PALESTINE

Reported attacks on education in Palestine occurred frequently during the 2017-2019 reporting period. While attacks on schools decreased, Israeli armed forces were frequently present outside schools and universities in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Israeli soldiers and settlers also fired teargas or live ammunition at schools and school students and personnel. Airstrikes continued to affect schools in the Gaza Strip.

Context

Conflict in Israel and Palestine continued during the 2017-2019 reporting period. OCHA reported that Israeli military forces and Palestinian armed groups engaged in hostilities during this time, and that the rate of settler violence remained high.[1541] According to Human Rights Watch, the Israeli government and military forces, in addition to occupying Palestinian land, also restricted Palestinians' movement across the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, and carried out discriminatory policies in the West Bank.[1542]

In the West Bank, OCHA documented the presence of 705 permanent obstacles, including checkpoints, roadblocks, and other barriers, in July 2018. OCHA found that these obstacles delayed teachers and students, one of the factors the led to a loss of school time in Palestinian classrooms.[1543] Throughout the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, Israeli settlement expansion accelerated, and Israel continued to demolish Palestinian homes and infrastructure, particularly in Area C of the West Bank, where it exercised civil and military authority.[1544] According to OCHA, the number of demolitions carried out increased by ten percent from 2017 to 2018,[1545] and by 35 percent between 2018 and 2019.[1546]

After more than a decade, Israel's blockade of Gaza continued. Combined with restricted access at the Egyptian border, the constraints on the movement of people and goods resulted in a protracted humanitarian crisis, according to Amnesty International and the UN.[1547] On March 30, 2018, Palestinians in the Gaza Strip began ongoing protests against the closure, called the "Great March of Return." The UN reported that from March 2018 to the end of June 2019, 58 Palestinian children in Gaza were killed and 7,000 injured.[1548] During some protests, which largely took place near the barrier separating Israel from Gaza, demonstrators reportedly burned tires, flew incendiary kites, or threw stones or Molotov cocktails in the direction of Israeli soldiers.[1549]

Violence in Gaza and southern Israel peaked in early May 2019, the worst since 2014.[1550] Human Rights Watch reported that both Israeli armed forces and Palestinian armed groups launched unlawful attacks that harmed civilians, during that time.[1551] In 2018, Palestinian rockets fired indiscriminately toward Israel reportedly injured over 40 Israelis.[1552]

The ongoing conflict and occupation posed serious challenges to children's access to safe, quality education across the West Bank and Gaza Strip. In Gaza, the conflict and humanitarian crisis affected half a million students' access to adequate education, through unpaid teacher salaries, lack of school budgets, and double or triple shifting of schools.[1553] Between January and June 2019, the UN reported that increased education-related violations in Area C, East Jerusalem, and West Bank affected over 39,000 students and teachers.[1554] Insecurity also caused school closures in Gaza and southern Israel, such as when airstrikes and rocket fire prevented an estimated 63,000 children in southern Israel and 637,195 children in Gaza attending school on November 12 and 13, 2018.[1555] The Education Cluster also reported that between May 3 and May 6, 2019, escalating hostilities in Gaza caused schools to close for two days, affecting approximately half a million children.[1556]

Attacks on schools

Attacks on schools occurred frequently from 2017 to 2019, particularly in the West Bank, with reports of over 100 reported attacks on schools and interference of education taking place each year. Search and arrest operations in schools by Israeli security forces, including the use of teargas, and attacks by Israeli settlers were among the most commonly reported forms of violence.[1557] In addition, schools in the West Bank were affected by demolitions, or demolition orders, by Israeli authorities, while airstrikes and ground fighting damaged schools in Gaza. In Gaza, Israeli airstrikes and Palestinian rockets reportedly damaged over 35 schools between 2017 and 2019.[1558]

In 2017, the UN documented 170 education-related incidents, including clashes in the vicinity of schools, search and arrest operations in schools, settler violence against schools, restrictions on access to education, arrest and intimidation

of students and teachers, and military presence in the vicinity of schools.[1559] The reporting identified more than 27,000 students as affected by these incidents. According to the UN, the majority of these attacks (163) occurred in the West Bank, particularly in Nablus, East Jerusalem, Hebron, and Bethlehem governorates. In many incidents, Israeli security forces were reported to have responded to clashes, protests, or stone throwing, with force, using teargas, sound grenades, or rubber bullets.[1560]

In 2017, the UN provided details on 170 verified education-related incidents through an Annual CAAC Bulletin.[1561] In some cases, Israeli forces entered schools to search for children who they accused of throwing stones. Included in the 170 incidents were 72 cases of restrictions on access to education, including closed military areas established near schools, delays at checkpoints, barriers near the entrance of schools, school closures, or the presence of Israeli forces in the vicinity of schools, as well as ten incidents of settler violence, including vandalism of schools or assault of students or teachers, and three cases in which schools were demolished.[1562] In Gaza, the UN reported that four schools were damaged by Israeli airstrikes and one school was damaged by a rocket fired by an unidentified armed group from the Gaza Strip at Israel but that fell short. The UN also reported that one kindergarten in Sderot in southern Israel was damaged by a rocket fired from Gaza in December 2017 and was counted as an attack on education in Israel.[1563]

In 2018, the UN received reports of 118 education-related incidents in Palestine, affecting 23,188 children; 113 incidents were perpetrated by Israeli forces and another five by Israeli settlers.[1564] According to the Education Cluster, attacks on schools increased after the beginning of the 2018-19 school year in August 2018; nearly two thirds of attacks on schools verified by the UN took place from September to December.[1565]

In 2018, reporting collated by GCPEA found that more than half of alleged attacks on schools involved Israeli forces firing teargas, stun grenades, or live ammunition into or near schools.[1566] In 2018, GCPEA identified least 14 UN and media reports of teargas launched into schools or schoolyards, which injured nearly 200 students and personnel.[1567] For example:

– On April 26, 2018, classes at Burin school in Nablus governorate were suspended, affecting over 250 children, when Israeli forces fired teargas canisters and sound bombs into the schoolyard during the lunch break, according to OCHA. Israeli sources reported that the action of Israeli forces was a response to stones thrown at Israeli settler vehicles.[1568]

– OCHA reported that in late August or early September 2018, Israeli forces assaulted and injured four teachers and fired teargas canisters into a school yard in Hebron city, injuring 20 children, allegedly in response to stone thrown from the school at them. Classes were suspended for the rest of the day.[1569]

– On September 19, 2018, Israeli forces reportedly injured 49 children and one teacher when they fired teargas canisters in a schoolyard in Hebron, allegedly in response to stones thrown from the schoolyard, according to OCHA.[1570]

– According to the Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT), on November 11, 2018, Israeli soldiers entered the Tareq Ben Ziad school in Hebron. They remained in the school for 30 minutes and fired multiple teargas canisters and sound grenades into the school compound as they left. More than 100 students were reportedly injured by the teargas, and one teacher was severely injured.[1571]

– *Haaretz* reported allegations that on November 18, 2018, an Israeli soldier fired teargas into Al Khalil School for Boys, also in Hebron.[1572]

In addition, Israeli settlers reportedly attacked Palestinian schools in at least six cases in 2018.[1573] For example:

– In three incidents, Israeli settlers, accompanied by Israeli forces, entered Urif village, Nablus governorate, and targeted the school. For example, on October 10, 2018, Israeli settlers, reportedly from the nearby Israeli settlement of Yitzhar, entered Urif village and attacked the school; settlers then threatened the school on October 17, 2018. According to OCHA, on October 18, the settlers arrived with axes and threw stones at Urif Boys' School. Israeli forces fired teargas at students trying to flee; 15 children and 21 school staff reportedly required medical treatment because of teargas inhalation, and rubber bullets injured at least seven children and one teacher.[1574]

– Similar attacks occurred on November 7, 2018, injuring at least three students, and around November 19, 2018,

injuring eight Palestinians, who were shot, and 60 others who suffered from teargas inhalation.[1575] The UN also reported that between 2012 and 2018, Israeli settlers attacked the secondary school on multiple occasions without any intervention from Israeli armed forces.[1576]

– According to OCHA, Israeli settlers sprayed graffiti on the wall of a school in early December 2018.[1577]

According to data collected by GCPEA from the UN and media sources, schools were fully or partially demolished in at least eight incidents in 2018, with some school facilities affected more than once.[1578] In December 2018, the Education Cluster reported that 48 schools, in Area C and East Jerusalem, had total or partial demolition orders pending.[1579] Examples included:

– OCHA and local media sources reported that Israeli forces demolished the Zanouta school, which reportedly served approximately 24 children, in April 2018.[1580]

– Also in April 2018, OCHA reported that Israeli authorities issued a seizure warning against a kindergarten held in a caravan in the Bedouin community of Jabal al-Baba, causing residents to dismantle it.[1581] The caravan, which was donor-funded and also sometimes served as a women's center and mobile health clinic, was reportedly demolished by Israeli forces in July 2018.[1582]

– According to OCHA, the Education Cluster, and local media, Israeli authorities reportedly dismantled classrooms serving the Tahadi 10 school in Ibziq village, Tubas governorate, which served around 24 students from first to sixth grade, in late October 2018.[1583] *The Guardian* reported on May 31, 2019, that the Israeli Defense Ministry had announced plans to auction the two classrooms, donated to Palestine by the EU.[1584] The following week, regional media outlet *Middle East Monitor* reported that Israel announced that it had postponed the auction.[1585]

– According to OCHA and local media sources, Israeli forces seized two structures being used for a school in As Simiya village, Hebron governorate, on December 5, 2018. The school served around 45 students. Following the seizure, the Palestinian Ministry of Education reportedly erected three tents so that children could continue their classes, but Israeli forces also seized the tents.[1586]

In Gaza, the UN verified two schools directly hit during ground attacks by Israeli forces in 2018, and a further four schools indirectly damaged by Israeli forces' airstrikes.[1587] Examples of schools damaged in airstrikes or ground strikes in 2018 included:

– OCHA reported that Israeli airstrikes carried out at the end of May 2018 damaged a school.[1588]

– Likewise, airstrikes carried out during an escalation between Palestinian groups in Gaza and Israeli forces, in July 2018, damaged multiple schools, according to OCHA.[1589]

– During demonstrations that occurred on September 14, 2018, Israeli forces fired shells at an area east of Khan Younis, hitting the wall of an UNRWA school. According to OCHA, the attack damaged two classrooms, and classes were suspended for a day.[1590]

Reporting compiled by GCPEA showed that a similar pattern of attacks on schools continued in 2019, with Israeli forces using teargas in the vicinity of schools, and entering schools to conduct searches, remaining the most common violation. GCPEA collected nine reported incidents that injured over 700 people.[1591] For example:

– According to OCHA and local media sources, on February 21, 2019, Israeli forces fired teargas canisters inside a school in Hebron, reportedly in response to stone throwing. Thirty students and three teachers were treated for teargas inhalation.[1592]

– On April 9, 2019, the UN and local media reported that Israeli armed forces attacked four adjacent schools in Hebron with teargas and stun grenades. Following the incident, OCHA reported that 350 people, the majority of whom were students, required medical assistance.[1593]

– During clashes on March 13, 2019, Israeli forces shot teargas canisters into a school in Hebron, causing 20 students and five teachers to seek medical treatment, according to OCHA.[1594]

– The UN reported that on March 19, 2019, Israeli soldiers entered Ziad Jaber boys' school, also in Hebron, arresting a ten-year-old boy.[1595]

Reporting collated by GCPEA indicated that Israeli settlers continued to attack Palestinian schools in 2019, sometimes protected by Israeli forces. GCPEA compiled seven reported instances in 2019,[1596] which included:

- According to the Education Cluster and *Ma'an News Agency*, on February 10, 2019, the Urif Boys' School in Nablus was attacked by Israeli settlers from Yitzhar settlement, who entered the village and broke into the school, similar to events described in 2018. Israeli forces allegedly accompanied the settlers, and ten students reportedly inhaled teargas that Israeli forces fired during clashes.[1597]

- On March 26, 2019, local media reported and the Education Cluster verified that Israeli settlers, escorted by Israeli forces, attempted to break into two Palestinian elementary schools in Tuqu village, near Bethlehem. *Ma'an News Agency* also reported that teachers and school staff reportedly prevented the settlers from entering the schools, which were dismissed early that day.[1598]

Israeli forces demolished two schools during the first half of 2019, according to the UN:

- According to OCHA, Israeli forces seized tents belonging to the school in As Simiya village, Hebron governorate, for the third time on January 1, 2019, again affecting around 45 students.[1599] According to the Israeli Committee Against Home Demolitions (ICAHD), five tables, 15 chairs, and the school's latrine unit were confiscated, in addition to three tents that the Palestinian Ministry of Education had put in place.[1600]

- OCHA and local media sources reported that Israeli forces demolished an elementary school that was being constructed in the Shu'fat refugee camp in East Jerusalem. The school was intended to serve as an extension to an existing school, supporting 450 students.[1601]

In the Gaza Strip, Save the Children and local media sources reported that in May and November 2019, shrapnel from Israeli airstrikes damaged almost 30 schools.[1602]

Attacks on students, teachers and other education personnel

For the 2017-2019 reporting period, GCPEA compiled reporting from the UN, civil society and media, indicating that hundreds of students and teachers were injured, threatened, harassed, or detained on their way to or from school, in dozens of incidents. Because of difficulties disaggregating reported information on education-related incidents, it was difficult to determine trends in these incidents in relation to the reporting period covered in *Education under Attack 2018*. Attacks on students, teachers, and other education personnel were reported almost exclusively in the West Bank.

According to Save the Children, in 2017, there were eight reports of attacks on Palestinian students and education personnel, 39 incidents in which Israeli forces arrested or detained students or education personnel at school, and 114 reported incidents in which students or teachers were delayed at checkpoints on the way to schools, or because of military presence in or around schools.[1603] The Palestinian Ministry of Education reported even higher numbers of students, teachers, and personnel affected by violence by Israeli forces or settlers, although GCPEA could not determine to what extent these occurred during attacks on schools or in incidents related to their status as students or educators. For example, According to the Palestinian Ministry of Education, reported attacks by Israeli forces or settlers affected 80,279 Palestinian students and 4,929 teachers and education staff in 2017, down from 89,799 students and 5,528 teachers and education staff in 2016.[1604] In 2017, reported attacks included the killing of nine students (compared with 26 students and one teacher killed in 2016) and the injury of 603 students and 55 teachers by live or rubber bullets or military vehicles (compared with the injury of 1,810 students and 101 teachers in 2016), along with the inhalation of teargas by dozens of students.[1605]

In 2018, reports complied by GCPEA showed that Israeli forces continued to target Palestinian students and teachers with teargas as they made their way to and from school, often alleging that students had thrown stones. Christian Peacemaker Teams documented that Israeli forces fired 238 rounds of teargas and 51 rounds of sound grenades between November 4 and November 27, 2018, in Hebron alone, affecting seven schools and more than 3,000 students; in 16 of these cases, the attacks occurred as students and teachers traveled to or from school.[1606]

In other reported incidents in 2018, Israeli forces arrested or detained students on their way to or from school, in some cases for allegedly throwing stones. For example:

- On November 12, 2018, according to OCHA, a 17-year-old boy in his 12th year at As Sawiya Al Lubban secondary school, in Nablus, was detained along with 11 other students and accused of throwing stones at vehicles with Israeli license plates. The 11 other students were arrested after two hours; the 17-year-old boy was taken to another village and held for six hours before being released to Palestinian police, who took him home.[1607] The boy told *Al Jazeera* that the police handcuffed and blindfolded him, and interrogated him about his family, siblings, and future plans.[1608]

- *Ma'an News Agency* reported that Israeli forces detained three Palestinian students, including two girls, for unknown reasons, in front of their school in Beituniya village, Ramallah, on December 23, 2018. The students were transferred to the Ofer detention center in Ramallah.[1609]

According to UN and local media sources, Israeli settlers reportedly harassed, intimidated, and injured, students traveling to or from school in at least nine cases in 2018.[1610] Examples included:

- According to reporting received by OCHA, stones thrown by settlers at a Palestinian school bus injured three students near Salfit in early March 2018.[1611]

- OCHA reported that Israeli settlers throwing stones and petrol bombs at Palestinian vehicles damaged a school bus outside Hebron in early April 2018.[1612] Israeli settlers damaged a second school bus under similar circumstances in June 2018.[1613]

- OCHA reported that two Palestinian students (aged 11 and 12) were injured when their school bus was struck by stones thrown by Israeli settlers near Hebron in late April 2018.[1614]

- On September 1, Israeli settlers attacked a 15-year-old boy with pepper spray, injuring him, while he was on his way home from school in Hebron, according to OCHA.[1615]

Similar patterns of attack continued in 2019, with reports of incidents of Israeli forces allegedly using teargas or live ammunition against students or detaining students along school routes, and of Israeli settlers reportedly responsible for harassing or throwing rocks at students in at least 13 cases that injured at least 100 teachers and students.[1616] Examples of the different types of attacks included:

- *Ma'an News Agency* reported that Israeli soldier used live ammunition and teargas against Palestinian students as they left school in Tell, Nablus governorate, on January 3, 2019.[1617]

- *Wafa* reported that on February 12, 2019, Israeli forces detained two Palestinian students who were on their way to school in Jabal al Tawil, Ramallah.[1618]

- According to OCHA, Israeli settlers harassed international activists who were escorting children to school in Hebron city on March 10 and 11, 2019. Israeli police reportedly dispersed both the settlers and the activists.[1619]

- The Education Cluster verified that on April 15, 2019, Israeli forces launched teargas at Palestinian children who were on the way to five different schools in Hebron city and governorate. Teargas inhalation caused serious injury to at least two dozen students and teachers, who were treated at the scene.[1620]

- On November 2, 2019, *Haaretz* reported that Israeli police arrested a 16-year-old high school student suspected of throwing rocks from a school yard in the Isawiyah neighborhood of Jerusalem. Following the arrest, the parent committee of the school organized a strike. Police summoned two of the parents and arrested one. The report noted that the incident disrupted the education of 4,500 students.[1621]

Military use of schools and universities

Military use of educational facilities was infrequently reported from 2017 to 2019, following similar trends as reported in *Education under Attack 2018*, which found that military use of schools and universities declined after 2014.[1622] The UN reported documentation of two cases of military use in the Gaza Strip, involving the operation of tunnels by armed groups under two UNRWA schools in June 2017, and under a third school in October 2017. Both tunnels were later sealed.[1623] In 2018, the UN verified the military use of two schools by Israeli forces as positions to fire teargas in Hebron and Bethlehem.[1624]

Attacks on higher education

Between 2017 and 2019, GCPEA collated approximately 20 incidents of attack on higher education. Attacks on higher education continued at similar rates as in previous years, with approximately six to 12 incidents taking place annually. Attacks included the arrest and detention of Palestinian students, by both Israeli and Palestinian security forces, searches of university campuses by Israeli forces involving damage to university property, and clashes between Israeli forces and Palestinian students, sometimes involving rubber bullets and teargas.

There were at least five attacks on university students and staff in 2017, including three cases in which Palestinian forces arrested two Palestinian students and one Palestinian professor, and two cases in which Israeli forces arrested a Palestinian professor and a Palestinian student.[1625]

Attacks on higher education doubled in 2018, with at least eight incidents reported.[1626] All cases involved the arrest or detention of Palestinian students or staff by Israeli security forces, or the use of force by Israeli security forces on Palestinian campuses. Cases included:

- On March 7, 2018, Israeli forces allegedly disguised as Palestinian journalists arrested the president of Birzeit University's student council. According to Scholars at Risk, they beat him before taking him into custody and aimed firearms at those watching. The academic was taken to an interrogation center near Jerusalem and allegedly interrogated without counsel.[1627]

- Scholars at Risk reported that Israeli forces arrested a female student activist at An-Najah National University in Nablus on March 12, 2018, in apparent connection to her organization of student protests against Israeli authorities. On July 30, 2018, the student was convicted and sentenced to seven months in prison on undisclosed charges.[1628]

- Also according to Scholars at Risk, Israeli police reportedly detained 15 participants at an academic conference at Hind Al-Husseini College in Sheikh Jarrah, East Jerusalem, after ordering the cancellation of the academic conference, reportedly because of allegations that it was encouraging incitement against Israel.[1629]

- Scholars at Risk and local media sources reported that Israeli forces clashed with students, fired teargas and rubber bullets, damaged property, and seized surveillance footage, at Al Quds University in Abu Dis, East Jerusalem on December 12, 2018. Students reportedly threw rocks at Israeli soldiers in response.[1630]

Attacks on higher education occurred at similar rates in 2019, with six incidents reported. Incidents were similar to those occurring in previous years and included:

- On February 4, 2019, Israeli forces surrounded Al Qud University in Abu Dis, East Jerusalem, and fired teargas canisters at nearby schoolchildren, as reported in *Wafa*.[1631]

- Scholars at Risk reported that Israeli forces fired teargas and stun grenades at students at Al Quds University in Abu Dis, East Jerusalem on February 12, 2019; 17 students were reportedly treated for teargas inhalation.[1632]

- As reported in local and regional media outlets, on March 20, 2019, Israeli forces fired stun grenades and teargas canisters at students at the Palestine Technical College in Al Arroub, Hebron, as students were holding a moment of silence for three Palestinians killed the previous day.[1633]

- Birzeit University reported that on March 26, 2019, Israeli forces in disguise arrested three students after breaking into the university, located near Ramallah, in the West Bank.[1634]

- Scholars at Risk reported that in November 2019, Israeli security forces arrested the director of the Bisan Center for Research and Development located in Ramallah, whose scholarship related to education and academic freedom in Palestine. He was detained for two months in prison without any criminal charges.[1635]

- Scholars at Risk and *Al Jazeera* reported that on December 12, 2019, Israeli armed forces arrested the president of the student council at Birzeit University. The military also established a checkpoint on a main thoroughfare leading to the university on the same day. The student was detained for a three-month prison term without any charges.[1636]

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