

## **“DANGER IS OUR REALITY”:** The impact of conflict & the occupation on education in the West Bank, occupied Palestinian territory

### **Executive Summary**

#### **Introduction**

Children living in Palestine have lived under military occupation and conflict all of their lives. This has impacted all parts of their lives, from their safety and development to their wellbeing and mental health. Children’s have a right to education, and they should feel safe in schools. But, many children in Palestine are vulnerable to dangers on their way to and from school and in the classroom, and often do not get to learn due to attacks on education and other threats.

Around the world, attacks on education are increasing. Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt) are some of the riskiest places for children to go to school, with over 1000 incidents in the West Bank, Gaza Strip and Israel between 2013 and 2017. In large areas of the West Bank, the Israeli military have law enforcement functions, which means that the military are in close proximity with children and their schools.

During times of conflict, attacks by the military on education violate international law. Attacks on schools and hospitals are also one of the six grave violations against children in conflict, which were identified by the United Nations (UN).

To find out about the impact that attacks on education have on children, Save the Children talked to more than 400 children across the West Bank, to find out what impacts the attacks on education had on them.

#### **Attacks on and barriers to education**

Children talked about a lot of incidents that made them feel unsafe at school, and stopped them from learning. These included Israeli military and settlers being around their school, and on routes to and from school. As well as this, some children talked about attacks on schools, being harassed at checkpoints, and not having safe transport to school.

The main concern of children in the West Bank was military being in and around schools. This can include people from the military or vehicles being outside the school gates, or Israeli soldiers coming into school grounds and buildings and disrupting classes. Children said that they felt there was no ‘safe space’ because soldiers could come in at any time.

Children also said they felt they were in danger or unsafe when travelling to and from school. Children said they felt in danger of being attacked, humiliated, or arrested. Three-quarters of children also said that when they go to school, they are scared of seeing people from the military or settlers, in case they are verbally abused or threatened with physical assault, arrest or teargas.

Nearly three-quarters of children said that their schools had been attacked. These attacks can include the firing of live ammunition, using tear gas or sound bombs in and around schools.

#### **Six Grave Violations**

The six grave violations against children in conflict are: the killing and maiming of children; the recruitment or use of children; sexual violence against children; abduction of children; attacks against schools or hospitals; and the denial of humanitarian aid for children (the blockage of food, water and medicine for children).

## The impact on children's education and lives

[See here to hear how children's education is impacted \(link to the hero video\)](#)

Children that we talked to said that because of these threats, they feel fear, anxiety and stress on their way to and at school. This has led to physical and emotional symptoms, like uncontrollable shaking, fainting, a loss of self-confidence and despair.

Many children also said that they have trouble concentrating in class – either because they are thinking about what happened to them on their way to school, or because they are worried about another raid or attack. Another problem is that children can miss a lot of school days and sometimes important examinations because of the military being around schools, checkpoints, and attacks on education.

Even with all of these dangers, children in the West Bank like school and believe their education is important. But, they want to go to school without being scared, and feel safe when in their classrooms. They want their schools to improve – to have more accessible classrooms, better facilities, and to be able to play and go on school trips.

Their message is clear: **stop attacking our education, and make our schools safe, accessible and fun.**

The Israeli and Palestinian authorities, other countries and international bodies, including the UN, and financial donors to oPt must urgently work to ensure that Palestinian children's vision becomes a reality, as it should be for children all around the world. Save the Children is asking all parties to the conflict and duty bearers to protect all children's access to education in line with their obligations under international law.