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Defense for Children International | Palestine Section

# Growing up between Israeli **SETTLEMENTS** and soldiers







## Growing up between Israeli

**SETTLEMENTS** and soldiers

2014

Defense for Children International Palestine



**Defense for Children International Palestine** (DCI-Palestine), an independent child rights organization, defends and promotes the rights of children living in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. For over 20 years, we've investigated and exposed grave human rights violations against children; held Israeli and Palestinian authorities accountable to universal human rights principles; and advocated at the international and national levels to advance access to justice and protections for children. We also provide direct legal aid to children in distress.

For more information, please visit our website:

[www.dci-palestine.org](http://www.dci-palestine.org).

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Israel's establishment and expansion of settlements, military zones and other Israeli-controlled areas across the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT) has been consistent since the military occupation began in 1967. As of 2013, estimates put the number of Israeli settlers living in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, between 500,000 and 550,000.

The presence of Israel's military and settler establishment has created a dangerous environment for all Palestinians. With the ongoing increase in settler and military violence against Palestinian communities, vulnerable demographics, such as children, are particularly affected.

Recent statistics released by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) estimate that 2,100 settler attacks have occurred since 2006 and 399 settler attacks took place in 2013 alone.

Settler attacks usually entail groups of Israeli men throwing stones at Palestinians, often including children, or vandalizing property, such as homes, cars, churches, mosques and schools. Beatings and shootings, resulting in injuries and occasionally fatalities, are also regular occurrences.

Israeli military violence against Palestinians, including children, is also common in the OPT. More than 1,500 Palestinian children in the West Bank were injured by "weapons other than live ammunition" between January 2011 and December 2013, according to a new report by the human rights group Amnesty International. It further observed that at least 67 children were "shot and severely injured





by live ammunition fired by Israeli soldiers in the West Bank” in the same time period.

Despite an ongoing increase in settler and military violence against Palestinians in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, Israeli authorities have consistently failed to adequately investigate complaints filed against soldiers and settlers.

Yesh Din, an Israeli human rights group, released a report in July 2013 which found that “only 16 investigation files opened from September 2000 through mid-2013 regarding incidents when Palestinians were killed led to indictments.” That same month, a separate, equally disturbing Yesh Din report noted that over 90 percent of investigations between 2005 and 2013 looking into settler violence were eventually dropped without indictments.

Throughout 2013, DCI-Palestine documented at least 31 settler attacks that targeted Palestinian children, and another five Palestinian children were killed by Israeli soldiers.

This report is primarily based on evidence gathered by DCI-Palestine in 2013 and is limited to settler and soldier violence that affects Palestinian children in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem.

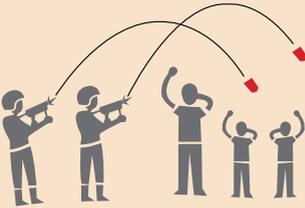
# TOP 5 FACTS



Israel's settlements in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, are illegal under international law.



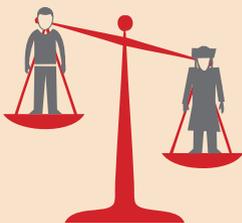
Although Israeli settlers are classified as civilians, they carry government-issued firearms.



The Israeli military's use of "non-lethal riot dispersal" methods often seriously injures or even kills Palestinian children.



According to Israeli military law, children under 12 years old cannot be arrested, though they are frequently detained.



All Palestinians living in the West Bank are tried in Israeli military courts, regardless of age. Israeli settlers, if indicted, fall under the jurisdiction of Israeli civil law.



## GROWING UP BETWEEN ISRAELI SETTLEMENTS AND SOLDIERS

At 2 am on Nov. 14, 2013, Ruwaida Dar Khalil was warming a bottle for her baby son when she heard the screech of car tires outside her home in Sinjil in the occupied West Bank. She dismissed the noise as teenagers fooling around in their cars, and went back to feeding her son. The next thing she heard was the sound of her front door being kicked in.

Four adult male Israeli settlers were breaking into the tiny house that Ruwaida shares with her husband and five children. The men smashed windows with crowbars, before dousing the entrance in gasoline and setting it ablaze.

“[The fire] lit so quickly and spread fast,” Ruwaida told Defense for Children International Palestine.

Smoke began filling the kitchen and Ruwaida realized that she had to get her family out.

“I woke up my husband and kids ... [my children] were so scared, terrified ... they were crying,” she said.

With the only escape route ablaze, Ruwaida and her husband, Khaled, had no option but to hide on the roof until help arrived.

Khaled and Ruwaida had left the United States to return to the West Bank with high hopes of raising their children in their homeland. They never anticipated that their home would be the target of four settler attacks.

Sinjil, the village they now live in with their three daughters and two sons, sits northeast of Ramallah. It is surrounded on three sides by an Israeli military base and two settlements. Soldiers are a common sight in the neighborhood, and Ruwaida finds it hard to understand

why they didn't come to help her family on the night of the attack.

"That night, there were Israeli police officers on the corner... and soldiers usually come to our place every night," she said. "But... nobody showed up. Nobody cared."

"Why didn't anybody come to protect innocent children in this house?"

By the time Palestinian firefighters arrived and put out the fire, the roof had partially collapsed. All five of the children were treated for excessive smoke inhalation following the fire.

The next day, Khaled found the words "Regards from Eden, Revenge!" scrawled in spray paint on an outside wall. The message referred to Eden Attias, an Israeli soldier who had been stabbed to death on a bus in northern Israel by a Palestinian teenager a day earlier. The Israeli daily *Haaretz* reported that the arson may have been carried out to avenge his murder.

Acts of violence like the one carried out against the Dar Khalil family are known as "price tag" attacks – and they are on the rise. Between 2009 and 2011, "price tag" attacks increased 144 percent, according to OCHA.

"Price tag" attacks are carried out by fundamentalist Israeli settlers against Palestinians (and other populations or institutions they see as responsible) in retaliation for any action taken against the

*Stationed throughout the West Bank, Israeli soldiers, police and private security staff protect settler populations. Unlike other Israeli civilians, settlers are armed by the government as a matter of official policy. This creates a hyper-militarized environment that results in the infliction of disproportionate physical and psychological violence against Palestinian children.*

settlement enterprise in the West Bank. This can include actions initiated by the Israeli government and Israeli forces, for example demolition orders against unauthorized settlements. The Israeli government has condemned "price tag" attacks.

The Dar Khalil children continue to struggle with the after effects of the brutal





*Ruwaida Dar Khalil explains how four settlers kicked down the door and set their home on fire in a “price-tag” attack on Nov. 14, 2013.*

attack. They declined to speak to DCI-Palestine about the attack, but Khaled and Ruwaida described some of their problems.

Three-year-old Nisreen continues to suffer from breathing difficulties.

“She is always panting,” said Khaled. “The doctor told me she may have to have surgery.”

Eman, 7, struggles to sleep at night and refuses to go to the bathroom alone.

“She won’t go take a sip of water, nothing, without me standing by her like a guard,” said Ruwaida. “She says, ‘No! No! No! The settlers are here.’ She always wakes up crying and thinks she heard settlers outside.”

Since Israel occupied the West Bank in 1967, it has established some 125 settlements. The Israeli human rights group B’Tselem estimates that there are over 515,000 Israelis living in these Jewish-only settlements. The settlements are woven throughout the

occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, often dividing the cities, villages and refugee camps of the 2.65 million Palestinians who live there.

*There are an estimated 515,000 Israeli settlers living in more than 125 settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.*

*In 2013, Israeli construction in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, increased by 130 percent compared to the year before.*

According to international law, Israel's settlements in the West Bank are illegal. Israel, however, claims religious and historical rights to the territory. It disputes that the Fourth Geneva Convention, which forbids an occupying power from transferring its civilians to the territory occupied, applies to the West Bank. Meanwhile, the settlements are growing. In 2013, Israeli construction in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, increased by 130 percent compared with 2012, according to Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics.

Stationed throughout the West Bank, Israeli soldiers, police and private security staff protect settler populations. Unlike Israeli civilians living across the Green Line, Israel's pre-1967 boundary with the West Bank, many settlers carry government-issued arms. Ahead of the UN vote on Palestinian statehood in September 2011, the Israeli government trained and further armed many settlers across the West Bank, according to Israeli daily newspaper *Haaretz*.

In this hyper-militarized environment, disproportionate physical and psychological violence is inflicted on Palestinian children.

## **BURNING A SCHOOL**

Jalud, a village about 30 kilometers (19 miles) south of Nablus, is in close proximity to four illegal Israeli outposts whose residents regularly attack Palestinian villagers and vandalize their property.

Generally smaller than a settlement, an outpost is a West Bank settlement built without official Israeli government authorization,



but which often receives support and assistance from government ministries, according to B'Tselem. The human rights group estimates that approximately 100 outposts exist throughout the West Bank.

Among the four outposts near Jalud is Esh Kodesh, an outpost community established in 2000, partially on land privately-owned by Palestinians. It has been protected by the Israeli military since 2011, despite being illegal under both international and Israeli law.

Some residents of Esh Kodesh are known for their extreme nationalist politics and religious beliefs, much like their neighbors in the Ahiya outpost less than two kilometers (about 1 mile) away. *(See map on page 37.)*



*1st grade students at Jalud's elementary school witnessed an attack in which Israeli settlers smashed car windows and set the perimeters of the campus ablaze on Oct. 9, 2013.*

*DCI-Palestine documented 31 cases of settler violence against Palestinian children in 2013.*



*Farah Abbad's brothers stand in front of their home, equipped with metal netting and bars on the windows to protect from attacks by Israeli settlers from the nearby outpost of Ahiya.*

On Oct. 9, 2013, a group of settlers from nearby outposts attacked Jalud's elementary school. Around noon, they broke into the school and threw rocks at the classrooms. *Haaretz* later reported that the attack was carried out as part of the "price-tag" campaign in reprisal for the Israeli military's dismantling of another outpost.

Omar Abdullah, 12, told DCI-Palestine that he and other students recognized the settlers from previous attacks in their neighborhoods.

"We were all very scared," Omar said. "The next day none of us came to school, even though we were supposed to take a big test."

He remembers thinking the attackers were Israeli soldiers at first: "I



saw them enter the front gate of the school and start smashing the windows of our teachers' cars. They were using stones.”

Later, he said, they poured a flammable liquid around the periphery of the school and lit a blazing ring of fire that encircled half of the school's perimeter.

“Even our teachers were scared after that,” Omar recounted nervously. “It was hard for us to come to school and think about our studies.”

For some students, this was not their first experience of settler violence.

Five-year-old Farah Abbad had been assaulted a few months earlier during an hour-long settler attack on his family's home near the Ahiya outpost.

Farah's grandmother, Wardeh, and his father, Naseem, were with him when he was attacked.

“The settlers came in disguise. They were dressed in Arabic clothing,” Wardeh told DCI-Palestine. “They were right in front of me by the time I realized they were settlers. One of them hit Farah in the head with a rock.”

Farah, then 4, was “screaming and crying really hard because he was in pain and terrified,” remembers Naseem. He received several stitches to the right side of his forehead.

He is now too scared to walk to school alone because the pathway is close to the Ahiya outpost.

“Sometimes [the settlers] harass the kids on the way home from school. Farah and the other kids often come home crying and frightened,” Wardeh said.

*“The settlers came in disguise,” explained Wardeh, [five-year-old] Farah's grandmother. “They were dressed in Arabic clothing. They were right in front of me by the time I realized they were settlers. One of them hit Farah in the head with a rock.”*

Naseem also explained that during the same hour-long attack his 16-year-old brother, Saleh, sustained a foot injury from a stone

hurled by a settler. “My whole family was terrified,” he added.

Recent OCHA statistics estimate that more than 2,100 settler attacks occurred since 2006, 399 of which took place in 2013 alone.

DCI-Palestine recorded 129 instances of settler violence against Palestinian children between 2008 and 2012.

While Israeli settlers, including children, often attack Palestinians with stones and other objects, they are rarely held accountable as the Israeli army lacks the authority to arrest Israeli settlers in the West Bank. As a result, only Palestinians, often children, are detained or arrested in connection with stone-throwing exchanges, according to affidavits collected by DCI-Palestine.

Across the West Bank, attacks regularly begin with settlers and are finished off by the Israeli military.

*See annex on page 32 for related case summaries.*

## BEATINGS AND BULLETS

Urif Secondary School is located 13 kilometers (about 8 miles) south of the northern West Bank city of Nablus. It lies in close proximity to the Yitzhar settlement, and has become a frequent target of both settler and military attacks.

Nabil al-Najjar, the principal at Urif Secondary School, says the Israeli military has attacked the school six times since September 2013.

One of the most recent attacks took place on Jan. 12, 2014, on a day when students at the school were sitting exams. It started when settlers threw rocks at the school and Israeli forces arrived a short time later.

Al-Najjar says that the soldiers cut the cables to the school’s security cameras and waited at the front gate. At 9 am, a group of students finished their exam and left the school grounds. Shortly after, confrontations broke out between the students and soldiers.

Al-Najjar recalls that one group of soldiers entered classrooms while exams were still in session, but that teachers intervened and prevented them from arresting any students. Another group of





*Nabil al-Najjar, principal of Urif Secondary School, explains that metal bars were put on all the windows to protect from stones thrown by settlers and tear gas canisters fired by Israeli soldiers.*

soldiers surrounded the campus, firing rubber-coated metal bullets and launching stun grenades and tear gas canisters into the school grounds. The wind blew tear gas into the classrooms while students were still inside.

After al-Najjar negotiated with the army the soldiers retreated, but dozens of children were injured by rubber-coated metal bullets and tear gas inhalation. A handful needed hospitalization.

The Israeli military uses what it calls “non-lethal riot dispersal” methods – including stun grenades, tear gas and rubber bullets – against Palestinian protests or clashes. In spite of their name, these methods can inflict serious, sometimes fatal, injuries, particularly on

children.

According to a February 2014 Amnesty International report, two Palestinians were killed by weapons other than live ammunition between January 2011 and December 2013. Amnesty estimates that another 8,000 Palestinians were injured by such weapons,

*Five Palestinian children were killed by Israeli soldiers in 2013.*

*The Israeli military has used at least 20 Palestinian children as human shields since 2004.*

1,522 of whom were children.

One of those children is six-year-old Mus'ab Sarahneh. He lost an eye after being hit in the face with a rubber-coated metal bullet fired by an Israeli soldier in Fawwar refugee camp, near Hebron, in September 2013. Mus'ab's mother, Heyam, told DCI-Palestine in a statement that despite his serious head injury, they waited four hours for approval from Israeli authorities to travel to East Jerusalem for medical treatment.

A few days later, on Oct. 1, 2013, an Israeli soldier shot 16-year-old Yazan Mahmoud Abed Zaid in the leg with a rubber-coated metal bullet as he stood outside the UNRWA Boy's School in Jalazoun refugee camp near Ramallah. Following the injury, Yazan underwent a five-hour surgery to remove the bullet.

An Israeli military spokesperson did not reply to DCI-Palestine's requests for a comment about Mus'ab Sarahneh or Yazan Mahmoud Abed Zaid.

For Jalazoun residents, the presence of Israel's Beit El settlement has created an environment that fosters conflict between the camp's youth and Israeli soldiers. Home to nearly 6,000 Israeli settlers, Beit El is predominantly built on privately-owned Palestinian land and is surrounded by several checkpoints, military watchtowers and bunkers.

A permanent military watchtower overlooks an olive orchard that



separates the UNRWA school from the Beit El settlement. Due to its proximity to the school, soldiers and private security are often present near the school, or in the camp, causing tension in the area. (See map on page 38.)

According to a faculty member at the UNRWA school, the military boarded up all the windows on the side of the school that faces the settlement and evidence of military activity is often found in the school grounds.

“Each morning, we walk around the school and pick up the tear gas canisters, sound bomb shells and rubber bullets,” the faculty member said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

Sources at the school say fear of military violence, as well as overcrowding and lack of resources, have contributed to a high dropout rate. This leaves many young people in the streets without work or studies and clashes with the military have become more frequent.

On May 21, 2013, 12-year-old Atta Sabah was shot with live ammunition by an Israeli soldier near the school grounds. The bullet entered Atta’s stomach and severed his spinal cord, leaving him paralyzed.

Mahmoud, 15, an eyewitness to the shooting, later told DCI-Palestine: “(Atta) walked for about one or two meters toward the soldier. Suddenly, he wanted to turn around and run away. At that moment, the second soldier fired one bullet and I saw Atta fall immediately.”

Atta says that he was trying to retrieve his schoolbag from the soldier, who had taken it from him the day before. Eyewitnesses report that

there were no clashes taking place in the area at the time.

*“Each morning, we walk around the school and pick up the tear gas canisters, sound bomb shells and rubber bullets,” the Jalazoun UNRWA school faculty member said, speaking on condition of anonymity.*

The Israeli military later claimed that the shooting happened when “a violent and unlawful riot took place in the area, with the participation of dozens of

Palestinians who threw rocks and Molotov cocktails toward the soldiers.”

In another incident on Dec. 7, 2013, 15-year-old Wajih al-Ramahi was shot in the back and killed from a distance of about 200 meters (656 feet) at a playground near the UNRWA school by an Israeli soldier using live ammunition.

Eyewitnesses confirmed that Palestinian youth had been throwing stones at Israeli soldiers at the time, but Wajih’s father, Wajdi, insists that his son was “playing soccer. He wasn’t throwing rocks or doing anything else.”

It remains unclear whether Wajih was involved.

The Israeli military later announced that it had been engaged in clashes with stone-throwing youth at the time and said that it was investigating the matter, according to *Haaretz* and other news reports. To date, no further information has been released about the investigation.

Wajih’s father told DCI-Palestine that his brothers and sisters are finding it hard to cope with his death.

“My youngest son cannot sleep anymore,” he said. “He wakes up crying and comes to sleep in our room. He doesn’t understand why his brother was killed. The others are always scared.”

The al-Ramahi family’s tragedy is not unique. Four more Palestinian children were killed by Israeli soldiers in 2013.

*See annex on page 33 for related case summaries.*

## “GAS THE ARABS!”

Residents of Hebron, the most populous Palestinian city in the West Bank, complain of daily harassment from both Israeli soldiers and settlers. Between January 2012 and July 2013, OCHA estimates that 700 Palestinians were injured by Israeli soldiers or settlers in the city.

Hebron’s city center, including the historic Old City, the old market and the Ibrahimi Mosque, is under full Israeli military and civil control as part of a 1997 agreement between Israel and the





*Marwa Abu Shamsiya and her brothers face regular harassment from Israeli settlers in the West Bank city of Hebron.*

Palestinian Authority. At that time, the city was split into two areas, H1, which is under Palestinian Authority control and H2, controlled by the Israeli military. (See map on page 39.)

In a unique situation, the Old City now permanently hosts upwards of 3,000 Israeli soldiers and some 600 settlers in four settlements. Thousands of Palestinian shops have been closed and homes evacuated in this once-bustling area of the city.

The Abu Shamsiya family lives in a modest two-room house in the heart of the H2 area. Imad, his wife Faiza, and their three sons and two daughters are the frequent victims of both settler and military violence.

“Everyone in this house has been attacked before,” Imad, 40, told DCI-Palestine.

But Imad’s 9-year-old daughter Marwa and son Mohammad, 12, have both been the victims of particularly disturbing attacks.

In 2011, Marwa, then 7, was snatched by a group of settlers as she made her way home from school. They held her down and set her hair on fire. An Israeli soldier quickly intervened and put out

*“Coming to and from school is our biggest problem. Our students often get held for long periods of time at the checkpoint,” Noura Nasser, the principal of Qurtaba School, explained to DCI-Palestine. “Settlers also throw eggs and trash at the kids as they walk here.”*

the fire, but it was more than a year before Marwa was able to sleep through the night without waking up and screaming.

In October 2013, Mohammad was on his way to the store to fetch bread for his mother when he was stopped by an Israeli soldier. Mohammad told DCI-Palestine that the soldier asked him if he had

recently thrown rocks, then he slapped Mohammad across the face twice and threatened to kill him.

“I went to tell my mom,” Mohammad said. “When my mom came to ask the soldier why (he hit me), he slammed her against the wall. When my dad went later, the soldier told him he hit me because he felt like it.”

Mohammad insists he is “used to the violence now,” but his mother, Faiza, told DCI-Palestine that all of her children are frightened at night.

Perched on a hill in H2 across from the Beit Hadassah settlement, Qurtaba School is where 157 Palestinian boys and girls, ages 7 to 16, study. Its windows are covered with metal netting to protect students from attacks by settlers, who in the past have thrown rocks, glass bottles and Molotov cocktails through the windows into the classrooms.

At any given time, visitors will find graffiti written by settlers. “Gas the Arabs!” has been scrawled on a wall near the school - and death threats against the students and curse words in both Hebrew and Arabic are also common.

Because Israel’s military restricts Palestinian movement in H2, some students have to cross through a military checkpoint and metal detectors on their way to school. A November 2013 OCHA report noted: “(There) are over 120 obstacles, deployed by the Israeli military, which segregate... restricted areas from the rest of the city,





*Israeli settlers frequently leave graffiti threatening Palestinian residents on the walls of the Old City in the West Bank city of Hebron.*

including 18 permanently staffed checkpoints.”

“Coming to and from school is our biggest problem. Our students often get held for long periods of time at the checkpoint,” said Noura Nasser, principal at Qurtaba School. “Settlers also throw eggs and trash at the kids as they walk here.”

Students who come through the main checkpoint must walk up Shuhada Street. Though quicker than making a detour of several kilometers around the Old City and entering the school from the other side, settlers frequently try to hit the children or run them over in vehicles.

“I’ve seen it with my own eyes,” said Nasser. “The settlers drive



*Each day dozens of Palestinian children must pass through checkpoints to reach the Qurtaba School, the last Palestinian school open in Hebron's Old City.*

RACISM

*An estimated 700 Palestinians were injured in Hebron between January 2012 and July 2013.*

*Palestinian movement in Hebron is inhibited by more than 120 obstacles, including 18 permanent checkpoints.*

*More than 99 percent of Palestinians tried in Israeli military courts are convicted.*

upwards of 80 kilometers per hour (55 miles per hour) with the intention of hitting kids.”

She says the school has changed its hours to start and finish earlier, which has lessened the problem.

Shatha Ramadan, 11, is one of the best students in the 6th grade, but she often struggles to maintain focus due to emotional trauma caused by frequent settler attacks.

“They come to our home every Saturday after they finish their holiday,” Shatha told DCI-Palestine, referring to Shabbat, the Jewish day of rest. “Several times they have kicked through the door to our house and attacked us in our home.”

Shatha lives next to one of the main checkpoints on Shuhada Street with her parents and six brothers and sisters, all of whom are under 18. Each morning on the way to school, Shatha has to walk past the settlers who attack her and her family.

During the worst incident, Shatha recalls opening her front door after hearing someone rustling around next to the window. When she stepped outside, a group of settlers struck her on the head several times.

“When I tried to turn and go back into the house, they hit me on the leg with a wooden pole,” Shatha said. “There were adults and kids. Afterwards, my dad had to take me to the hospital.”

Shatha had to have x-rays and was left with severe bruising.

Each day Muawiah Abu Heikal, 11, walks back and forth between the school and his home in the Tel Rumeida neighborhood of Hebron. One Sunday in April 2013, he and his brother were arrested by



*A Palestinian child stands across from an Israeli settlement and military base in Hebron's Old City, where thousands of soldiers are stationed to protect some 600 settlers.*

Israeli soldiers after a confrontation with a group of local settlers.

“We were walking home the same way as them,” Muawiah told DCI-Palestine. “One of the settlers started to bother my friend Ahmad. We tried to help him get away, but the settler called over a soldier and said we hit him with stones.”

Muawiah and his brother were handcuffed and taken to a police station in Kiryat Arba, a nearby Israeli settlement.

“My brother was left handcuffed in the military jeep while they took me inside for interrogation,” he said, adding that he was frightened to go in by himself.



After being questioned by soldiers for several hours, Muawiah was taken to a hospital.

“I had bruises on my arms because they hit me ... and my stomach hurt badly. Before they released us, they took our pictures and threatened to fine our parents if they catch us again,” he said.

Israeli military forces detain or arrest Palestinian children in Hebron on a regular basis. Israeli soldiers rounded up 27 backpack-wearing children on their way to school in March 2013 in an incident documented by DCI-Palestine and news sources.

DCI-Palestine estimates that the Israeli military has detained over 8,000 children since 2000. Since 2008, there have been at least 170 Palestinian children in Israeli detention at any given time.

Israeli military documents leaked to *Haaretz* in 2011 noted that “99.74 percent... of cases (against Palestinians) heard by the military courts in the occupied territories end in a conviction.”

Across the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, Palestinian children are frequently detained, arrested and imprisoned. Yet no such equivalent exists on the Israeli side, meaning settlers and soldiers operate largely without legal consequences.

*See annex on page 35 for related case summaries.*

## **“POLICY OF IMPUNITY”**

This is by no means an exhaustive account of the harm inflicted on Palestinian children as a result of the establishment, preservation and expansion of Israeli settlements. Yet these anecdotes of settler and military violence serve as a window into the innumerable injustices Palestinian children face due to the presence of Israeli settlements and the military infrastructure and personnel that guards them.

Almost more alarming than the fact that 1,401 Palestinian children have been killed by Israeli soldiers or settlers since 2000 is the climate of impunity that makes such violence possible.

Although the UN and other international legal institutions have consistently condemned Israel’s practices in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, little has been done to either put pressure on

Israel or hold its government and institutions accountable.

In July 2004, the International Court of Justice (ICJ), while issuing an advisory opinion about Israel's separation barrier in the West Bank,

*1,401 Palestinian children have been killed by Israeli military forces or settlers since 2000.*

*Only 16 investigation files opened by the Israeli military into soldier violence led to indictments.*

*Over 90 percent of investigations opened into Israeli civilian violence against Palestinians in the West Bank were closed without indictments.*

reaffirmed that Israeli settlements violate international humanitarian law and international legal standards.

The report from the 2013 United Nations International Fact-Finding Mission on Israeli Settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory concluded: "The identities of settlers who are responsible for violence and intimidation are known to the Israeli authorities, yet these acts continue with Israeli impunity."

The report also called on Israel "to ensure the full accountability for all violations, including for all acts of settler violence, in a non-discriminatory manner and to put an end to the policy of impunity."

Indeed, following incidents of settler violence, lack of justice is the norm and not the exception. In a report published in July 2013, the Israeli human rights group Yesh Din found that more than 90 percent of the investigations opened into settler violence between 2005 and 2013 "were closed without an indictment being served against suspects."

A recent Amnesty International report documented 41 Palestinians killed by live ammunition in the West Bank between January 2011 and December 2013. Another recent Yesh Din report, however, found that "only 16 investigation files opened from September 2000 through mid-2013 regarding incidents when Palestinians were killed led to indictments."



*The 2013 UN Fact-Finding Mission on Israeli Settlements concluded “that the identities of settlers who are responsible for violence and intimidation are known to the Israeli authorities, yet these acts continue with Israeli impunity.”*

The rise in violence has also been accompanied by a pattern of dehumanization of Palestinian children by Israeli soldiers, particularly in social media. In February 2013, the international media reported on an Israeli soldier who had posted an Instagram photograph of a Palestinian child seen

through the cross hairs of a rifle. Al Jazeera English had reported similar incidents prior to this, including an instance in 2010 in which an Israeli soldier posted photos posing next to a handcuffed Palestinian child on her Facebook account.

The lack of accountability for Israeli military and settler violence perpetuates an environment in which children are targets. Worse still, many Palestinians are resigned to a reality without safety and justice for their children.

“We’re used to death,” concluded Wajdi al-Ramahi, whose 15-year-old son was shot and killed by an Israeli soldier last December. “I cannot protect my children here. We do everything we can to guarantee their protection, but in the end it’s all in God’s hands.”







## CASE SUMMARIES

### ANNEX TO “BURNING A SCHOOL” SECTION

On the morning of Dec. 27, 2013, **AHMAD A**, 17, was attacked by Israeli settlers as he grazed his goats on agricultural land just outside the northern West Bank village of Khirbet Um al-Rehan.

Ahmad tried to escape after being ambushed by three settlers hiding in an olive tree grove, but he fell after being struck with a rifle on his leg. The settlers beat him for several minutes, until he eventually lost consciousness.

Just a week later, on Jan. 2, 2014, Ahmad and his cousin were attacked a second time by the same settlers. Together, the three men slapped him several times, but he eventually broke loose and fled to his village.

Now, Ahmad is afraid to go to the agricultural lands outside the village, but must still graze the sheep each day because his family has no other source of income.

**MARAH J**, 12, had an English exam on her mind as she and her cousin made their way to Sharia Secondary Girls School in the Old City of Jerusalem on the morning of Jan. 5, 2014. While walking through the city’s narrow corridors, a young settler attacked her and pushed her from behind. After her face slammed against the pavement, he proceeded to kick her until passersby arrived and the settler fled.

“I was crying hard because I was feeling so much pain and so scared,” Marah told DCI-Palestine, adding that she has since



suffered psychological trauma. Fearing running into her attacker again, she walks a different path to school.

“I think of him a lot,” she concluded. “I have to cover my face under the blanket now so I can sleep.”

**ALAG**, 8, was confronted by three Israeli settlers in Yatta, south of the West Bank city of Hebron, on June 7, 2013. When the men approached him, he fled. The settlers released a dog that chased the boy, causing him to trip and hit his face on a rock.

Bleeding and crying out in pain, his father came to help him. The settlers only left once Israeli police officers arrived and made them go.

## ANNEX TO “BEATINGS AND BULLETS” SECTION

After being physically assaulted by a settler on Sept. 12, 2013, **ALIS**, 14, was detained by Israeli soldiers near his hometown of Azzoun. After being taken to a military camp outside the village, the boy was beaten by the soldiers.

“They pulled me out and sat me down on the ground,” he explained to DCI-Palestine. “One of them approached me and put out his cigarette on my lips.”

Later, while in interrogation, Ali was forced to sign a confession that stated he had been throwing stones. The next day he was transferred to another Israeli base, strip-searched, held in a detention room with adults, and eventually moved again to Meggido Prison in northern Israel. The Fourth Geneva Convention forbids an occupying power from transferring prisoners outside of an occupied territory.

Israeli settlers from Yitzhar, a settlement located 10 kilometers (6 miles) south of Nablus, attacked two **SCHOOL BUSES FULL OF PALESTINIAN GIRLS** on April 30, 2013. After surrounding the buses near the Huwwara checkpoint, the settlers launched rocks until the drivers managed to pass after about ten minutes.

At least three girls were injured, either from being struck by stones or from the shattered glass windows. “I was terrified,” Huriya Mohammad, principal at Qibya Girls School, recalled. “I was really scared about the girls. They were screaming, and some of them fainted.”

Sources told DCI-Palestine that Israeli soldiers were present among the attacking settlers, though they did not intervene.

In the West Bank village of Qusra, **IMRAN H**, 17, and **RAED O**, 16, were both injured during clashes between Palestinian youth and Israeli soldiers on Jan. 1, 2013. A group of around a dozen settlers from the nearby settlements of Esh Kodesh and Magdolim attacked the southern end of the village, uprooting olive trees and pelting local Palestinian residents with stones.

At some point during the two-hour confrontation that ensued, Israeli soldiers stepped in to defend the settlers. “Israeli soldiers started firing live ammunition and rubber bullets at us,” Raed told DCI-Palestine, “as well as teargas canisters and sound grenades.”

Imran was struck in the hand and the head with tear gas canisters fired by the soldiers – he later had to get stitches on his forehead. Raed was also hospitalized after being shot in the leg by a rubber-coated metal bullet.



## ANNEX TO “GAS THE ARABS!” SECTION

As **FARAHAT R**, 9, led his family donkey to the yard behind his home in the West Bank city of Hebron on the morning of Oct. 20, 2013, he was confronted by a crowd of Israeli settler children. They blocked his path to prevent him from passing. One of the boys snatched his donkey’s leash from him and another one smashed Farahat in the face with a stone.

“He was about 10 meters [30 feet] away when he threw it at me and it hit me in my nose and right eye,” he told DCI-Palestine. “It was so painful I burst into tears and rushed back to the house, screaming loudly because of the pain.”

Farahat was subsequently taken to the hospital for an x-ray and first aid.

**YAZAN S**, 13, was assaulted by Israeli settlers in Hebron on the afternoon of Jan. 25, 2014. While running a grocery errand for his mother, he and a friend were attacked by five settler children: one pushed him from behind, others kicked him in the knees.

Accompanied by an adult settler, an Israeli soldier quickly intervened. A scuffle broke out between the two boys and the men. “[The soldier] grabbed me hard by my collar and kept dragging me to the checkpoint,” Yazan told DCI-Palestine.

“He forced me to stand by the checkpoint,” he continued. “But about three minutes later, he knocked me down facing the ground and stepped on my back.”

Yazan’s father soon arrived. After he pushed the soldier away from Yazan, both father and son were detained and interrogated. The two were eventually released from Israeli custody after the soldier filed a complaint against both of them, and they are still awaiting their trial date.

On the afternoon of Sept. 23, 2013, **AWNI S**, 14, was startled by a loud banging noise on the roof of his home, located in the Tel Rumeida neighborhood of Hebron. He went outside and was attacked by a group of Israeli settlers. Israeli soldiers chased a handful of the settlers off, but more arrived from the nearby settlement of Ramat Yishai, situated about 100 meters (300 feet) from his house.

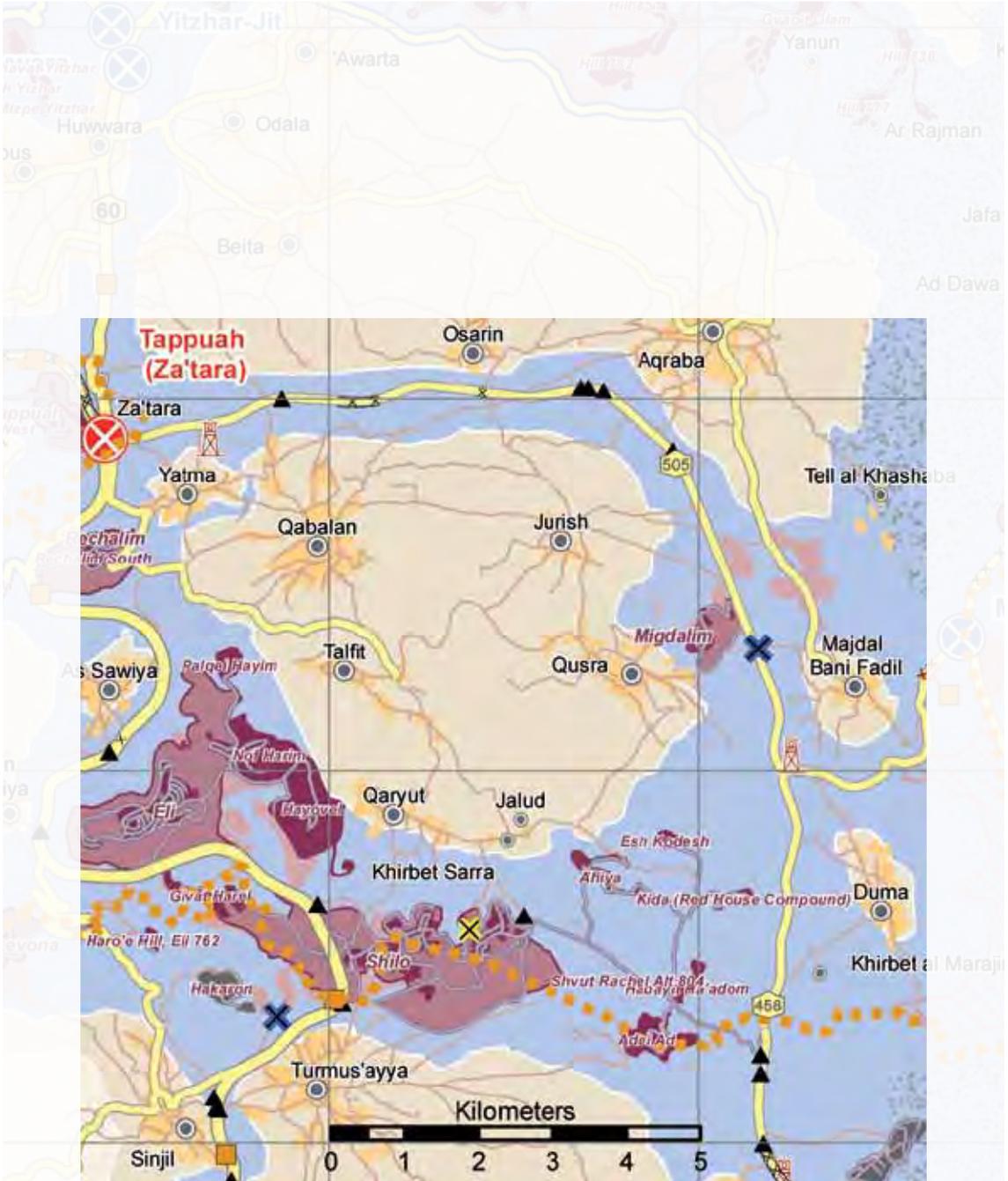
“Two of the settlers beat me, they kicked me several times on my legs and slapped me across the face,” Awni told DCI-Palestine. “I tried to fight back and hit one of them, but three more settlers surrounded me and started slapping and kicking me really hard. They kept beating me until I fainted.”

He was later treated at the Al-Ahli Hospital, where he received an x-ray and first aid for the bruising he had sustained on his legs.



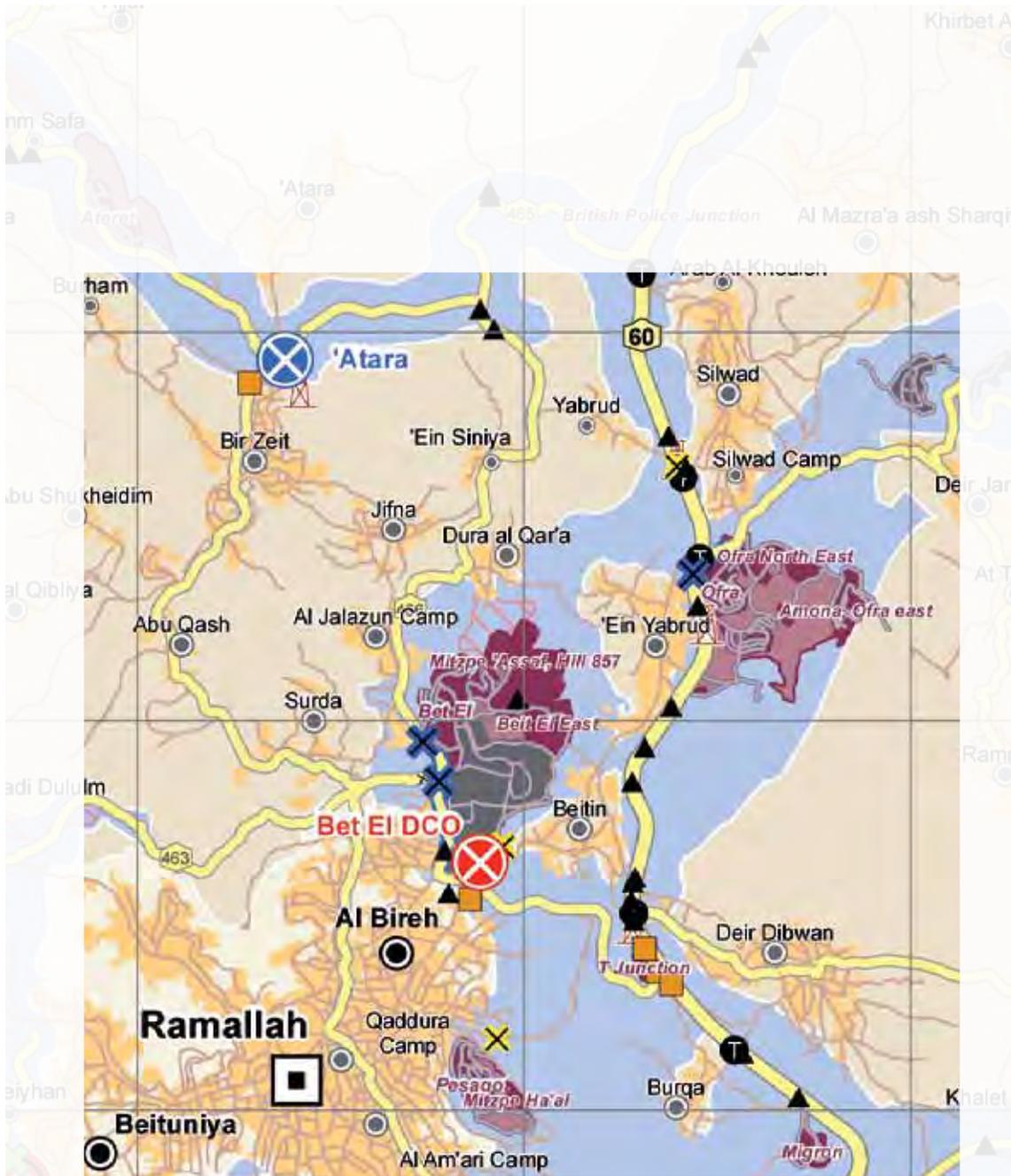
# MAP OF JALUD AND NEARBY ISRAELI SETTLEMENTS

Source: United Nations OCHA oPt



## MAP OF JALAZOUN REFUGEE CAMP AND BEIT EL SETTLEMENT

Source: United Nations OCHA oPt









Founded in 1991, Defense for Children International Palestine (DCI-Palestine), an independent child rights organization, defends and promotes the rights of children living in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

o [dci-palestine.org](http://dci-palestine.org)

