

PALESTINE

Attacks against education increased sharply during the 2022-2023 reporting period. Attacks peaked amid hostilities between Israeli forces and Palestinian armed groups in the Gaza Strip in late 2023, when over 350 schools were damaged. Many attacks on schools involved the use of explosive weapons. The military use of schools, as well as attacks on higher education, also continued.

CONTEXT

Hostilities in Palestine intensified during the 2022-2023 reporting period.¹ In August 2022, Israel carried out airstrikes and used explosive weapons in the Gaza Strip, and Palestinian armed groups launched rockets into Israeli communities;² the fighting killed approximately 22 civilians including 17 children, and injured hundreds in the Gaza Strip, according to the UN.³ In May 2023, Israeli forces conducted a five-day offensive in the Gaza Strip that resulted in at least 12 civilian fatalities, including six children, and injured 190, including 64 children, according to OCHA.⁴

On October 7, 2023, Hamas-led fighters carried out a deadly assault in southern Israel, attacking towns and kibbutzim, taking scores of hostages, and killing hundreds of civilians, as reported by Human Rights Watch and International Crisis Group.⁵ Palestinian armed groups also launched thousands of rockets at Israeli communities, causing deaths, injuries, and damage to buildings.⁶ Attacks on education in Israel were reported at that time, including the military use of educational facilities.⁷ Subsequently, Israel launched thousands of airstrikes and artillery attacks, and conducted an intensive, months-long ground operation in the Gaza Strip.⁸ The UN estimated that nearly two million people were displaced in the Gaza Strip.⁹ In late December, according to the Ministry of Health in Gaza, at least 20,057 people had been killed.¹⁰

In the occupied West Bank, violence increased during the reporting period.¹¹ In 2022, 34 children in the West Bank were killed, the highest number in 15 years, according to Save the Children and Human Rights Watch.¹² This number increased to 124 in 2023, according to the UN.¹³ The UN reported that around 2,000 Palestinians were forcibly displaced by Israeli settler attacks in 2022 and 2023, and 2,380 more were left homeless by demolitions.¹⁴ In July 2023, Israel led a military operation in the West Bank using airstrikes and drones, which killed 16 Palestinians, and injured more than 100.¹⁵

During hostilities that began in October 2023, Israel cut basic services such as electricity and water to Gaza, and blocked the entry of most food and aid supplies, a continuation of a 16-year Israeli policy of closure of the Gaza Strip that restricted the entry and exit of people and goods, compounding the humanitarian situation.¹⁶ The UN reported that grave violations against children in Palestine increased during the reporting period;¹⁷ violence included the use of live ammunition.¹⁸

Violence impacted education during the reporting period.¹⁹ In the West Bank, the Israeli Ministry of Education temporarily suspended six East Jerusalem schools' licenses due to use of Palestinian curriculum, in July 2022.²⁰ During the hostilities beginning October 2023, all schools in the Gaza Strip were closed, according to the UN,²¹ and the Ministry of Education stated that the school year was suspended.²² Other barriers to education included delays at checkpoints, inadequate infrastructure, restrictions on movement, and teacher strikes.²³ At the end of 2023, the UN reported that around 90 percent of school buildings in the Gaza Strip were being used as shelters or had been damaged during fighting, including some that sustained damage while being used as shelters.²⁴

ATTACKS ON SCHOOLS

GCPEA identified at least 642 attacks against, and interferences to, education during the 2022-2023 reporting period. This was an increase as compared to the previous reporting period, when GCPEA identified over 429 attacks.²⁵

In 2022, the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt) Education Cluster reported 167 attacks on schools, affecting over 24,000 students, many of which involved the use of teargas or weapons firing, at or near schools, an increase compared to previous years.²⁶ In the first half of 2022 alone, these attacks affected 6,880 students (2,108 girls) and 279 teachers (38 female), including killing two students and leaving 478 students and 42 teachers in need of medical treatment.²⁷ The UN also verified 74 cases of Israeli forces firing weapons at or near schools.²⁸

In addition, GCPEA identified 32 attacks on schools in 2022, which reportedly injured 58 students and staff.²⁹ Since it was unclear how many of these attacks overlapped with Education Cluster reports, they were not included in the total number of attacks on schools, to avoid double counting. Examples of incidents identified by GCPEA included:

- On March 1, 2022, teargas was reportedly fired at three schools, including a secondary school, in Hebron city and governorate, West Bank, according to ACLED and local media Wafa News Agency; dozens of students and teachers were reportedly affected, and some were treated by paramedics for teargas inhalation.³⁰
- On May 18, 2022, live ammunition was reportedly fired in the direction of a girls' secondary school in Duma village, Nablus governorate, West Bank, while classes were in session, leading students to panic, according to ACLED and local media Wafa News Agency.³¹
- The Palestinian Centre for Human Rights (PCHR) reported that, on October 13, 2022, Israeli forces fired teargas near al-Qisariya Mixed School, Juhor al-Deek village, Gaza, causing breathing problems for a number of students; the school was subsequently evacuated.³²
- The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) reported that, on December 5, 2022, in Bethlehem governorate, West Bank, Israeli Security Forces forcibly entered a girls' school and tried to enter a nearby boys' school. The Israeli Forces fired live ammunition outside the girls' school during clashes with Palestinians, who threw stones; the girls' school sustained damage and

schools in the area were closed that day.³³

According to the reports identified by the oPt Education Cluster, 56 schools in the West Bank were under threat of being demolished by Israeli authorities in June 2022.³⁴ Examples of incidents collected by GCPEA included:

- PCHR reported that, on August 3, 2022, Israeli forces issued a demolition order for a classroom of Khelet al-Dabi' school, Hebron governorate, West Bank.³⁵
- The Norwegian Refugee Council reported that, on November 23, 2022, Israeli forces bulldozed a primary school in Isfey Al-Fouqa village, Hebron governorate, West Bank, while instruction was taking place; soldiers allegedly used sound bombs to force students to vacate the building.³⁶

Some attacks on schools in 2022 also involved settler violence. The oPt Education Cluster reported three incidents of settler violence, including damage to school windows and solar panels.³⁷ Examples identified by GCPEA included:

- As reported by PCHR, on March 13, 2022, an alleged Israeli settler fired live ammunition at al-Khansaa' Elementary School, Bethlehem governorate, West Bank, causing fear among students.³⁸
- On May 30, 2022, in Urif village, Nablus governorate, West Bank, alleged Israeli settlers reportedly attacked a secondary school with stones, damaging solar panels, while alleged Israeli soldiers reportedly fired teargas at the school. Students and staff suffered breathing problems, and the school was subsequently evacuated, according to ACLED and local media *Wafa News Agency*.³⁹

In 2023, GCPEA identified at least 475 attacks on schools. In the first half of 2023, the oPt Education Cluster reported an increase in attacks on schools as compared to previous years, including airstrikes that affected 42 schools and 21 kindergartens in Gaza.⁴⁰ Also between January and June 2023, the Education Cluster reported 63 incidents involving Israeli security forces firing teargas, rubber bullets, or live ammunition, at or near education facilities; these attacks affected 10,300 students, 4,684 of them girls, including killing one student and leaving 32 students and five teachers in need of medical treatment.⁴¹ Between the hostilities in October and December 2023, the UN reported that at least 352 schools were damaged in Gaza, representing more than half of all schools.⁴² Among schools that were damaged, eight were destroyed, 96 sustained major damage, and 110 sustained moderate damage.⁴³

In the West Bank, according to the reports identified by the oPt Education Cluster, Israeli authorities demolished or confiscated property at two schools and issued stop-work orders for three schools. In addition, 60 schools in the West Bank were under threat of being demolished in June 2023, affecting education for approximately 6,800 students.⁴⁴

GCPEA identified at least 75 individual incidents of attacks on schools from media and UN reports in 2023.⁴⁵ For instance:

- UNRWA and OCHA reported that four schools in the Jenin Refugee Camp, West Bank, were damaged when Israeli forces carried out drone strikes and at least 1,000 soldiers were engaged in operations in the camp on July 3 and 4, 2023.⁴⁶
- On August 17, 2023, Ein Samiya elementary school was demolished in the West Bank, as reported by OCHA.⁴⁷
- On August 31, 2023, in Jerusalem Old City, East Jerusalem, textbooks were allegedly seized while being transported by car to a Palestinian private school, as reported by international media *Middle East Monitor*.⁴⁸
- On October 10, 2023, Al Fakhoora House, an educational facility, was destroyed during a bombing in Al Rimal, in the Gaza Strip, according to Education Above All Foundation and international media *Doha News*.⁴⁹
- On October 17, 2023, in al-Maghazi refugee camp, in the Gaza Strip, during Israeli airstrikes in the area, an UNRWA school was hit, causing extensive structural damage.⁵⁰
- On November 21, 2023, Israeli settlers allegedly set fire to Zanuta Elementary School south of Hebron, West Bank, damaging several classrooms, as reported by local media *Al Quds* and the Ministry of Education.⁵¹

ATTACKS ON SCHOOL STUDENTS, TEACHERS, AND OTHER EDUCATION PERSONNEL

GCPEA identified at least 385 attacks on school students, teachers, and other education personnel during the 2022-2023 reporting period. This marks an increase as compared to the previous reporting period, when GCPEA identified at least 85 incidents in 2020 and 2021.⁵²

In 2022, the Education Cluster recorded over 150 attacks against school students or staff, including 19 incidents in which students were detained at school, or on the way to or from school; 55 cases of delays at checkpoints, affecting more than 900 students; 65 cases of the denial of the right to education; and 15 cases of intimidation while commuting to school, which affected at least 200 girls, and 17 female teachers.⁵³ The UN verified 44 incidents of interferences with education, including intimidation and delays at checkpoints.⁵⁴ Separately, GCPEA identified 27 attacks on school students, teachers, and other education personnel in the West Bank in 2022.⁵⁵ Since it was unclear how many of these attacks overlapped with Education Cluster reports, they were not included in the total number of attacks on school students, teachers, and other personnel, to avoid double counting. Examples of incidents of arrest or detention included:

- In mid-January 2022, PCHR reported that Israeli forces detained two students, as well as assaulting teachers, after raiding their school in Ramallah city, Ramallah and al-Bireh governorate, West Bank.⁵⁶
- On November 17, 2022, Israeli forces allegedly detained a male student at a school in Zubeidat village, Jericho governorate, West Bank, after forcibly entering the school, as reported by local media *Wafa News Agency*.⁵⁷
- On December 1, 2022, Israeli forces allegedly stormed a school in Tuqu town, Bethlehem governorate, West Bank, and briefly detained the school director and teachers, according to local media *Wafa News Agency*.⁵⁸

Other incidents of attacks on students, teachers, or other personnel outside, or on the way to or from, school in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem included:⁵⁹

- On May 11, 2022, a 16-year-old student was reportedly shot and killed by Israeli forces as he was leaving school in Al Bireh, Ramallah and al-Bireh Governorate, West Bank, during confrontations between Palestinians and Israeli forces, according to OCHA.⁶⁰
- On September 18, 2022, Israeli forces allegedly fired teargas at Anata Girls' Secondary School in East Jerusalem, Quds governorate, West Bank, as reported by ACLED and local media *Jerusalem 24*.⁶¹
- On October 4, 2022, a group of alleged Israeli settlers forcibly entered the secondary school in Huwwara village, Nablus governorate, West Bank, and beat students and teachers. The settlers also reportedly threatened teachers and students with live ammunition, according to ACLED and international media *Al Jazeera*.⁶²

In the first six months of 2023, the Education Cluster recorded a sharp increase in the number of attacks on students and staff with over 225 attacks, including 186 cases of delays at checkpoints, affecting more than 7,600 students and 463 teachers, including 3,588 girls and 263 female staff; 15 incidents in which students were detained at school, or on the way to or from school; and 16 cases of intimidation while commuting to school.⁶³ Separately, GCPEA identified at least nine incidents of attacks on school students, teachers, and other personnel in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, in 2023.⁶⁴ For example:

- On August 31, 2023, in connection to the incident detailed above in the Old City of East Jerusalem, Israeli authorities allegedly detained a driver and school employee who were transporting textbooks to a Palestinian private school, as reported by international media *Middle East Monitor*.⁶⁵
- On September 3, 2023, Israeli police reportedly confiscated Palestinian textbooks from students outside Al-Aqsa Secondary School in the Old City of East Jerusalem, as classes were set to resume after the summer break, according to international media *Middle East Monitor*.⁶⁶
- On October 4, 2023, Israeli forces allegedly detained the director of Shaab al-Batm Mixed Basic School, as well as at least two teachers, for over an hour, at a military checkpoint, in al-Tuwanah village, Hebron governorate, West Bank, disrupting education for over 50 students, as reported by local media *Al Quds*.⁶⁷

MILITARY USE OF SCHOOLS AND UNIVERSITIES

GCPEA identified several cases of military use in the 2022-2023 reporting period, as in previous years.⁶⁸

In 2022, the UN verified the existence of a tunnel underneath a school in Gaza, for potential use by Palestinian armed groups.⁶⁹ Also in 2022, the Education Cluster reported eight incidents of military presence in or around schools,⁷⁰ although it is not clear how many of these met GCPEA's criteria for military use.

GCPEA identified at least ten reports of military use in 2023.⁷¹ Separately, between January and June 2023, the Education Cluster reported 27 incidents of military presence in or around schools;⁷² as above, GCPEA was not able to establish whether these incidents met GCPEA criteria for military use. GCPEA also identified anec-

total reports of additional military use of educational facilities after October 7, 2023, although these were not included in the count due to the lack of sufficient details.⁷³ Incidents identified by GCPEA included:

- As reported on October 11, 2023, according to Scholars at Risk and *University World News*, a press release from Israeli forces detailed an airstrike on the Islamic University of Gaza, which destroyed several buildings; the press release claimed that the university was being used by Hamas as a military training center.⁷⁴
- On December 9, 2023, Hamas-led fighters allegedly shot at Israeli soldiers from a school in Beit Hanoun, in the Gaza Strip, as reported by ACLED and *The New York Times*; the school was subsequently targeted in an attack by the Israeli military.⁷⁵

ATTACKS ON HIGHER EDUCATION

GCPEA identified 28 attacks on higher education during the 2022-2023 reporting period. These attacks occurred at a slightly higher rate as compared to the prior reporting period, when GCPEA identified around 15 such incidents in 2021, and five in 2020.⁷⁶ Attacks were identified predominantly in the West Bank, but also sporadically in the Gaza Strip.

In 2022, GCPEA identified at least 16 incidents of attacks on university students.⁷⁷ These cases involved the arrest or detention of Palestinian students as well as protest repression by Israeli forces, including the use of teargas and live ammunition.⁷⁸ Examples of incidents identified by GCPEA included:

- On April 16, 2022, Israeli forces reportedly used teargas and clashed with students at Al Quds University in East Jerusalem, in the West Bank, during a student demonstration, according to ACLED and Scholars at Risk.⁷⁹
- On June 29, 2022, Palestinian Authority security forces allegedly detained a student at Hebron University in Hebron city and governorate, West Bank, while he was leaving the university, as reported by Scholars at Risk.⁸⁰

In addition, GCPEA identified at least six reported attacks on higher education facilities in 2022.⁸¹ For example:

- On April 12, 2022, Israeli forces reportedly raided the Palestine Technical University, Kadoorie in Tulkarem city, West Bank, and clashed with students, allegedly firing teargas and rubber bullets, which injured 18 students, according to ACLED, Scholars at Risk, and local media *Wafa News Agency*.⁸²
- On August 5, 2022, airstrikes in Gaza reportedly damaged a building of Al-Quds Open University in the Gaza Strip, killing five students and injuring several more, as reported by Scholars at Risk; following the attack, eight universities in the Gaza Strip closed temporarily.⁸³

In 2023, GCPEA collected at least six reports of attacks on higher education students and facilities.⁸⁴ For example:

- On September 24, 2023, dozens of military vehicles, and Israeli forces, forcibly entered Birzeit University in Ramallah governorate, West Bank, reportedly assaulting the university guards, raiding the Student Council office, and causing extensive damage; the Israeli forces also arrested eight students, as reported by Scholars at Risk, a statement from Birzeit University, and local media *IMEMC News*.⁸⁵
- As reported on November 6, 2023, Israeli airstrikes reportedly struck south of Gaza City, in the Gaza Strip, destroying Al-Azhar University buildings and causing serious damage, as reported by Scholars at Risk.⁸⁶
- On November 8, 2023, Israeli forces allegedly forcibly entered Birzeit University, Ramallah city, West Bank, with six military vehicles, raided the Student Council office, and damaged property, as reported by Scholars at Risk.⁸⁷

ENDNOTES

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