

UN reports unprecedented scale of violations against children in Gaza and West Bank in 2023

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Palestinian children wounded in the Israeli bombardment of the Gaza Strip are treated in al-Aqsa

Hospital in Deir al-Balah, on June 9, 2024. (By AP)

United Nations, June 12 (RHC)-- A new UN report says violence against children reached “extreme levels” in conflict-stricken countries last year, with more grave violations being committed against children in war-torn Gaza and the occupied West Bank than anywhere else in the world.

The annual report on Children in Armed Conflict, a copy of which was obtained by the Guardian on Tuesday, reported that the occupied Palestinian territories present “an unprecedented scale and intensity of grave violations against children.”

The UN report verified more than 8,000 grave violations against 4,247 Palestinian children in 2023. The report went on to say that it reflected only a partial picture of the situation in the besieged Gaza Strip due to severe access challenges.

“Owing to severe access challenges, in particular in the Gaza Strip, the information presented herein does not represent the full scale of violations against children in this situation,” it said.

According to the report, most incidents were caused by the use of explosive weapons in populated areas by Israeli military and the regime’s deliberate or indiscriminate attacks against civilians.

It also stated that in the course of the Israeli war on Gaza, “nearly all critical infrastructure, facilities and services have been attacked,” stressing, “Children are at risk of famine, severe malnutrition and preventable death.”

The report also found grave abuses by Israeli forces in the occupied West Bank, with 126 Palestinian children killed and 906 detained.

The genocidal Israeli war on Gaza has inflicted immense suffering on innocent civilians, particularly children, whose lives have been shattered by airstrikes, displacement, and loss of loved ones.

Other countries in the report included the Democratic Republic of Congo--the next worst place for violence against children-- as well as Myanmar, Somalia, Nigeria and Sudan.

The annual assessment, due to be presented to the UN General Assembly later this week by UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres, included for the first time the Israeli military on its blacklist of perpetrators that violate children’s rights. Guterres said he is “appalled by the dramatic increase and unprecedented scale and intensity of grave violations against children in the Gaza Strip, Israel and the occupied West Bank.”

The magnitude of the Israeli military campaign and the scope of death and destruction in the Gaza Strip have been unprecedented, he said, reiterating calls for Israel to abide by international law and ensure civilians are not targeted, and that excessive force is not used during law enforcement operations.

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