

His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki Moon
United Nations Secretary-General
United Nations Headquarters
First Avenue at 46th Street
New York, NY 10017

8 May 2015

**Joint letter to the UN Secretary-General concerning Israel's armed forces
and grave violations of children's rights**

Dear Mr. Secretary-General,

As the Palestinian Human Rights Organisations Council, we write to follow up on our previous letter dated 9 February 2015 and again urge you to list Israel's armed forces in the annex to your 14th Annual Report on Children and Armed Conflict for committing grave violations against children in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

We strongly regret that you have, for a second time, had to establish a UN Headquarters Board of Inquiry (BOI) to examine a number of incidents affecting or involving UN premises and personnel in Gaza related to another Israeli military offensive. We commend your aim "to develop a clear record of the facts of these serious incidents...with a view to preventing a recurrence of such incidents in the future," and understand that the Board does not make legal findings. However, it must be recognized that despite being regularly and repeatedly informed of the coordinates of UN premises being used as shelters both Boards found the Government of Israel responsible for deaths and injuries caused to individuals, including children, sheltering at UNRWA schools.

In a context where systemic impunity is the status quo, we need your leadership to activate a process for accountability. We must use all tools available to ensure that human rights and protection of civilians, particularly children, is a universal core responsibility. For children in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, without justice and accountability we know a third inquiry will likely be established in the not so distant future.

So far, the children and armed conflict framework has failed to foster accountability and compliance of Israeli forces with international child protection standards. Irrespective of repeated military offensives, persistent reports of grave violations committed by Israeli forces against children consistently detail patterns of killing and maiming, attacks against schools, and widespread and systematic ill-treatment and torture of Palestinian child detainees. The country-level UNICEF-led working group in the Occupied Palestinian Territory has extensively monitored and reported on these violations over the last eight years yet grave violations continue unabated.

We reaffirm that the monitoring and reporting mechanism (MRM) established by the Security Council was created not only to systematically gather evidence related to the six grave violations against children during armed conflict worldwide, but also to provide a mechanism for accountability when armed forces or armed groups violate these universal and fundamental principles. The global MRM is a strong mechanism that works to significantly increase protections for children during armed conflict, but to ensure that it grows and continues to be an integral tool for child protection the decision to list individual armed forces or groups must be impartial and undoubtedly evidence based.

We recognize this moment as a critical juncture, not only for children living in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, but also for the integrity of the MRM process. If the MRM is to remain a relevant and credible evidence-based system, it is necessary to list Israel's armed forces. There exists ample evidence to trigger listing for killing and maiming and attacks against schools.

We urge you now to act with moral courage and, based on the wealth of evidence presented to you, to take the principled position and list Israel's armed forces in your upcoming annual report on children and armed conflict.

Respectfully,

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CC:

Ms. Leila Zerrougui, Special Representative of the Secretary General for Children and Armed Conflict, OSRSG-CAAC