

UNICEF reports sharp increase in child casualties in West Bank since Israeli war outbreak

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Palestinian children walk between tents used as temporary shelter and stagnant wastewater in Deir el-Balah in the central Gaza Strip on July 19, 2024. (Photo by AFP)

United Nations, July 22 (RHC)-- The United Nations children's agency says the total number of Palestinian children killed in the West Bank, including East al-Quds, since the beginning of Israel's war in October showed a spike of nearly 250 percent compared to the preceding nine months.

According to UNICEF, a total of 143 Palestinian children have so far been killed in the West Bank since the beginning of Israel's war on Gaza while 41 children had lost their lives in nine months before the regime's military invasion.

The UN report notes that more than 440 Palestinian children have also sustained injuries with live ammunition, adding that they have also been heavily affected by movement and access restrictions that disrupted their daily lives. The figures raise serious alarm around unnecessary and excessive use of force against the most vulnerable, the UN body added.

UNICEF Executive Director Catherine Russell expressed concern that children living in the West Bank, including East al-Quds, have been exposed to "horrific" violence for years now. "The situation has deteriorated significantly, coinciding with the escalation of hostilities inside Gaza. We are seeing frequent allegations of Palestinian children being detained on their way home from school, or shot while walking on the streets," she said. She stressed the importance of putting an immediate end to the violence against the Palestine children.

UNICEF reported the casualties in 10 out of 11 provinces in the West Bank, with more than half of the killings taking place in Jenin, Tulkarm and Nablus. "These areas have seen an increase in large and militarized law enforcement operations over the past two years, indicating a shift in intensity and scope," it said.

The world body warned that the escalation of tensions in the West Bank are also impacting the physical and mental well-being of thousands of children and families, who are now living in daily fear for their lives. It noted that children are afraid of walking around their neighborhoods or traveling to school.

UNICEF once again reaffirmed the need under international law for protection of children and prevention of further grave violations against them, including killing and maiming. "Children's right to life must be upheld and children should never be the target of violence, no matter who or where they are," it pointed out.

Russell said the true cost of the violence in the ongoing Israeli war on the Gaza Strip "will be measured in children's lives—those lost and those forever changed by it."

"What the children desperately need is an end to violence and a lasting political solution to the crisis, so that they can reach their fullest potential in peace and safety," the UNICEF executive director added.

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