

Aid agencies alarmed by attacks against Palestinian educational facilities ahead of the new school year

24th August 2017

This week, two educational facilities have been targeted by Israeli authorities, taking the total up to three in the last fortnight alone. On the day before the start of the new school year, the Israeli Civil Administration (ICA)¹ entered the community of Jubbet adh-Dhib and dismantled the elementary school in the final stages of construction. In the early hours of Monday 21 August, the ICA entered the Bedouin community of Jabal al-Baba, accompanied by soldiers, to demolish the newly established kindergarten. One week earlier, the community of Abu Nuwar was yet again targeted, and the elementary school had its' only source of power - solar panels and batteries - removed, making learning conditions more intolerable for young students. An additional school was also issued with a Stop Work Order in August. Today, there are more than 55 schools in the West Bank with pending **Demolition or Stop Work Orders issued by the Israeli authorities.**²

Across the West Bank, children face countless threats in simply trying to reach school and enjoy their basic right to education. These threats include: violence and harassment from settlers/Israeli soldiers on the journey to school, military activity in or around their schools, military or police arresting and detaining children from their classrooms, lost time due to the closure of a military area or firing zone, delays crossing checkpoints, threats of destruction and demolition of schools and Stop Work Orders.

In 2016, there were 256 education-related violations documented by the Grave Violations Working Group, affecting the education of 29,230 students. Between January and March 2017 there were 24 cases of **direct attacks against schools**³. These include incidents of tear gas canisters and sound bombs fired at students on their way to/from school. More than 20,000 pupils **lost crucial learning time** due to obstructions such as delays at checkpoints or areas declared closed for Israeli military use as well as the arrest and detention of children in and around schools. In the Shufaat refugee camp in East Jerusalem, up to 15,000 children are forced to cross a checkpoint every day just to reach school.

The universal right to education is enshrined in the **Universal Declaration on Human Rights**, and reaffirmed by the **International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights**; the **Convention on the Rights of the Child** and the **UNESCO Convention against Discrimina-**

¹ The Civil Administration is a civil-military body that is charged with implementing Israel's civil policy in the territory. It operates as a civilian operation, but sits under the command of the military authority.

² Israeli zoning and planning policy controls any construction in Area C; in 2015 only 1.81% requests were approved.* The UN Secretary General has previously noted that the Israeli zoning and planning policy in the West Bank, which regulates the construction of housing and structures in Area C, is restrictive, discriminatory and incompatible with requirements under international law.*

*Source: Judea and Samaria Central Planning Committee, retrieved from <http://iplan.gov.il/Mechozi/yosh/Pages/yosh.aspx> (available in Hebrew only)

*UN Secretary General. 20.01.16. A/HRC/31/43. Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and in the occupied Syrian Golan. Para. 45

³ **Attacks against schools** are defined by the working group on grave violations on Children Affected by Armed Conflict (CAAC).

tion in Education. In the oPt, this right is being increasingly eroded with accompanying child protection risks that are so severe that children face frequent threats of violence, humiliation, arrest and detention and lack of safe spaces for learning.

We call on all duty bearers to protect children's inalienable right to education and address the growing risks faced by children in accessing education across the oPt.

We urge state parties, non-state actors, the local and international communities to:

- Cease violations of the right to education in all its forms and to seek and ensure accountability for violations of that fundamental right.
- Take all necessary measures to avoid the damage or destruction of educational infrastructure, including ending administrative demolition of educational facilities and revoking the thousands of pending demolition orders in East Jerusalem and Area C of the West Bank.
- Cease violence or incitement to violence in or around schools and to respect all schools and places of learning as inviolable safe spaces for children and educational staff.
- Ensure that armed or unarmed settlers or settlement guards are not present in or around schools, and to ensure that any attacks perpetuated against schools are properly investigated and held to account.
- Undertake every effort to allow for the safe and unhindered passage of students and school staff through checkpoints on their way to and from school.

ENDS

Notes to editors:

This is a joint statement endorsed by Save the Children, The Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), Action Against Hunger and Gruppo di Volontariato Civile (GVC)