Assembly (UNGA), the Security Council (UNSC), the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), the Trusteeship Council, the Secretariat, and the International Court of Justice (ICJ) (United Nations, 2024).

² China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States (United Nations, 2024).

³ The topic was first brought under a different name: Protection of children affected by armed conflicts (United Nations General Assembly, 1994).





Machel, then Mozambique's Minister of Education, as an expert to deliver a report about the impact of armed conflict on children. The report was presented in 1996 to the UNGA, with the recommendation of nominating a special representative on Children and Armed Conflict (Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, 2023).

This nomination was accomplished with Resolution 51/77, in 1997, which also created the mandate of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict (United Nations General Assembly, 1997, p. 4-7). In 1998, Portugal, President of the UNSC at the time, made a Presidential Statement after the first debate on the topic, recognizing the importance of the mandate and supporting it (United Nations Security Council, 1998).

In 1999, the UNSC adopted its first resolution on Children and Armed Conflict (S/RES/1261), which condemned and appointed the enlistment and use of children as soldiers in armed conflicts as war crimes. Additionally, the resolution stated six grave violations against children committed by parties in conflict: killing and maiming, sexual violence, abduction of children, attacks against schools and hospitals, denial of humanitarian access, and recruitment of children as soldiers (United Nations Security Council, 1999, p. 1).

The resolution also expressed concern about the harmful impact of armed conflict on children and its long-term consequences for durable peace, security, and development. It also urged all parties in armed conflicts to ensure that the protection, well-being, and rights of children were taken into account during peace negotiations. The resolution also supported the ongoing work of the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), as well as other UN systems and organizations supporting children affected by armed conflict (United Nations Security Council, 1999, p. 1-4).

Since then, the Council's main goal in addressing Children and Armed





Conflict has been safeguarding children's well-being and rights while promoting peace and security, following its mandate (United Nations, 2022, p. 9-11). In this sense, between 2005 and 2021, the UNSC discussed crucial issues for protecting children and adopted resolutions emphasizing the importance of monitoring through governmental and non-governmental mechanisms. Accordingly, Resolution 1612 (2005) brought significant advances with the creation of the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM) and the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, composed of UNSC Member States (United Nations Security Council, 2005).

The MRM is responsible for collecting information and data on the grave violations committed against children in armed conflicts through the cooperation between governments, UN entities, and civil society actors. The data is then compiled into reports, which are received and reviewed by the Working Group. Then, the Group considers these reports to take informed actions to safeguard children affected by armed conflict effectively (United Nations Security Council, 2005, p. 1-5).

Furthermore, in 2009, with Resolution 1882, the UNSC continued to discuss the importance of child-supporting actors, such as UNICEF and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), for monitoring and reporting grave violations committed against children (United Nations Security Council, 2009, p. 1-5).

Between 2011 and 2014, the six grave violations and the destruction of Palestinian civil infrastructure were at the center of UNSC discussions. In 2011, with Resolution 1998, the Council condemned the destruction of schools and hospitals, as well as the use of such structures for military purposes, which is considered a grave violation (United Nations Security Council, 2011, p. 1-6). The need for cooperation between states and regional organizations to combat the killing and mutilation of children was a recurring theme in the 2012 debates, with Resolution 2068 (United Nations Security Council, 2012, p. 1-3). In 2014, protecting schools and ensuring access to the right to education





during conflicts were key topics in the Council discussions, culminating in Resolution 2143 (United Nations Security Council, 2014, p. 1-6).

Adopted in 2015, Resolution 222 expressed the Council's deep concern over the abduction and deprivation of the liberty of children, often by armed groups, followed by other abuses and violations of international law that may be considered war crimes. As such, the Resolution urged Member States and organizations to make efforts for the immediate release of these children from armed groups and to adopt measures for their rehabilitation and reintegration (United Nations Security Council, 2015, p. 4).

Furthermore, with Resolution 2427, adopted in 2018, the UNSC underscored the importance of diplomacy, mediation, and peace in protecting future generations from the scourge of war, while also seeking the reintegration and rehabilitation of affected children. It also emphasized the need for sustainable long-term financing of psychosocial and mental health programs in humanitarian contexts, to ensure that all affected children receive timely and adequate support and that their opinions are considered in educational activities (United Nations Security Council, 2018, p. 1).

In 2021, the Council prioritized education through Resolution 2601, affirming that it must be a fundamental priority for the international community. Member States were called upon to develop effective measures to prevent attacks on schools and their use as military bases, and to guarantee the safety of schools, students, and education personnel, encouraging immediate action to rehabilitate, repair, or replace attacked schools (United Nations Security Council, 2021, p. 1-3).

However, the UNSC is not the only UN body that discusses children's rights, as there is an entire normative structure for protecting children's rights under two main areas: Human Rights Law and International Humanitarian Law⁴. In this sense, it is important to consider certain

⁴ According to the International Committee of the Red Cross (2004), "international humanitarian law is a set of rules which seek, for humanitarian reasons, to limit the effects of armed conflict. It protects persons who are not or are no longer participating in the





conventions and protocols, such as the 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols, as well as the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War (1949) and its respective Additional Protocols, to provide a solid base of concepts embedded in jurisprudence and previous events.

In 1989, global leaders came together at the UN Headquarters in New York to adopt a convention on behalf of all children, aiming to protect and fulfill their irrevocable rights. This was the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which solidified the understanding that children are not their parents' possessions and have rights on their own. In this context, world leaders demonstrated a historic commitment to the welfare of children worldwide by adopting the Convention on the Rights of the Child (Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2024).

Nowadays, the Convention is the most extensively ratified Human Rights treaty⁵. More children are now receiving the nutrition and medical attention they require to survive and grow, and there are more robust measures in place to protect them from abuse and exploitation. This has prompted governments to alter domestic laws and policies and invest in these areas (United Nations Children's Fund, 2024).

Alongside the Convention, there are the Optional Protocols on the involvement of children in armed conflict, which serve as a complement to the Convention by bringing new agreements and definitions, such as the criminalization of sexual crimes against children and children's involvement in armed conflict. Adopted in 2000 by the UNGA⁶, the First Protocol entered into force in July 2002 and aims to stop the illegal recruitment of children

hostilities and restricts the means and methods of warfare. International humanitarian law is also known as the law of war or the law of armed conflict”.

⁵ The Convention on the Rights of the Child is ratified by 196 nations, some of which have expressed objections or reservations. All UN Members, except the United States, have either ratified or acknowledged the rights specified for children under the age of eighteen or below each state's majority age (United Nations Children's Fund, 2024).

⁶ Currently, the Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Minors in Armed Conflict is ratified by 173 parties. Seven states have signed the Protocol, but have not yet ratified it, while 17 others have yet to sign and ratify it (Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, 2024).





for warfare use, specifying a minimum recruitment age of eighteen years old. The Second Protocol entered into force in January 2002 and prohibits the sale of children, child pornography, and child prostitution (Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, 2024).

Other important treaties that cover International Humanitarian Law and guarantee children's protection during armed conflicts are the IV Geneva Convention (IVGC)⁷ and its Additional Protocols of 1977⁸. The IV Geneva Convention is concerned with the protection of civilians during wartime and, given the special vulnerability of children, declared specific provisions regarding the states' obligations to them, such as evacuation, the establishment of special zones, assistance and care, identification, family reunification and unaccompanied children, education, cultural environment, and exemption from the death penalty (International Committee of the Red Cross, 2003, p. 1; 2014).

Additionally, the IVGC makes it clear that civilian hospitals (i.e., those that demonstrate their civilian nature and refrain from using their facilities for purposes that may compromise their protection) must always be respected and protected by the parties involved in armed conflict and under no circumstances should be targeted. By the same token, it emphasizes the importance of affording every feasible facility for the continuation of studies or exploration of new disciplines, thereby ensuring the education of children and young people (International Humanitarian Law Database, 2024 a, p. 175-176; p. 200).

⁷ The Fourth Geneva Convention was adopted in 1949, the same year that the First, Second, and Third Geneva Conventions were revised and updated. That is why all of the Conventions are often referred to as the Geneva Conventions of 1949. However, the Fourth Geneva Convention is specifically relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War and includes children's specific rights.

⁸ Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts (Protocol I) and Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and relating to the Protection of Victims of Non-International Armed Conflicts (Protocol II), adopted on 8 June 1977.





Despite the creation and adoption of the Fourth Geneva Convention, there has been a continuous increase in the number of victims from non-international armed conflicts and domestic wars, demonstrating the insufficiency of the IVGC to adequately protect victims (International Humanitarian Law Databases, 2024 a). In this context, the adoption of the Additional Protocols of 1977 was deemed necessary to reinforce the protection of victims of international armed conflict (Additional Protocol I) and non-international armed conflict (Additional Protocol II), imposing limits on how wars are conducted (International Committee of the Red Cross, 2014; International Humanitarian Law Database, 2024 b).

Among the most suffering victims of armed conflict are children, who not only face physical and psychological hardships but also participate in them – a topic that differentiates Additional Protocols I and II. In this sense, Additional Protocol I require states to take all possible measures to prevent children under fifteen years old from taking direct part in hostilities, expressly prohibiting their recruitment into the armed forces and encouraging parties to prioritize recruitment among those aged between fifteen and eighteen (Art. 77). Additional Protocol II goes even further, prohibiting both the recruitment and participation – direct or indirect – in hostilities by children under fifteen years of age (Art. 4, paragraph 3c) (International Committee of the Red Cross, 2003, p. 1-2).

The situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, which includes the Gaza Strip, West Bank, and East Jerusalem, has been characterized by extreme violence for decades, due to the constant Israeli attacks on civilian infrastructure, forced displacement, the destruction of hospitals and schools, and the starvation of the Palestinian population. Such an environment is extremely harmful to the population living there, of whom 2.3 million are children – whose day-to-day life has been marked by poverty and insecurity, jeopardizing their development, and causing them to be in urgent need of humanitarian aid (Save The Children, 2024).





In the West Bank, cases of home demolition and forced displacement prevent children from living a dignified life with guaranteed human rights. Likewise, the military attacks in Gaza have been affecting children and non-combatants and violating International Humanitarian Law. In addition to the denial of humanitarian aid, hundreds of thousands of children are starving to death. That is why it is so important for the UNSC to discuss Children and Armed Conflict with a focus on the Occupied Palestinian Territory (Save The Children, 2024).

The six grave violations committed against children, as mentioned previously, have been escalating massively in the Occupied Palestinian Territory since 7 October 2023, when hostilities between Israel and Hamas regained traction. In this context, over 2.3 million children are suffering, over 13,800 were killed and over 12,009 were injured between October 2023 and May 2024. Furthermore, 84 percent of health facilities were damaged or destroyed and 625,000 children are out of school in Gaza, as the education system has collapsed (Save the Children, 2024; United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in The Near East, 2024 c). All this amounts to an attempt to dehumanize Palestinians, especially children, and constitutes a serious violation, not only of the six grave violations of children's rights but also of the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols, as well as the IVGC and its Additional Protocols.

Therefore, by observing the situation of children in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, three serious challenges can be identified. Firstly, since the beginning of the conflict, there has been a significant displacement of people, driven by the bombing of basic infrastructure such as schools, hospitals, and homes (Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2024). Secondly, there has been an interruption of the right to education, as educational facilities are not being used due to attacks and bombings. Finally, as another consequence of the conflict, children are suffering severely from food insecurity and lack of water (Integrated Food Security Phase Classification, 2024).





The destruction of civil infrastructure in the Occupied Palestinian Territory has been happening since 2009 when the Israeli army occupied Palestinian infrastructures for their government's use or to be demolished. Palestinians have been suffering ever since from the demolition of their homes, hospitals, and schools, which may include the bombing, dismantlement, confiscation, or sealing of structures (or parts of structures) by the Israeli government. The situation has been worsening continuously up to the present day and has reached its peak due to the direct conflict that began in October 2023. For instance, from 5 March 2024 to May 2024, 10,528 owned structures (such as houses and stores) were demolished in the West Bank, which led to forced displacement (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2024 a).

Not having a safe place to live seriously jeopardizes children's development by not providing them with safe life, good education, mental health, and the perspective of having a future (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2024 a). The matter of the destruction of hospitals also represents a serious issue, as children are dying due to the lack of access to treatments and medicine. As of 7 April 2024, just some of the 36 primary regional hospitals and only 8 of the 24 UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) health centers were operational, and those working had significant restrictions on the range of services they could provide (United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, 2024 d).

Additionally, for the past decade, the Gaza Strip has suffered from a chronic electricity problem, which jeopardized the already fragile living conditions of the population and has severely affected the availability of essential services, such as health, water, and sanitation (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2024 b). Since September 2020, essential medicine has been at almost zero stock level, jeopardizing the lives of the most vulnerable, such as transplant, hemodialysis, and





oncology patients, and approximately 13,000 elective surgeries have been suspended (World Health Organization, 2020).

Furthermore, recent reports from the Secretary-General indicated a rise in assaults targeting schools, obstructing the education of millions of children in countries in conflict situations, such as the Occupied Palestinian Territory. In June 2020, the UN verified 4 incidents regarding the military use of Palestinian schools by Israeli forces, along with 242 other interferences that jeopardized Palestinian children's access to education. For example, the use of tear gas, sound grenades, and firing live ammunition in and around school grounds, left approximately 48,000 Palestinian children unable to attend school (United Nations Security Council, 2020, p. 13).

In addition, according to Report S/2023/363 on Children and Armed Conflict from June 2023, there was a 112 percent increase in attacks on schools since the last report, especially in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (United Nations Security Council, 2023, p. 3). All UNRWA schools situated in the Gaza Strip have been shut down, depriving over 300,000 children of education. Most of these schools have had their infrastructure impacted and now serve as shelters. Furthermore, UNRWA schools in the West Bank and East Jerusalem have also come under attack. According to the Education Cluster, at least 782,000 students have been affected (United Nations Relief Agency and Work Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, 2024 a).

Hunger has also become a reality within the Occupied Palestinian Territory, according to the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) for acute food insecurity. In accordance with the World Health Organization (WHO), 90 percent of children under the age of two are facing severe food poverty in Gaza, therefore, they consumed a maximum of two food groups the day before. Considering this evidence, over 95 percent of adults reduced their food consumption so that their children had food to eat, which reflects the reality of Palestinian children (United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, 2024 b).





The restriction of humanitarian access in the Occupied Palestinian Territory directly hinders access to basic survival supplies, such as food. If access is facilitated, the World Food Programme (WFP) could quickly scale up to provide enough food for over 1 million per month; as an example, during the brief lull in fighting in November 2023, agencies were able to double distribution points and bring in four times more aid than they would in an average week of conflict (World Food Programme, 2024).

Another concerning problem is the lack of personal hygiene products and sanitation, which causes diseases and conditions that are intensified by the absence of access to treatments and hospitals. Palestinian children are getting even more sick, and, with no possibilities of treatment, are dying. Further, by 2022, more than 97 percent of the water in Gaza was deemed unsafe for human consumption due to water contamination. In January 2024, the WHO reported cases of diarrhea affecting more than half of the children under five years old due to the lack of basic sanitation (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2022; 2024 c).

Therefore, considering the catastrophic situation of children in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, the delegates of the FAMUN 2024 UNSC must address three issues:

1. Considering that the destruction of civilian infrastructure in the Occupied Palestinian Territory affects not only schools and hospitals, but also water treatment facilities, power generation, and homes, how can the UNSC ensure the protection of these facilities and children's access to them?
2. How can the UNSC guarantee the non-interruption of the right to education in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, aiming not only to protect educational institutions during the armed conflict but also to safeguard the entire teaching structure, including student transportation and the availability of personnel?
3. How can the UNSC take action to ensure the free and uninterrupted flow of food and water to children and stimulate food production





within the Occupied Palestinian Territory, given the actual limited agricultural possibilities and widespread water contamination?

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UN REFERENCES

This section presents important sources from UN bodies on Children and Armed Conflict. The annual reports of the Secretary-General on the topic are documents that provide updates about the situation of children around the world, covering especially the six grave violations committed against them. The resolutions are the documents that express the decisions of the UNSC. In this sense, each document will be discussed with a summary, along with pages and paragraphs with highlighted information. Further, other relevant documents prepared by UN agencies and funds will be presented. Lastly, official websites of the UN system that contain information, data, reports, and updates on Children and Armed Conflict and the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory will be introduced.

Reports of the Secretary-General

2023 Secretary-General's Annual Report on Children and Armed Conflict

The 2023 Secretary-General's Annual Report on Children and Armed Conflict noted with worry the escalation of violations against children's rights, especially the increase in the number of deaths and maiming around the main conflicts in the world (p. 1). In Palestine, the misuse of force by Israel was highlighted by the Secretary-General as a problem to be remedied (p. 12). Also, the number of children found dead in hospitals and schools has increased due to the focus on the destruction of such buildings (p. 11-13). The denial of humanitarian access was also reported as a critical and constantly escalating problem in the Occupied Palestinian Territory due to the increased conflict tensions (p. 13). However, the report pointed to an improvement in the cooperation between states to promote the safety of children, through their protection and reintegration into society (p. 2).

2022 Secretary-General's Annual Report on Children and Armed Conflict

The 2022 Secretary-General's Annual Report on Children and Armed Conflict discussed the increase in the number of children killed and maimed,





mainly due to military operations and airstrikes, and in the abduction and forced recruitment (p. 3). The increase in attacks on civil infrastructure, such as hospitals and schools, was also highlighted (p. 13). Furthermore, the report found serious violations committed against children in the West Bank, East Jerusalem, Gaza Strip, and Israel (p. 13-15). These violations included detentions of Palestinian children by Israeli forces, often with reports of ill-treatment, and the killing and mutilation of children by both Israeli forces and Palestinian armed groups (p. 13). The UN also verified impediments to humanitarian access by Israeli forces and Palestinian armed groups (p. 15).

2021 Secretary-General's Annual Report on Children and Armed Conflict

The 2021 Secretary-General's Annual Report on Children and Armed Conflict discussed the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the situation of children in conflict zones and the six grave violations. The report states that the pandemic made children more vulnerable to these violations due to school closures and hospital restrictions, therefore also limiting their access to safe spaces and protection services (p. 3). Specifically, regarding Israel and Palestine, the United Nations verified a total of 1,031 grave violations committed by parties in conflict against 343 children, from January 2020 to December 2020 (p. 12). The most frequently identified violations were the denial of humanitarian access, detention, and maiming of children. Although there was a decrease in the overall number of identified violations compared to previous years, the report highlighted concerns about the data gathered and the use of disproportional force by Israeli forces (p. 12-14).

Resolutions

Resolution 2601 (2021) - 29 October 2021 (S/RES/2601)

In this resolution, the UNSC emphasized the commitment to address the widespread impact of armed conflict, including disruption in education and long-term consequences for peace, security, and development (preambular paragraph 2). It recognized armed group's increased use of





schools for military purposes, which increased the chances of targeted military attacks (preambular paragraph 9). As such, the UNSC highlighted that education should be a fundamental priority for the international community. It condemned the military use of schools and called for measures to ensure that their civilian nature is respected (paragraph 6). The UNSC also urged the rehabilitation and repair of schools to restore safe access and guarantee the right to education for children (paragraph 9). It also highlighted the importance of mental health support for children affected by conflict and the need for equitable access to education, especially considering the COVID-19 pandemic (paragraphs 13 and 26). Finally, the UNSC underscored the role of international collaboration in protecting education in conflict zones and reaffirmed the commitment to this issue (paragraph 27).

Resolution 2427 (2018) - 09 July 2018 (S/RES/2427)

In this resolution, the UNSC recognized the contribution of regional organizations in protecting and reintegrating children affected by armed conflict and encouraged them to continue child protection (operative paragraph 11). It expressed deep concern regarding the violations of International Humanitarian Law and human rights abuses committed by non-state armed groups, reaffirming the importance of addressing, through raising awareness and education, the recruitment of children in those armed groups (operative paragraphs 17 and 18). The UNSC also condemned attacks on schools and urged Member States to take concrete measures to stop them (operative paragraph 16).

Resolution 2225 (2015) - 18 June 2015 (S/RES/2225)

Although the UNSC acknowledged the progress made in preventing and responding to violations committed against children (preambular paragraph 3), it also remained, in this resolution, concerned about the lack of progress in situations where parties faced no consequences for violating International Humanitarian Law and recalled the importance of punishing the responsible





parties for crimes against children (preambular paragraph 4, 5, and 17). The Council also reiterated how children must not be deprived of their liberty and supported reintegration and rehabilitation of children, including access to healthcare, psychological support, and education programs (preambular paragraph 18). The UNSC expressed deep concern regarding abuses and violations of applicable international law against children, such as abduction, recruitment as soldiers, killing and maiming, and sexual violence (operative paragraph 12), as it reaffirmed the importance of the Reporting Mechanism (operative paragraph 9) and urged Member States to maintain child protection (operative paragraph 15).

Other publications

UNRWA Situation Report 108 on the situation in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem (13-19 May 2024)

This report, organized by the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), presents a current overview of the situation in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and highlights how UNRWA is trying to respond to the conflict escalation and provide humanitarian aid and civilian protection.

UNICEF: Escalation Humanitarian Situation Report No. 24 (18 April to 1 May 2024)

The report of the United Nations Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF) presents an overview of the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory focusing on the humanitarian needs of the population and the reality of children. It provides information about UNICEF’s responses and funding for addressing the needs of the affected population in the Gaza Strip. This includes initiatives related to Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) (p. 5), child protection efforts, education programs (p. 5), and health support, such as the enhanced restoration of primary healthcare services through field hospitals and operational primary health care centers (p. 3).





WHO: Emergency Situation Report, Issue 31 (7 October 2023 to 18 May 2024)

In this report provided by the World Health Organization (WHO), there is information about each Palestinian region regarding health issues, fatalities, and injuries. It also includes information on health facilities, such as the current data on damaged or non-operational hospitals (p. 1). Lastly, the document presents data on diseases that affect the Occupied Palestinian Territory in graphics (p. 2).

Official websites

United Nations Security Council (UNSC)

This is the official website of the UN Security Council. In it, you can access any type of UNSC document, such as press statements, resolutions, Secretary-General reports, letters, and speeches. The documents are separated by topic and year; thus, you can search for “Children and Armed Conflict” by pressing “Ctrl+F” or in the “Search the UN” search bar.

United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF)

This is the official website of the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF), the UN body designated to defend and guarantee children’s rights. In it, you can find UNICEF research, reports, data, and publications, as well as information on its work around the world. To find publications on Children and Armed Conflict, you need only to reach for the search bar, type in the topic, and be directed to all available content.

United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA)

The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) is one of the main actors helping affected Palestinians across the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Its website presents important reports and data about the situation in the region, as well as news and updates.





United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)

This is the official website of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the most important UN entity mandated to promote and protect human rights for all. In it, you can find important information about the entity's work in fulfilling its mandate, as well as resources such as reports, news, and statements, including those referencing the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

United Nations Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict (OSRSG-CAAC)

This is the official website of the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict (OSRSG-CAAC), the UN entity responsible for protecting children affected by armed conflict. In it, you can find more information about the Office and its mandate, as well as news, the latest activities, messages, and how to take action to protect children affected by armed conflict.

United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA)

The UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) is a UN agency created to defend and guarantee the human rights of Palestinian refugees. On their official site, you can find press releases, official statements, emergency reports, photos, and videos from UNRWA, as well as information about the agency and its work. Pressing on the three bars in the top right-hand corner of the website will take you to the menu, which will lead you to available articles.





EXTRA RESOURCES

This section includes publications and media from sources not affiliated with the UN. All the extra resources address specific issues regarding the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, with a focus on children in armed conflict.

Security Council Report

The Security Council Report operates independently and does not take a position on issues discussed by the UNSC, but rather covers all meetings and discussions, thus being a very informative source. Its website updates subjects discussed by the UNSC, emphasizing formal and informal meetings, documents, and negotiations, both old and new. The website offers detailed and backstage information on Children and Armed Conflict.

Defense for Children International - Palestine

Defense for Children International (DCI) is an organization that advocates for the rights of Palestinian children in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Since 1991, DCI-Palestine has exposed severe human rights violations, represented Palestinian children in Israeli military courts, and worked to end the military arrest of children by Israeli forces. The organization also addressed issues of child recruitment, fatalities, and injuries.

Born in Gaza (2015)

“Born in Gaza” is an immersive documentary film focused on the violence of the Israel-Palestine conflict and its effects on the children in the Gaza Strip. The documentary follows the story of ten children who tell what their daily life is like, after the horror of the war in Gaza in the summer of 2014. All the children highlight the challenges presented in the Research Guide Introduction – the attacks on civil infrastructure such as schools and





hospitals, the disruption of the right to education, and famine and food insecurity – and how they affect children’s future.

Fauda (2015)

“Fauda” is a television series that shows both sides of the Israel-Palestine conflict. Doron, commander of the Israeli Special Forces, and his team are inside the Palestinian Territory looking for Hamas fighter Abu-Ahmed. Meanwhile, Ahmed tries to escape with his family, eternally fighting against Israel. This series is important because it highlights the conflict between Palestinian armed groups and Israeli forces, emphasizing the precarious living conditions faced by Palestinians, particularly children.

Photos: Israel’s war on Gaza’s children - Aljazeera (2023)

“Israel’s War on Gaza’s Children” presents a gallery featuring photos of injured and displaced children, highlighting the devastating impact of the conflict on the youngest and most vulnerable. The exhibit also provides numbers of child deaths and details the actions of Israeli forces contributing to the crisis. This set of photos is essential for the debate, as it emphasizes the human perspective on the vulnerability and precariousness that children experience in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.





DATABASES

This section presents three databases with detailed quantitative information regarding the situation of children in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS)

The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) is a government organization that aims to develop and enhance the Palestinian official statistical system, based on legal grounds that organize the data collection process and utilization for statistical purposes. In the sector of statistics, it is possible to use the filters and access data that demonstrate the impact of the armed conflict in the Occupied Palestinian Territory on the population and in areas such as education, economy, and others.

Humanitarian Data Exchange (HDX)

The Humanitarian Data Exchange (HDX) is an open data platform managed by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) through its Centre for Humanitarian Data. Launched in 2014, the platform centralizes and brings critical data on humanitarian crises, offering a comprehensive repository that includes statistics on affected populations, available resources, humanitarian needs, and other relevant metrics. HDX fosters collaboration among humanitarian agencies, non-governmental organizations, governments, and other involved actors, promoting transparency and the sharing of essential information for crisis management.

Statista

A platform for online statistics, Statista provides data and information from a variety of sources, including media, economy, industry, consumer, demography, and more. It gathers information from several reliable sources, including government databases, market reports, opinion polls, and scholarly publications, and presents it in one convenient location. Researchers,





analysts, journalists, and business professionals utilize the site extensively to obtain knowledge and support for making decisions based on data. This database also serves as a tactile and numerical tool for visualizing the impact of armed conflict on children.





OFFICIAL POSITION OF COUNCIL MEMBERS

The UNSC is composed of fifteen members: five are permanent and ten are elected by the UNGA for a two-year term. The five permanent members are those who won the Second World War: China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States. The ten non-permanent members are elected according to a regional distributive principle: five countries must be elected from Africa and Asia (being one of the seats reserved for one Arabian country from either continent), one country from Eastern Europe, two countries from Latin America and the Caribbean, and two countries from Western Europe (United Nations, 2024).

The UNSC can also include observers on certain topics, such as in the case of Open Debate meetings on Children and Armed Conflict. The observers do not have voting rights but can make statements and be both countries and international organizations. For the FAMUN UNSC simulations, the observers will be Palestine, South Africa, UNICEF, and UNWRA. Bearing this in mind, this section presents the official position of Council Members and Observers on Children and Armed Conflict in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. It is a starting point for delegates to begin their research and better represent their position during the simulation.

Permanent Members

China

China affirms that the issue of children and armed conflict should be tackled by preventing and resolving conflicts around the world, while also respecting the principle of sovereignty when cooperating and providing support to them (United Nations Security Council, 2015, p. 17-18). China expresses its concern over the situation of children in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, highlighting the severity of the attacks happening in schools and hospitals, the killing and maiming of children, the denial of humanitarian access, and the recruitment of children as soldiers (United Nations Security Council, 2022, p. 24-25). The country also affirms that donor





countries should assist in conflict areas around the Middle East and opposes the reduction of humanitarian assistance as a form of political move, considering a major problem when political intentions overcome humanitarian aid to children. Likewise, China states that unilateral sanctions directly affect the ability to help children in those areas. China indicates that Resolution 2728 (2024), which established a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip, is the best way to provide humanitarian aid for children (Permanent Mission of the People’s Republic of China to the UN, 2024).

France

France is very concerned about children in armed conflict and the violations committed against them, emphasizing the urgent need to combat their suffering (United Nations Security Council, 2023 b, p. 10). France believes that the recruitment of children as soldiers is unforgivable, as well as their use as hostages to guarantee political advantages, and highlights the importance of reintegrating them into society. France encourages efforts to protect internally displaced and refugee children. In the Occupied Palestinian Territory, France has addressed the illegality of Israeli settlements according to international law, as these settlements create circumstances for a crisis that could further harm resident children (United Nations Security Council, 2017 a, p. 24-26). France supports the efforts made by the UN system and the work of the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) to help children. The country also urges other Member States to protect children in conflict by signing and ratifying the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and by endorsing the Paris Commitments⁹ (United Nations Security Council, 2019, p. 15-16; United Nations Security Council, 2022, p. 12-13).

⁹ For more information on the Paris Principles and Commitments on Children Associated with Armed Forces or Armed Groups, see: <https://www.unicef.org/media/113631/file/UNI-Paris-Principles-and-Commitments-FAQ-21.pdf>.





Russian Federation

The Russian Federation is concerned about the topic of children and armed conflict and stresses the importance of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which provides the rights to life and development for children, access to education, healthcare, and their protection from all forms of violence (United Nations Security Council, 2022, p. 21). Russia is also concerned about the persistent violence in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, resulting from the attacks of Israel, which consistently causes the death of children and the destruction of educational institutions and hospitals (United Nations Security Council, 2024 g, p. 7). Additionally, Russia criticized the suspension of funding for the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), which is one of the main agencies that assist the children affected by the conflict, and also criticized Israel's authorities for denying humanitarian access for children and using hunger as a war instrument (Permanent Mission of The Russian Federation to the United Nations, 2024). As a result, Russia emphasizes the necessity for a diplomatic dialogue between the parties in conflict and the international community, so a more sustainable environment can be established for children (United Nations Security Council, 2024 i, p. 3-4).

United Kingdom

The United Kingdom is concerned about the situation of children trapped in armed conflict and urges all Member States to take measures aimed at preventing the grave violations committed against children, such as sexual violence, killing, maiming, and recruitment by armed groups. The United Kingdom also condemns the attacks from both Israel and Hamas against schools and hospitals and the denial of humanitarian aid to children (United Nations Security Council, 2024 e, p. 18-19). More specifically, the United Kingdom expresses its concern about the situation of children in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The country condemns all acts of violence against children, including acts of terror, provocation, and destruction, mainly





in the West Bank and Gaza Strip (United Nations Security Council, 2024 f, p. 11). According to the United Kingdom, effective humanitarian aid requires an integration strategy that not only provides relief but also involves a firm call for Israel to prioritize the safety of infrastructure and civilians. The United Kingdom is concerned about defenseless Palestinian children who are dying from famine, lack of infrastructure, and agonizing medical operations. Additionally, the country supports two actions to acquire peace and stability in the region: a plan to revitalize the Palestinian Authority and a meaningful dialogue between the parties in conflict (United Nations Security Council, 2024 g, p. 17).

United States

The United States considers it crucial to protect children and defends that such an agenda continues to be a priority to the UNSC in all its work, urging all Member States to criminalize violations against children in national laws and to guarantee that UN peacekeeping missions have child protection capacity (United Nations Security Council, 2022, p. 12). The matter of ensuring life-saving assistance, such as access to nutrition, water, and healthcare, to children is also an important point for the United States and the country's strong support of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) reflects that (United Nations Security Council, 2019, p. 14). The country also highlights how armed conflict impacts children, citing the violations and abuse they suffer, the lack of access to education and humanitarian assistance, and the jeopardizing environment. The United States notes that the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory has been extremely harmful to children and demands that both parties in conflict do more to protect civilians and take all necessary steps to ensure the flow of humanitarian assistance, especially to children (United Nations Security Council, 2024 d, p. 18).





Elected Members

Algeria

Algeria strongly condemns the continued recruitment of children as soldiers and defends that this issue should be an essential component of post-conflict programs. The country welcomes the integration of the protection of the rights of children in peacekeeping missions and expresses support for this matter to be considered during peace negotiations (United Nations Security Council, 2004, p. 9). Algeria encourages programs in the post-conflict scenario of disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration of children, and condemns all types of sexual exploitation against them (United Nations Security Council, 2005, p. 27-28). The country also calls for urgent UNSC action in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and emphasizes the suffering of children, as well as condemns starvation as a weapon of war used by the Israeli government. Algeria encourages the monitoring and vigilance mechanism, proposing more binding measures to stop the usage of children as soldiers, as well as supports a ceasefire to end the violence (United Nations Security Council, 2005, p. 28; United Nations Security Council, 2024 b, p. 8).

Ecuador

Regarding the topic of Children and Armed Conflict, Ecuador affirms that it is essential to guarantee the protection and well-being of children and basic resources for them. In addition, the country condemns children's involvement in any armed conflict. Ecuador expresses extreme concern about the conflict in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, especially regarding the rights of affected children. The worsening situation is exacerbating hunger and increasing fears of the escalation of violence, which could disproportionately affect children if the conflict spreads to other regions. Ecuador affirms that the actions committed by Israel are causing damage to civilians, including children. The country states that examinations that were carried out in shelters and health centers show that 16 percent of children





under two years old are malnourished, with 3 percent suffering from the most severe form of malnutrition due to difficult humanitarian access. The use of hunger as a military tactic in northern Gaza and the attacks on civilian infrastructure are also a cause for concern. For these reasons, Ecuador calls upon the UNSC to take more effective actions regarding the violations that are being committed against children in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (United Nations Security Council, 2024 b, p. 12; 2024 h, p. 16-17).

Guyana

Guyana believes that children's lives must be improved with protection and care, and it is necessary to strengthen their education, access to clean water, sanitation, and hygiene, as well as reverse child poverty. The country agrees with collective action and is determined to work with Council Members to address the matter of children in armed conflict (United Nations Children's Fund, 2020). Regarding the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Guyana is extremely concerned about the reports of cruel, inhumane, and degrading treatment of children in the region, and condemns the six grave violations being committed against them. The country is particularly alarmed by the high number of children killed and injured, emphasizing the responsibility of both parties in conflict to fully and unconditionally respect and uphold International Humanitarian Law (Permanent Mission of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana to the United Nations, 2023; United Nations Security Council, 2024 h, p. 8-9). Therefore, Guyana urges the Council to take effective measures, such as a ceasefire, to end once and for all children's human rights violations in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (United Nations Security Council, 2024 b, p. 6-7).

Japan

Japan condemns any activity that puts the protection of children and their quality of life at risk, including the worrisome consequences of the attacks on hospitals and schools, which not only rob children of their lives





but also violate their fundamental rights to education and health (International Court of Justice, 2023 a, p. 3-5). Japan also believes that action against landmines contributes to preventing severe violations against children and ensuring their freedom from fear. Therefore, Japan has supported the removal of landmines and the promotion of education about their risks. Japan also emphasizes the importance of a monitoring system to inspect whether children's rights are being violated, thus enabling the assessment of impacts on children and the implementation of measures to protect them (United Nations Security Council, 2017, p. 18). Japan believes that lack of access to education contributes to the escalation of severe violations against children; therefore, the country has made various contributions to the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to provide emergency digital education and school meals for children. Japan calls for mutual work between Member States and the UN to remove impediments hindering children's ability to pave their future (Permanent Mission of Japan to the United Nations, 2023, p. 1).

Malta

Malta is alarmed by the increasing number of grave violations committed against children by Israeli forces in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, such as killing and maiming, attacks on schools and hospitals, and the denial of humanitarian access (United Nations Security Council, 2023 a, p. 9). Malta reiterates that the denial of humanitarian assistance and the use of hunger as a weapon of war constitute war crimes: after nearly 7 months of conflict, one in three children is severely malnourished in Gaza (United Nations Security Council, 2024 b, p. 10). Malta, as Chair of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, is actively collaborating with the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict in building capacities to ensure child protection and further deepen the analysis of how gender norms have shaped children's exposure to each of the grave violations across various contexts (United Nations Security





Council, 2023 b, p. 9-10). Malta urges continued support for the Children and Armed Conflict mandate from the Special Representative in the Council and will do its utmost to ensure a consensus to protect children in all situations, especially in armed conflict (United Nations Security Council, 2023 c, p. 10).

Mozambique

Mozambique expresses extreme concern about and condemns the continued trend of violations of children's fundamental rights, including murder, mutilation, sexual violence, psychological torture, and the recruitment of child soldiers (United Nations Security Council, 2023 b, p. 16-17). In this regard, the country calls attention to the situation of children in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, highlighting the unfolding humanitarian crisis, with endless deaths, forced displacement, and hunger (United Nations Security Council, 2024 c, p. 16). Given this, Mozambique points out that the cutting off of funds for the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) will be harmful to the entire population, of which more than half are children. The country states that the deaths are not being caused solely by bombs and weapons, but also by the lack of food, access to drinking water, lack of electricity, and the destruction of hospitals (United Nations Security Council, 2024 e, p. 8-9). Mozambique proposes the establishment of conditions that ensure safe humanitarian access, such as the strengthening of cross-border cooperation, increasing public awareness, and advocating for unobstructed humanitarian access, thus ensuring that assistance reaches children quickly and efficiently (United Nations Security Council, 2024 a, p. 7-8).

Republic of Korea

The Republic of Korea expresses great concern regarding the violence against children in armed conflict and emphasizes the importance of humanitarian access for all children, including the ones detained. As stated by the country on 3 April 2024, the denial of humanitarian access deserves





special attention, not only for its immediate effects on children but also for its long-term consequences, such as the impact on the physical and mental health of children. The Republic of Korea affirms that the Council should keep a zero-tolerance position on this, without taking into consideration any geopolitical matters. The country also highlights the importance of holding the perpetrators of the violations against children accountable, as well as guaranteeing the reintegration of children into society. On the matter of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, the Republic of Korea expresses its apprehension about the killing of humanitarian workers in the Gaza Strip and recognizes the need to improve ways of monitoring the denial of humanitarian access, since there are no defined and detailed guidelines for collecting this specific data (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2024; Permanent Mission of the Republic of Korea to the United Nations, 2024).

Sierra Leone

Concerning the topic of children and armed conflict, Sierra Leone is extremely worried about the elevated number of grave violations being committed against children in armed conflicts (United Nations Security Council, 2024 d, p. 16). Particularly, the country acknowledges the harsh reality that innocent children have been facing in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and calls for special attention to the lack of access to essentials such as food, water, electricity, and medical supplies. Sierra Leone reiterates that children in southern Gaza can access only 1.5 to 2 liters of water per day, a portion way below the standard requirement for their survival (United Nations Security Council, 2024 f, p. 14-15). According to UNICEF, another 1 million children in Gaza need mental health and psychosocial support, and 17,000 are unaccompanied or separated from their parents (United Nations Children's Fund, 2024 a). Therefore, Sierra Leone calls for the parties to respect and comply with the 26 January 2024 order of the International Court of Justice to allow the provision of basic services, which are so desperately





needed in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, so that the necessary support can be given to children (United Nations Security Council, 2024 a, p. 15-16).

Slovenia

Slovenia is very concerned about the situation of children's human rights in situations of armed conflict, appealing to combat their violation through cooperation between states (United Nations Security Council, 1998, p. 8). Advocating in favor of International Law and International Humanitarian Law, Slovenia emphasizes its willingness to assist and provide support to children who are currently affected by armed conflict by providing food, psychological rehabilitation, and physical well-being (Permanent Mission of the Republic of Slovenia to the United Nations, 2024). In the context of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Slovenia emphasizes that the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and protection of the children cannot be denied. The country reiterates that the parties in conflict are violating the basic rights of children and calls for a peaceful solution to improve living conditions (International Court of Justice, 2024, p. 28-30).

Switzerland

Switzerland emphasizes its deep concern about the high number of grave violations against children in armed conflicts, such as attacks against schools and hospitals, denial of humanitarian access, their recruitment or use as soldiers, and their killing and maiming. Regarding the situation of children in the Gaza Strip, the country is concerned that children are dying from acute malnutrition and structural poverty caused by restrictions in the surrounding areas which prevent the arrival of supplies (United Nations Security Council, 2024 a, p. 7). In addition, Switzerland reinforced that the protection of civilians must be a priority for the UNSC (United Nations Security Council, 2023 d, p. 16-17) and that guaranteeing the right to education will prevent severe violations against children's rights. For that,





Switzerland calls for the adoption of the Safe Schools Declaration¹⁰ by all states, pointing out that it will start financing and promoting education in emergency zones (United Nations Security Council, 2022, p. 32; Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack, 2024). Switzerland also calls attention to how insufficient the information on children’s trajectories in and out of armed groups is and offers support to change this through UN University research to prevent the recruitment and use of children as soldiers (United Nations Security Council, 2017 a, p. 53). Switzerland also supports the partnership of End Violence Against Children, so that every child can grow up shielded from violence (United Nations Security Council, 2018, p. 61; United Nations Security Council, 2023 a, p. 11).

Observers

Palestine

Palestine highlights the importance of children’s rights in armed conflict and advocates for the punishment of parties involved in violating these rights, as is currently happening in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (United Nations News, 2024 c). Palestine asserts that these conflicts destroy infrastructure, such as water systems and healthcare, leading to diseases and food insecurity, which primarily affects children (United Nations News, 2024 a). The conflict in the Territory increased internal displacement and acute food insecurity, affecting 95 percent of Palestinians in Gaza, and leaving thousands injured, including 11,800 children (United Nations Children’s Fund, 2024 b, p. 2). Alarming statistics reveal that, in the Gaza Strip, there are 43,300 malnourished children. Additionally, 625,000 students are deprived of access to education due to school closures in the region, denying children the fundamental right to learn and develop (United Nations Children’s Fund,

¹⁰ The Safe Schools Declaration is an inter-governmental agreement first declared in 2015, through a process led by Norway and Argentina. Its primary commitment is to strengthen the protection of education from attacks and restrict the use of schools and universities for military purposes. The first conference occurred in Norway, in May 2015, as an opportunity for countries to express support for the protection of students, schools, and universities during armed conflict (Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack, 2024).





2024 c, p. 1). Palestine criticizes the international community for failing to protect children as outlined in the mandate of the UNSC Children and Armed Conflict and calls for international humanitarian protection and assistance (United Nations Security Council, 2023 b, p. 31). It advocates for a ceasefire, which is crucial to protect Palestinians, especially children, hindered by the restrictions and punishments of the occupying force, especially the illegal blockade of the Gaza Strip (United Nations Security Council, 2024 d, p. 5).

South Africa

South Africa highlights the importance of discussing children and armed conflict and also encourages that more resources should be allocated to this topic. On the six grave violations, the country expresses its worry on the recruitment of children, stating that recruited children are primarily victims and ought to be treated as such, as well as reintegrated into society. South Africa is concerned with children's access to justice and the identification of perpetrators, arguing it is crucial to their psychological and psychosocial development into adulthood. The country encourages the incorporation of gender perspectives and women's participation as active agents in conflict resolutions, while also recognizing the vulnerability of girls during conflicts to sexual trafficking and abuse (Permanent Mission of South Africa to the United Nations, 2017; 2019). South Africa defends that addressing and attempting to solve the root causes of conflicts are absolutely essential for the safety of children; thus, on December 23rd of 2023, the country filed an application to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) against the state of Israel under the allegations of its engagement in genocidal acts against the Palestinian people in Gaza, violating its obligations under the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (Permanent Mission of South Africa to the United Nations, 2018) (International Court of Justice, 2023 b).





United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF)

UNICEF is committed to clarifying the real situation of children and young people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and taking measures to help, which include sending specialized humanitarian aid personnel and convoys loaded with supplies, raising funds through publicity campaigns, and collaborating with countries such as Egypt, with its UNICEF cell on the border with the Gaza Strip, responsible for coordinating UNICEF’s logistical and humanitarian operations from this route. Data from April 2024 in the area revealed the following problems: high rates of malnutrition and food insecurity, several sources of water unsuitable for consumption, schools partially or totally destroyed, and a lack of personal hygiene products, especially for girls, which can cause various diseases (United Nations Children’s Fund, 2024 c, p. 1). However, UNICEF has also experienced difficulties in providing humanitarian aid in the Occupied Palestinian Territory due to recurrent attacks on the organization’s staff and convoys. Considering the worrisome situation, UNICEF calls for a ceasefire between the parties in conflict, safe and unrestricted access to humanitarian aid in the Territory, the preservation of local civilian infrastructure (including schools, hospitals, energy, and water services), the non-violation of children’s rights, and the installation of temporary health centers for the emergency care of children (United Nations Children’s Fund, 2024 d, p. 2-3; p. 4-6; p. 7-8).

United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA)

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) is committed to providing services for registered Palestinian refugees in the Near East, such as healthcare, social services and basic education for the children, including in times of armed conflict (The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, 2024 c). However, UNRWA hasn’t been able to provide assistance to refugees smoothly; with the ongoing strikes in the Occupied Palestinian





Territory, humanitarian aid has been destabilized, and a lot of areas where the agency usually works have been denied assistance, especially in the Gaza Strip. Additionally, UNRWA has been facing difficulties providing critical supplies and rotating humanitarian staff due to the military operations in Rafah, and all shelters located in the region have been forced to vacate. As of 9 June 2024, 193 UNRWA officials have been killed in the ongoing conflict (The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, 2024 b). So, UNRWA urgently calls on countries that have suspended their funding to reconsider their decision, in order to prevent the disruption of its humanitarian response. Additionally, the agency urges for the safe and unhindered passage of essential supplies such as fuel, food, medicine, water and hygiene items into the Occupied Palestinian Territory, arguing that the continuation of humanitarian assistance is crucial for the survival of the people in the Near East and for maintaining regional stability (The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, 2024; United Nations News, 2024 a).

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