NO WAY TO TREAT A CHILD

THE PLIGHT OF PALESTINIAN CHILD SOLDIERS

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Recruiting and Using Children as Combatants Is a War Crime

"My officer taught me the values of courage, sacrifice, and love of jihad, as well as some battle tactics… I feel that I can free my energy in a good way. I can do for real what I do in video games."

—Radwan Wasfi, age 15, a graduate of Hamas high school military training program

International law expressly forbids the use of children (defined as a person under the age of 18) as soldiers or in any other capacity related to military activities.

Yet, various Palestinian groups (Hamas, Fatah, Islamic Jihad, Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine) use children as young as 13 as suicide bombers, as couriers, as fighters, and on the "front line" as rock and Molotov cocktail throwers. When not used as soldiers, many Palestinian children are used as human shields by these groups.

This use of children for military purposes is expressly forbidden by international law. This includes:

- Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court
- UN Security Council Resolutions 1261 (1999), 1314 (2000), 1379

(2001), 1460 (2003), 1539 (2004) 1612 (2005), 1882 (2009) and 1998 (2011)

- Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949
- Convention on the Rights of the Child
- Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict
- International Labour Organization (ILO) Minimum Age Convention 138
- International Labour Organization (ILO) Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention 182

Life magazine cover from June 1970 showing child soldiers

The Paris Commitments and Principles (2007) defines child soldiers as: *"A child associated with an armed force or armed group refers to any person below 18 years of age who is, or who has been, recruited or used by an armed force or armed group in any capacity, including but not limited to children, boys and girls, used as fighters, cooks, porters, spies, or for sexual purposes."*

Dr. Anne Speckhard, adjunct associate professor of psychiatry, Georgetown University Medical Center, and professor of psychology, Vesalius College, Free University of Brussels, has researched and written extensively about this subject. She describes how Palestinian children are indoctrinated by Palestinian political and religious leaders to extol "martyrdom," including becoming human bombs:

"In the Palestinian territories, there currently exists a 'cult of martyrdom.' From a very young age children are socialized into a group consciousness that honors 'martyrs,' including human bombers. …Young children are told stories of 'martyrs.' Many young people wear necklaces venerating particular 'martyrs,' posters decorate the walls of towns, and rock and music videos extol the virtues of bombers." [1]

[1] Speckhard, Anne (2005). "Understanding Suicide Terrorism: Countering Human Bombs and Their Senders." In Jason S. Purcell; Joshua D. Weintraub. "Topics in Terrorism: Toward a Transatlantic Consensus on the Nature of the Threat." Atlantic Council Publication, July 2005.

Abusing Children, Including Handicapped Kids, to Carry Out Murderous Acts

During the "al-Aqsa Intifada," children were used as "messengers and couriers and in some cases as fighters and suicide bombers in attacks on Israeli soldiers and civilians." The groups that committed these war crimes were Fatah, Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine.

Hussam Abdo

Even a mentally handicapped Palestinian teenager, 15-year-old Hussam Abdo, was recruited to carry out a suicide attack. He was disarmed at an Israeli checkpoint before he could explode himself, and the incident was caught on video and widely seen around the world. The incident was described by the BBC:

> *"It was an unforgettable image. A teenager standing alone at a checkpoint, explosives strapped to his chest, confused, trying to follow Israeli orders to get him to dismantle his bomb."* [2]

[2] James Reynolds, "Nobody is going to live forever," BBC, July 16, 2004, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/3899015.stm

Teaching Hate, Anti-Semitism, and Murder

Most recently in the so-called “knife intifada,” the Palestinian Authority and other Palestinian groups have specifically targeted children to stab Israelis randomly. Often this incitement has used anti-Semitic imagery. Some examples:

"Liberation of Palestine" video game

Hamas even uses video games and television shows to recruit children. The video game "Liberation of Palestine" is meant to "strengthen the national culture and plant desire for the liberation of Palestine in the hearts of the players, especially children," according to the Hamas publication Falesteen. One of the game's developers said, "The idea is to develop the spirit of resistance among Palestinian boys and girls."

A Palestinian weekly children's television show featured a Mickey Mouse-like character named Farfour *(above left)* who taught Palestinian children to fight Israelis with violence. Farfour was eventually killed off by an actor portraying an Israeli official, a "terrorist," according to Farfour. The audience was told Farfour was "martyred" and killed "by the killers of children."

Another Palestinian television show broadcast a children's play that encouraged violence against Israelis *(above right)*. The play featured a little girl stabbing Israeli soldiers. She is then shot and falls to the ground. A little boy playing a Palestinian sniper then shoots an Israeli soldier and frees a Palestinian prisoner.

Hamas Also Funds Militarized Summer Camps for Children

"Despite its financial crisis, Hamas is funding numerous **summer military camps** to train the next generation of Palestinian fighters and to maintain the group's popularity, especially among youths.... **Young men ages 13 to 18 form the largest segment of camp enrollees**... [and] Hamas launched the Hamas Knights summer camps. Ayman Barud, who heads the Hamas camps in west Gaza, told *Al-Monitor*, 'There are 850 campers ages 15 to 18 who were members of scouts missions and trained in first aid, civil defense, and scouting.'... It seems Hamas is counting heavily on Palestinian youths to enroll in its ranks. Article 16 of Hamas' charter issued in 1988 stresses **the necessity to educate future generations, who will lead the upcoming military battles with Israel for the liberation of Palestine**. It is on this principle that Hamas trains all of its cadres and members, particularly new members, and the military camps are nothing but a means to that end." [3]

—*Adnan Abu Amer, a Palestinian academic,*
Al-Monitor

[3] Adnan Abu Amer, "Thousands of teens enroll in Hamas summer camps," *Al-Monitor*, August 18, 2015, www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2015/08/palestine-summer-camps-hamas-qassam-brigades-israel.html.

Arrests of Palestinian Children

The wave of Palestinian violence since 2015 to the present has targeted Israelis, mostly civilians. This is the direct result of a campaign of incitement by radical Islamist groups (such as Hamas) and even the Palestinian Authority led by Mahmoud Abbas. Palestinian youth are the main target of this incitement.

Palestinian Violence Against Israelis
September 13, 2015–December 31, 2016

166 stabbing attacks

89 attempted stabbings

109 shootings

47 vehicular (ramming) attacks

42 Murdered in car rammings, knifings, shootings, bus bombings, Molotov cocktails, and rock-throwing attacks

600 injured (mostly civilians, including children) in all attacks

Other attacks involving fatalities resulted from rocks thrown by Palestinian youths at cars driven by Israelis.

These terrorist attacks are part of the PA's strategy of "popular resistance" adopted by the PA and Fatah in August 2009 at the Sixth Fatah conference.

The rise in Palestinian youths arrested by Israeli security personnel is a direct result of the Palestinian leadership's targeting Palestinian youth for incitement to violence and recruitment in militarized summer camps.

One particularly gruesome attack was carried out on February 19, 2016, by two 14-year-old Palestinians in an Israeli supermarket, where they stabbed to death two Israelis:

> ***The two terrorists, Omar Rimawi and Ihad Sabah, traveled from Beitunia, a neighborhood just north of Ramallah, armed with knives concealed under their clothing, to Sha'ar Binyamin. They crossed two security checkpoints, one at the entrance to the Sha'ar Binyamin industrial area and a second at the entrance to the Rami Levi supermarket, where Jews and Palestinians shop together daily. ... [There are] 22 terrorists in the current terror wave ... below the age of 16 (10 percent); 81 terrorists are between the ages of 16–20 (37 percent); 74 terrorists are between the ages of 21–25 (34 percent); 17 terrorists are between the ages of 26–30 (8 percent); and 25 terrorists are above the age of 30 (11 percent).*** [4]

If Palestinian children were not being indoctrinated into carrying out violent terrorist attacks, there would be no arrests.

[4] Yoav Zitun, Elior Levy, "Increasingly younger Palestinian youth carry out attacks," *YNet News*, February 2, 2016, www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4768276,00.html

Children Killed Building Hamas Tunnels

"During a police patrol that the author was permitted to accompany in December 2011, nothing was done to impede the use of children in the tunnels, where, much as in Victorian coal mines, they are prized for their nimble bodies. At least 160 individuals have been killed in the tunnels, according to Hamas officials."[5]

[5] "Gaza's Tunnel Phenomenon: The Unintended Dynamics of Israel's Siege," Nicolas Pelham, *The Journal of Palestine Studies*, Institute for Palestine Studies, Vol 41, No. 4, December 2011

Incitement and Indoctrination in the Classroom

Some 240 Palestinian Authority school textbooks used in hundreds of United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA)-sponsored schools incite Palestinian children between the first and ninth grades to kill Israelis and sacrifice themselves as "martyrs" to destroy Israel and evict the Jews. This goading to violence is found in subjects ranging from civics to mathematics in over 400 UNRWA schools in the West Bank, Gaza, and eastern Jerusalem. The textbooks glorify war and terrorism while indoctrinating thousands of Palestinian children to hate Israel and Jews, prepare for war, and spurn peace.

UNRWA

An agency of the United Nations funded to a large extent by U.S. tax payers

The Propaganda Campaign in the U.S.

In the U.S. and elsewhere, this situation is being exploited by a hypocritical campaign called No Way to Treat A Child.[6] We agree. Recruiting, inciting and indoctrinating Palestinian children to become "martyrs" by carrying out deadly attacks on Israelis is indeed no way to treat a child.

If the sponsors of this campaign were truly supportive of human rights, they would call out Palestinian leaders for violating a wide range of international law with their recruiting children to be soldiers and putting them in harm's way.

[6] Sponsored by a coalition of anti-Israel groups, including American Muslims for Palestine, Amnesty International – USA, Christian Peacemaker Teams, Friends Committee on National Legislation, Friends of Sabeel North America, Jewish Voice for Peace, Mennonite Central Committee U.S., U.S. Campaign to End the Israeli Occupation

This Is Child Abuse. It Must Stop.

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EVELYN & DR. SHMUEL KATZ

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