

One year on: States must act now to end the indiscriminate killing of children in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the region

Over the past year, the world has witnessed a blatant disregard for international law, including the international humanitarian law (IHL), resulting in unprecedented levels of violence against children in both the Occupied Palestinian Territory and Israel and in the Region. This violence occurs in the context of Israel's decades-long unlawful occupation and annexation of Palestinian territory.

The crimes committed by Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups on 7th October 2023, which resulted in the death of nearly 1,200 people, many of them of young age, including at least 33 children, and the taking of 251 hostages, have been widely condemned. In retaliation, Israel's military operations in Gaza have officially killed more than 40,000 people, including over 14,000 children, while almost 100,000 people have suffered life-altering injuries and potentially irreversible mental harm. Additionally, an estimated 20,000 Gazan children remain missing.

Meanwhile, in the West Bank, the use of unnecessary and disproportionate force by the Israeli Defense Forces, along with increasing settler violence, house demolitions, forced displacement, has resulted in the death of nearly 700 Palestinians, including at least 143 children, and the displacement of thousands more.

Israel's conduct of hostilities and practices of humanitarian access have made it nearly impossible for humanitarian, human rights, and development aid organizations to fulfill their mandates. The shrinking humanitarian space in Gaza is not conducive to providing robust and meaningful humanitarian aid to people in need.

For decades, members of Terre des Hommes International Federation have provided life-saving humanitarian support in the West Bank and Gaza.

Over the past year, we have witnessed firsthand the immense pain and suffering experienced by children, their families, and the entire communities in the region, yet their resilience in the face of overwhelming challenges continues to inspire our work.

The long-term impact of this extreme violence on children, youth, and future generations is impossible to predict with certainty.

We are deeply concerned about the future, as this situation calls into question how these communities will be able to rebuild and coexist in a peaceful and sustainable way.

Members of Terre des Hommes International Federation reiterate their call for::

- Immediate ceasefire in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and in Lebanon and dedicated diplomatic efforts for de-escalation in the region.
- The immediate and unconditional release of all hostages and individuals arbitrarily detained.
- Unimpeded access for humanitarian actors must be regular and safe.
- All civilians should be protected by the international law and the Rights for children should be always respected.

All States must take all measure to respect and to ensure respect for the international law, including the IHL, in all circumstances.