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## Submission of NGO Monitor to the High Commissioner's report on the rights of the child and inclusive social protection

### Introduction

NGO Monitor, a project of the Institute for NGO Research,<sup>1</sup> an organization in Special Consultative Status with UN ECOSOC since 2013, respectfully submits the following information to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to inform the High Commissioner's report on the rights of the child and inclusive social protection to be presented at the 54th session of the Human Rights Council in September 2023. We hope that this submission will aid the Commissioner in the preparation of the report.

This submission focuses on the rampant campaign of incitement targeting children and the endemic recruitment and use of child soldiers by the Palestinian Authority (PA), Hamas, and other terrorist factions. It also documents the complicity by UN actors in these activities. This campaign of incitement is endemic throughout Palestinian society and has damaged many generations of Palestinian children. Palestinian incitement undergirds the ongoing armed conflict with Israel and is responsible for countless deaths of both Palestinians and Israelis. It also underlies the extensive recruitment and use of Palestinian children as combatants.

### International Obligations

The Palestinian Authority purporting to be a state entity has signed on to multiple international agreements and human rights conventions, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD), the Geneva Conventions, and the Rome

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<sup>1</sup> Members of NGO Monitor's Advisory Board include Elliott Abrams, Senior Fellow for Middle Eastern Studies at the Council on Foreign Relations; former Canadian Ambassador to Israel, Amb. Vivian Bercovici; Michal Cotler-Wunsh, former member of Knesset for the Blue and White Party; Hon. Michael Danby, MP, senior member of the Australian Labor Party; Harvard Professor Prof. Alan Dershowitz; Canadian Senator, Hon. Linda Frum; best-selling author and commentator and British journalist and international affairs commentator, Tom Gross; Bonnie Glick, former Deputy Administrator and Chief Operating Officer of USAID; Colonel Richard Kemp, former commander of British forces in Iraq and Afghanistan; Douglas Murray, Director of the Centre for Social Cohesion, best-selling author and commentator; former Member of Italian Parliament, Hon. Fiamma Nirenstein, UCLA Professor and President of the Daniel Pearl Foundation, Prof. Judea Pearl; US Jurist and former Legal Advisor to the State Department Judge Abraham Sofaer; Dr. Einat Wilf, former member of Knesset with the Israel Labor Party and advisor to Shimon Peres; Harvard Professor Prof. Ruth Wisse; R. James Woolsey, former US Director of Central Intelligence; and Israeli Supreme Court Justice, Justice Elyakim Rubinstein

Statute. Regardless of the PA's failure to meet the criteria for statehood, it has bound itself to these conventions and is therefore required to uphold the obligations contained therein. (See Appendix 1 below.)

The PA's human rights obligations are not diminished because of its on-going armed conflict with Israel. The existence of this conflict and the unresolved legal status of the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and Gaza cannot serve as an excuse for the PA's non-compliance with its international legal obligations.

### **Pay to Slay**

Despite the clear obligations mandated by the various international agreements and human rights conventions, and the PA's assent thereto, the Palestinian Authority has routinely ignored the protection of children. Not only does the PA fail to protect its children from incitement, it has fully adopted and implemented a program specifically targeting children, flooding them with racist and antisemitic messages, encouraging children to participate in violence, and heroicizing those who engage in antisemitism and extreme violence. This program strongly emphasizes the commission of hate-based violence against Jewish civilians.

Instead of prioritizing social programs and economic development, the PA rewards and encourages this violence, spending more than \$350 million a year incentivizing murder.<sup>2</sup> This "pay to slay" policy, funded by the UN, EU, and many governments, rewards those who commit violence (including children) with cash payments. The greater the crime and the more victims injured or killed, the more money received. This campaign targeting children begins from birth and continues throughout childhood and the teenage years. It takes place through state media, schools (including those run by UNRWA), youth groups and centers, and sporting and cultural events in both the West Bank and Gaza.

### **Child Soldiers**

While the PA's international legal obligations explicitly forbid the recruitment and use of child soldiers, the recruitment and use of Palestinian children sanctioned by the PA and also Hamas is endemic.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://jcpa.org/paying-salaries-terrorists-contradicts-palestinian-vows-peaceful-intentions/>

The ruling Fatah party's Tanzim and the Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades recruit and use children as combatants. Many other organizations in and members of the PA, the Palestinian Legislative Council, and the Palestine Liberation Organization are part of Palestinian terror groups such as Hamas, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), the DFLP, and others. The PA routinely allows armed groups to recruit on school campuses under the guise of carrying out "social programs." Such activity allows vulnerable children to be placed in contact with violent actors, placing them at risk for recruitment.

In the Concluding Observations of the [2020 CRC review of "Palestine"](#), the Committee explicitly criticized the PA for "recruitment and use of children in hostilities by non-State armed groups operating from the territory of the State party."

In summer 2022, Fatah's Central Hebron branch held the "Buds of Construction and Liberation" summer camp where hundreds of Palestinian children as young as seven were taught to handle automatic weapons and to celebrate the murderers of Israeli Jews.<sup>3</sup> Photos posted on social media show hundreds of children holding Kalashnikov rifles in front of a banner depicting former PLO/PA/Fatah leader Yasser Arafat, and current PLO/PA/Fatah leader Mahmoud Abbas.<sup>4</sup> A video on the Facebook page of the Fatah Commission of Information and Culture explains that the camp is necessary because "our battle with the sons of dogs [in other words, Israelis] is long and we need a young generation."

For more information regarding 68 Palestinian minors since 2018 who carried out attacks on Israeli civilians and soldiers, as well as those killed in the context of clashes between Palestinians and Israeli security personnel, see NGO Monitor's database "[Excuse and Disregard: Palestinian NGOs on Teens' Involvement in Terror Attacks and Violent Clashes.](#)"

## Incitement

Not only does the PA extensively participate in recruitment and use, it also does nothing to prevent incitement campaigns and recruitment and use by Hamas, Islamic Jihad, PFLP, and other Palestinian armed groups. Failure to prevent these activities is a violation of the PA's

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.thejc.com/news/world/summer-camps-of-hate-for-palestinian-children-as-young-as-seven-UjrC7rm6kMYryYjz7Zak3>

<sup>4</sup> <https://palwatch.org/page/31863>

legal obligations, For instance, in the Concluding Observations to the [2019 CERD review of Palestine](#), the Committee expressed concern over “the existence of hate speech, in particular hate speech directed against Israelis, which at times fuels anti-Semitism towards this group, in certain media outlets, in particular those controlled by Hamas, as well as on social media, in public officials’ statements and in school curricula and textbooks, which also fuels hatred and may incite violence.”

Contrary to these recommendations, the Palestinian Authority, Fatah, Hamas, and other armed factions routinize the grooming of children from an early age as combatants in the Palestinian war against Israel and Jews. They have enacted a widespread and systematic program of violent and antisemitic incitement. Children are encouraged by cuddly animals on PA and Hamas TV to kill Jews. Fatah publishes manuals for kids on how best to kill with stones and knives.

Recreation centers and sports tournaments are named after terrorists, including kids who kill. UNRWA schools teach antisemitism, hate, and glorify Palestinian killers and the elimination of Israel. Kids are encouraged to skip school to participate in violent riots, slingshot rocks at passing cars, and even to stab children and mothers to death in their homes.

For instance, in April 2022, the PA [inaugurated a garden at the Al-Adawiya High School for Girls in Tulkarem](#) in “honor” of the “freedom tunnel prisoners,” six prisoners who were convicted for planning and carrying out numerous terror attacks, including suicide bombings and shooting attacks on civilians. Additionally, on March 18, 2019, on the official PA TV station, a Fatah official referred to two murderers who killed four Israelis as “the role models for the children.” On May 29, 2017, the Gaza-based Palestinian Islamic Jihad affiliated Al-Huda Kindergarten held a graduation ceremony where the children are seen “armed with toy weapons and wearing military uniforms and Islamic Jihad headbands. They simulate killing other children playing Israeli soldiers dressed as ultra-Orthodox Jews. A Hamas song in Hebrew is playing in the background, with lyrics including “O Zionist, a rocket will reach you where you live... I will make you drink the cup of death.”

Additionally, the PA is also a leader in state-sponsored antisemitism, propagating anti-Jewish propaganda in textbooks. IMPACT-se, has documented significant incitement of

Palestinian children in the educational curriculum. For example, the Palestinian curriculum uses “subliminal violent messaging” in math, science, and other subjects.<sup>5</sup>

### **Palestinian Terror-Linked Partners**

Since 2007, UNICEF has led the “Working Group on Grave Violations against Children” to ostensibly undertake “consolidated efforts to monitor and report on grave violations against children in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt).”<sup>6</sup> In sharp contrast to the guidelines regarding neutrality, impartiality, and credibility, the Working Group on Israel comprises several Palestinian organizations with ties to terrorist groups, notably the PFLP. These partners, while purporting to document all violations, routinely ignore Palestinian wrongdoing, incitement of Palestinian minors to commit violence against Israelis, and the recruitment of Palestinian children by terrorist organizations, fundamentally skewing and distorting UNICEF’s reporting. These distorted reports and damaging activities are further promoted by UNISPAL and Reliefweb. Such reporting failures wastes precious humanitarian resources, entrenches conflict, and allows PA and armed group targeting of children to continue unabated.

### **Recommendations**

This submission has highlighted only a small portion of the extreme campaigns of incitement, violence, and recruitment and use actively carried out by the Palestinian Authority and Palestinian armed groups targeting Palestinian children. Fully documenting this destructive campaign would require providing thousands upon thousands of pages.

Rather than promoting a positive supportive environment for Palestinian children to thrive, this campaign fosters hatred, antisemitic discrimination, prolonged armed conflict, and endemic societal violence. This poisonous campaign is not only a violation of the PA’s obligations under UN guidelines but is the primary obstacle to peace with Israel.

- The High Commissioner must ask the PA to address the issue of incitement in its reporting to the United Nations.

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<sup>5</sup> [http://www.impact-se.org/wp-content/uploads/WASATIA-IMPACT-Booklet\\_Digital-Format-A5.pdf](http://www.impact-se.org/wp-content/uploads/WASATIA-IMPACT-Booklet_Digital-Format-A5.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.ochaopt.org/coordination/coordination-structure>

- The Commissioner must ask the PA what it is doing to combat campaigns of antisemitism, racial discrimination, and violent incitement by Palestinian armed groups, including Hamas.
- The Commissioner must ask the PA what it is doing to combat the recruitment and use of child soldiers by itself and other Palestinian armed groups.
- The Commissioner must confront the PA about its “pay to slay” program and the eligibility of children to receive this perverse funding.

## Appendix: Relevant Provisions Relating to Children and Incitement

Treaty	Relevant Provisions
<p>Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Article 19.1: States Parties shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child.</li> <li>● Article 29: (b) The development of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and for the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations; (c) The development of respect for . . . civilizations different from his or her own; (d) The preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin;</li> <li>● Article 36: States Parties shall protect the child against all other forms of</li> </ul>

	<p>exploitation prejudicial to any aspects of the child's welfare.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Article 38: States Parties shall take all feasible measures to ensure that persons who have not attained the age of fifteen years do not take a direct part in hostilities. 3. States Parties shall refrain from recruiting any person who has not attained the age of fifteen years into their armed forces. In recruiting among those persons who have attained the age of fifteen years but who have not attained the age of eighteen years, States Parties shall endeavour to give priority to those who are oldest. 4. In accordance with their obligations under international humanitarian law to protect the civilian population in armed conflicts, States Parties shall take all feasible measures to ensure protection and care of children who are affected by an armed conflict.</li> </ul>
<p>Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Article 4: (a) Shall declare an offence punishable by law all dissemination of ideas based on racial superiority or hatred, incitement to racial discrimination, as well as all acts of violence or incitement to such acts against any race or group of persons of another colour or ethnic origin, and</li> </ul>



also the provision of any assistance to racist activities, including the financing thereof; (b) Shall declare illegal and prohibit organizations, and also organized and all other propaganda activities, which promote and incite racial discrimination, and shall recognize participation in such organizations or activities as an offence punishable by law; (c) Shall not permit public authorities or public institutions, national or local, to promote or incite racial discrimination.

- Article 7: States Parties undertake to adopt immediate and effective measures, particularly in the fields of teaching, education, culture and information, with a view to combating prejudices which lead to racial discrimination and to promoting understanding, tolerance and friendship among nations and racial or ethnical groups, as well as to propagating the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, and this Convention

<p>International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Article 20: (1) Any propaganda for war shall be prohibited by law; (2) Any advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence shall be prohibited by law.</li> </ul>
<p>International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Article 10: Special measures of protection and assistance should be taken on behalf of all children and young persons without any discrimination for reasons of parentage or other conditions. Children and young persons should be protected from economic and social exploitation. Their employment in work harmful to their morals or health or dangerous to life or likely to hamper their normal development should be punishable by law. States should also set age limits below which the paid employment of child labour should be prohibited and punishable by law.</li> </ul>
<p>Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts (Protocol I), 8 June 1977</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Article 77(2): The Parties to the conflict shall take all feasible measures in order that children who have not attained the age of fifteen years do not take a direct part in hostilities and, in particular, they shall</li> </ul>

	<p>refrain from recruiting them into their armed forces. In recruiting among those persons who have attained the age of fifteen years but who have not attained the age of eighteen years, the Parties to the conflict shall endeavour to give priority to those who are oldest.</p>
<p>Rome Statute</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Article 8.2(xxvi): Conscripting or enlisting children under the age of fifteen years into the national armed forces or using them to participate actively in hostilities.</li> </ul>
<p>Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Article 4: (1) Armed groups that are distinct from the armed forces of a State should not, under any circumstances, recruit or use in hostilities persons under the age of 18 years; (2) States Parties shall take all feasible measures to prevent such recruitment and use, including the adoption of legal measures necessary to prohibit and criminalize such practices.</li> </ul>