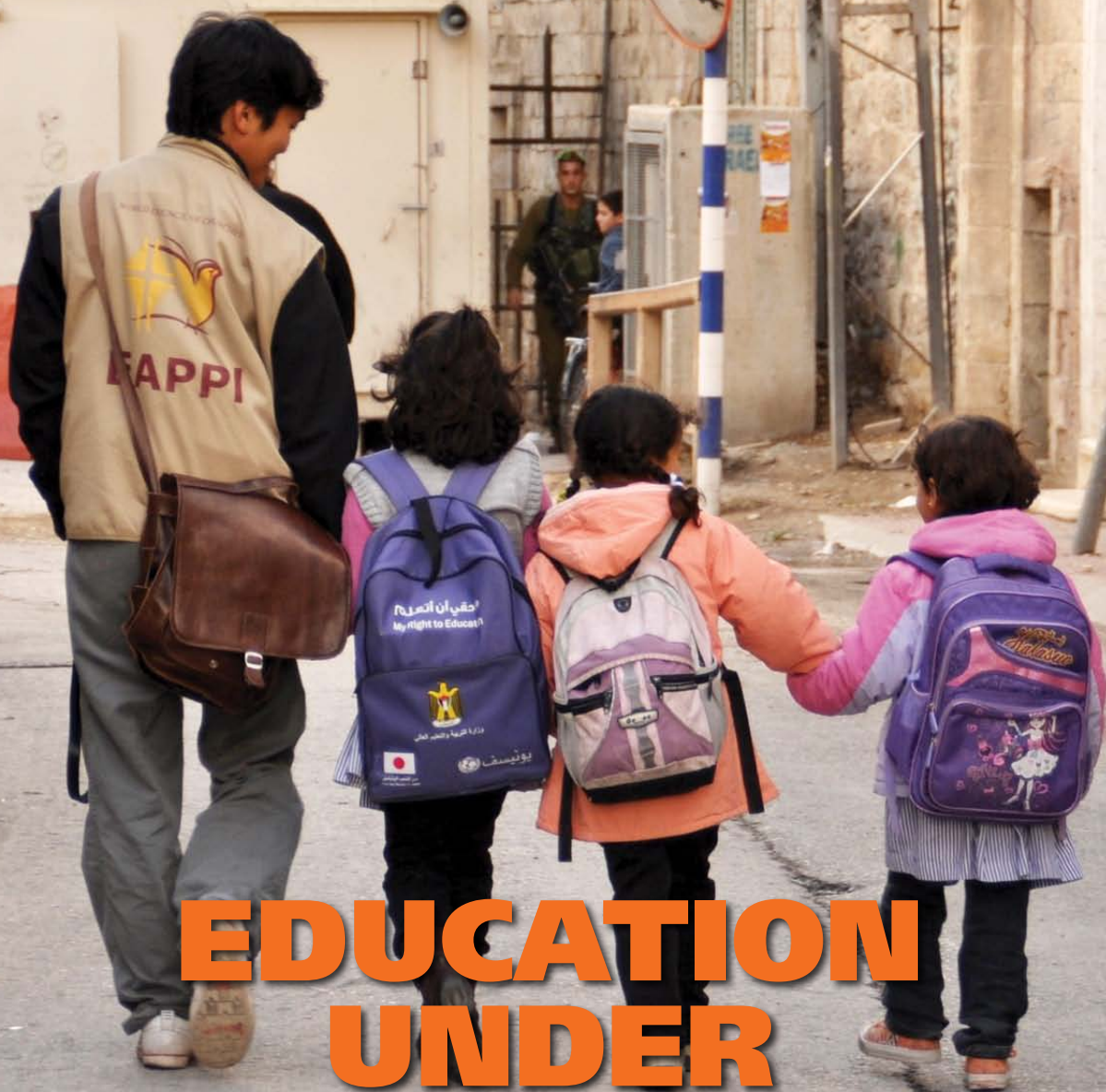


Commission of the Churches on International Affairs (CCIA)  
World Council of Churches



# EDUCATION UNDER OCCUPATION

Access to Education in the occupied Palestinian territory

Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI)



# EDUCATION UNDER OCCUPATION

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The Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI) brings international volunteers to the West Bank to experience life under occupation. Ecumenical Accompaniers (EAs) provide a protective presence to vulnerable communities, monitor and report human rights abuses and support Palestinians and Israelis working together for peace. When they return home, EAs campaign for a just and peaceful resolution to the Israeli/Palestinian conflict through an end to the occupation, respect for international law and implementation of UN resolutions.



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**“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to  
change the world.”**

Nelson Mandela

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# Foreword

## **“The bulldozers could be there any day”**

All international treaties agree that education must be available for all without discrimination and that it must be accessible, within safe physical distance. Throughout the years, the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI) has offered protection to Palestinian children who must pass through military checkpoints, or face the risk of harassment and/or violence from Israeli settlers and soldiers while trying to exercise their right to education. EAPPI has helped these children to deal with and expectantly conquer fear; a fear that would prevent them from enjoying this fundamental right.

This year we began our cooperation with UNICEF in this field of protection. We are particularly honoured for the opportunity to work with an organization that is deeply committed to creating a world in which all children, regardless of their gender, socioeconomic background or circumstances, have access to free, compulsory and quality education. EAPPI is committed, as UNICEF, to provide an environment in which Palestinian children may learn in safe and secure conditions.

As Ms Jean Gough, UNICEF – occupied Palestinian territory (oPt) Special Representative recently said, “everything must be done to protect the safety and the lives of innocent children.” We join her in the appeal to “all parties to do everything in their power to protect children and to put an end to violence.”

The testimonies compiled in this report speak loudly about the plight of many Palestinian children whose right to education is hindered by military checkpoints, as in Nabi Samwil in the Jerusalem Governorate. They make clear that these school children must leave their village on a daily basis and commute through a military checkpoint because they are prohibited from expanding their one-room school due to heavy building restrictions.

These testimonies also speak about the predicament of students of the Cordoba School in Hebron, who over the past decade have found themselves on the front line of a campaign of harassment, violence and intimidation from settlers. They portray the situation in Tuqu’, a small Palestinian village nestled in the hills south of Bethlehem where detention and mistreatment of children from the schools has been a significant problem for a number of years.



These lively narratives explain that parents from Arab ar Ramadin al Janubi are pulling their daughters out of school because male soldiers have reportedly conducted unsupervised body searches on adolescent female students. Students who are 16 and older must present an ID card, a permit, and an electro-magnetic to pass the checkpoint, while students under the age of 16 must furnish their birth certificates, and photocopies of their parents' ID cards, electro-magnetic cards, and permits if available.

One would prefer to think that these are isolated incidents; however, the frequency and repetition of these and many other incidents seem to suggest a trend.

In 1889, Jose Marti, a Cuban writer, politician and the leader of the War for Independence against Spain, published *The Golden Age*, a book of stories for adults to read with their children. In that book, Marti asked, "to work for children because children are the ones who know what is needed, because children are the hope of the world." And the late US President John F. Kennedy said, "children are the world's most valuable resource and its best hope for the future."

I personally hope that EAPPI and UNICEF will continue working together to guarantee that this hope for the Palestinian people is not lost! For we believe that education is essential to overcome ignorance, suspicion and mistrust between the peoples of Israel and Palestine; as well as to affirm principles of dignity, equality and mutual respect of human beings — principles whose violation have frequently brought about conflict and war. We see our role in protecting Palestinian children's free and secure access to education as a humble contribution to dialogue and understanding towards lasting peace in this land.

Manuel Quintero Perez  
EAPPI International  
Coordinator  
Geneva, February 2013

# Acknowledgements

The Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI) thanks all the members of EAPPI's Local Reference Group (LRG), and especially His Grace Bishop Munib Younan (ELCHLJ), Chair of the LRG. Bishop Younan has guided the programme and offered spiritual support ever since the local heads of Churches in Jerusalem called for its creation.

EAPPI also extends a special thanks to the United Nations Children's Fund's (UNICEF) Jerusalem staff, especially to Mr Constantijn Wouters (Education Officer) and Mr Terry Durnnian (Chief of Learning for Development) who have diligently been working jointly with EAPPI to enhance access to education for children in the oPt.

Moreover, EAPPI appreciates the dedication and hard work of all EAPPI National Coordinators, whom recruit, train, and coordinate the advocacy efforts of Ecumenical Accompaniers (EAs) upon their return home.

EAPPI is also grateful for all those who have participated in the programme as EAs and continue to give hope for justice via their actions, especially those who contributed their articles for this report.

Furthermore, EAPPI is thankful for the Palestinian families, schoolteachers and children who shared their fears and grievances, as well as their hopes and dreams that education may bring forth a better life for the next generations.

# Abbreviations & Definitions

## Abbreviations:

- oPt – occupied Palestinian territory
- PA – Palestinian Authority
- MoE – Ministry of Education
- GoI – Government of Israel
- UN – United Nations
- UNICEF – UN Children's Fund
- UNRWA – UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East

## Definitions:

- **Area C:** An area of the West Bank designated under the 1993 Oslo Accords to be under Israeli security control and Israeli civil administration – more than 60% of the land in the West Bank is Area C.
- **Israeli Civil Administration (ICA):** A governing body that operates in the West Bank, which was established by the GoI in 1981 to carry out bureaucratic functions within the oPt. The ICA is largely staffed by Israeli Military personnel and is part of a larger entity known as the Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT) – a unit in the Israeli Ministry of Defense.
- **H1:** An area of the West Bank City of Hebron that is controlled by the PNA.
- **H2:** An area of the West Bank City of Hebron that is controlled by the Israeli Military.
- **Green Line:** The demarcation line between Israel and the oPt (West Bank, including East Jerusalem, & Gaza Strip).
- **Barrier:** A barrier of 25-foot-high concrete walls, fences and trenches that Israel has been constructing since 2002, which separate the main Palestinian parts of the West Bank from Israel and the largest Israeli settlements.
- **Seam Zone:** A land area in the West Bank located east of the Green Line and west of Israel's Barrier.
- **Settlements:** Large housing projects built by Israel in the West Bank in violation of international law. These settlements are joined to each other and to Israel with 'by-pass' roads, which are for the exclusive use of Israeli settlers and are oftentimes built on privately owned Palestinian land.
- **Education Cluster:** Is one of several thematic coordination groups that contribute to the Humanitarian Country Team's (HCT) analysis by providing essential information from needs assessments and monitoring to support the HCT's development of strategic objectives and other policy guidance. The group brings together all stakeholders with expertise in education and children's rights, including: local authorities, NGOs and UN agencies.<sup>1</sup>

1 <http://www.ochaopt.org>

# I. Conceptualization of Access to Education in the oPt

In 1994, the Oslo Accords led to the establishment of the Palestinian Authority (PA), which assumed partial control of administration and services in many areas of Palestinian life, including education. The Ministry of Education (MoE) was established under the PA that same year. After 1994, the education sector saw significant advances. Enrolment in all schools substantially increased, school construction and rehabilitation became priority, and the MoE made progress towards greater inclusiveness in schools – particularly for girls and children with disabilities. The Ministry also addressed early childhood education programmes, as well as technical and vocational training.<sup>1</sup>

According to a report commissioned by UNESCO's International Institute for Educational Planning, and Save the Children, Israel's response to the Second Intifada imposed immeasurable costs on the entire education system - both human and structural.<sup>2</sup>

Many schoolchildren in the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt) still have restricted access to quality, protected education due to military checkpoints and settler harassment, and some of these communities are in need of urgent humanitarian assistance to participate in protective education processes.

For more than 40 years, communities in the West Bank including East Jerusalem and Gaza have been subject to varying conditions of the recurrent conflict and occupation which has negatively impacted education. These conditions include armed conflict, military incursions, and violence; violations of rights including the right to education; damage and destruction of property and schools; arrest and detention of children and youth; disruption of schooling; restrictions on movement including access to education and schooling; impediments and restrictions from the Israeli Civil Administration (ICA) on developing educational infrastructure according to minimum humanitarian standards; displacement; and the array of psycho-social effects including excessive stress, trauma and fear.

Since 1967, schools in the oPt have fostered a certain type of resilience, but today many are vulnerable to attacks from Israeli settlers and to demolition or stop-work orders.

On 12 July 2011, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 1998 during its Annual Open Debate on Children and Armed Conflict, further increasing protection for children in situations of armed conflict. Resolution 1998, which was unanimously adopted by UN Security Council, expands the criteria for including parties to conflict in the Secretary-General's Annual Report on Children and Armed Conflict to include

those parties that engage, in contravention of applicable international law, in recurrent attacks on schools or in recurrent attacks or threats of attacks against protected persons in relation to schools.

Protecting education under occupation is a critical humanitarian concern throughout the oPt, especially as there has been an alarming increase of attacks on schools<sup>3</sup> in recent years. The UN Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM)<sup>4</sup> noted that in 2010, there were 24 attacks on schools in oPt, which directly affected 7,071 students, and in 2011 there were 46 attacks on schools. Between January and August 2012, there were 17 documented attacks on schools in the oPt, resulting in damage to educational facilities and disruption of schooling affecting 9,357 students<sup>5</sup>. The most commonly reported incidents are airstrikes on schools in the Gaza Strip, and military use of premises, settlers related violence / vandalism, and military demolitions of schools (or threat of demolition) in the West Bank.

One of the most serious types of attacks in the oPt is the demolition of educational facilities. In 2011, part of a school was demolished in village of Dkaika (South Hebron Hills), and in 2010, the school in Khirbet Tana, near Nablus was demolished twice.<sup>6</sup> Currently at least 38 schools serving approximately 3,000 children in Area C of the West Bank and in East Jerusalem have been issued either verbal and/or written stop-work or demolition orders by the ICA, meaning they are under a constant threat of demolition.<sup>7</sup> The children and staff of some of these schools undergo repeated intimidating visits from Israeli military personnel and may experience violence or harassment from nearby settlers.

Moreover, children lack protected access to education and face a range of dangers and obstacles on their way to and from school. They must travel long distances and are confronted with long delays and harassment during searches at military checkpoints along the Barrier and within the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. They must navigate around other types of closure obstacles and pass through closed military zones while being exposed to the risks of settler and military violence on their school commutes.

As of 31 August 2012, 24 incidents of denial of access to education were documented in oPt, directly affecting more than 4,000 Palestinian students.<sup>8</sup> In 2011, 39 such incidents were documented, affecting more than 30,000 students and teachers.<sup>9</sup>

These problems result in drop-out, lack of attendance, decreased learning time in school, and deterioration of the quality of learning, as well as in separation of families in their efforts to ensure that their children and youth continue their education. Girls are affected disproportionately, especially in terms of secondary school attendance.<sup>10</sup> Girls are more likely to stop attending when faced with harassment, violence and intimidation at checkpoints or on their commute to school. Some of the violence, harassment and intimidation are also gender-based.

Today, these conditions are most prevalent in: Area C of the West Bank, Seam Zones near the West Bank Barrier, and East Jerusalem. Ecumenical Accompaniers (EAs) are not present in the Gaza Strip due to access restrictions.

The case studies that form this report were written by EAs via information that they gathered first-hand while living in seven locations throughout the West Bank – Bethlehem, Hebron, Jayyus, Jerusalem, the South Hebron Hills, Tulkarm and Yanoun, with the aim of providing human stories that illustrate how people are affected by the statistical data mentioned above. The case studies that were selected for this report are not isolated incidents by any means, but rather key examples that are representative of widespread problems related to access to education in the oPt.

Moreover, this report is the direct outcome of a joint project between UNICEF and EAPPI that enhanced access to education for 1,361 children in six different locations across the West Bank that were strategically selected by the MoE and Education Cluster as needing interventions to make the learning environment safe.

Beneficiaries of EAPPI's Protective Presence (according to EAPPI's current EA's)

	Location / School / Checkpoint	Governorates	Number of students benefitting		
			Total	Girls	Boys
1.	Azzun Atma 2	Qalqiliya	16	8	8
2.	Habla Gate	Qalqiliya	59	33	26
3.	Khirbet Jbarah	Tulkarm	64	38	26
4.	Nazlat Isa	Tulkarm	19	7	12
5.	Silwan, Dung Gate	Jerusalem	116	63	53
6.	Tuqu' School	Bethlehem	760	650	110
	<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>1,034</b>	<b>799</b>	<b>235</b>



*An EA accompanying schoolchildren from A Seefer, in the Seam Zone to their school in Imneizil in the South Hebron Hills. Simon Ming © EAPPI*

At these locations, EAs accompany children on their commutes to and from school, display a visible presence at a number of West Bank / East Jerusalem checkpoints and schools; document data and cases of harassment to share with concerned organizations for advocacy and intervention purposes; intervene when necessary to prevent and/or deescalate harassment in order to facilitate better access to education.

Upon returning home, EAs have used their first-hand-experiences in doing this work to advocate for the right of Palestinian children to have a sustained safe access to education. This work has been done via holding public-information sessions, meeting with decision makers and diplomats, writing articles about this issue for the media, and contributing to this report.

These combined efforts were vital in reducing incidents of harassment of children in the targeted areas and making both children and teachers feel more secure on their daily commutes.

## II. Reflections From The Field

### Students & Soldiers

Dawn Waring, Ellinor Nykvist, John Cassel, Sophie Wickham & Adele Toit  
EAs, Bethlehem: September-November 2012

EAs visit Tuqu', a small Palestinian village nestled in the hills south of Bethlehem twice a week to provide a protective presence for students attending the co-ed elementary school (400 students) and the girls' secondary school (260 students) on the west side of the village's main road, and the boys' secondary school (520 students) to the east of the road.

Two Israeli settlements, Teqoa and Noqedim, are built on land belonging to the village, and the road by the schools serves both the villagers and settlers. On most school days, Israeli soldiers station themselves next to the schools during students' daily commutes. The soldiers claim to be there to provide security for the passing settlers; yet, in practice they restrict these 1,180 students' access to education.

It is early morning when we arrive to monitor the children as they queue-up for school. An army jeep is parked outside a house adjacent to the elementary school; four armed soldiers stand by the road. Teachers start to arrive and position themselves next to the busy road in anticipation of the students' arrival. Shortly after 7:00AM the sides of the road are flooded with lines of children walking in both directions.

In recent weeks the soldiers just stand and watch – but their presence clearly makes some children apprehensive. Several children of the schools who have been arrested and detained by Israeli Security Forces reported being ill-treated. In June of 2012 three teenage boys were arrested from the secondary school, one of whom is still in detention. The most frequent reason for which the boys are arrested is the accusation of throwing stones at passing settler vehicles. Palestinian children living in the West Bank are tried in military courts, while civilian courts try settler children.<sup>1</sup>

In the past 12 years, soldiers have killed two boys from the secondary school.<sup>2</sup>

As we listen to teachers and parents, they provide insight into the unseen impact of the military presence on the children. The boys' school counsellor explains: "Children are stressed and afraid when the army is outside the school, which affects their concentration. They keep looking out the window to see if the soldiers are there. Their grades drop and some leave the school early."

Schoolchildren are taught about not allowing themselves to be provoked by settlers or the military, and not reacting by throwing stones.

<sup>1</sup> The Impact of Child Detention: Occupied Palestinian Territory, Save the Children [2012] p24

<sup>2</sup> Hassan Muhammad Hassan Hamid (Age 17), 13 September 2008, B'tselem; Walid Muhammad Ahmad al-Badan (Age 17), 30 November 2000, B'tselem



### A teacher says:

It is very difficult to be a teacher here. They (soldiers) throw tear gas into the classrooms. We have to be always ready with onions [which mitigates the harmful effect of tear gas]. Last year they did this and the Principal went out to the entrance of the school to talk to them but they did not care. Two years ago a colleague was pregnant and had to be rushed to hospital after inhaling tear gas. We put the children inside the classrooms, but we can't protect them from the soldiers.

The road that the children walk along and cross to get to school was built by Jordan in 1966, and was never intended to be a major thoroughfare. However the construction of the Barrier around Bethlehem necessitated an alternative route between Hebron and Ramallah, forcing cars and trucks through Tuqu'. The road is also the main link between Israeli settlements in the area and Jerusalem. Settlers drive at high speeds – to pass through Tuqu' as fast as possible - but their speed adds to the danger for the young children commuting to and from school. Moreover, the road is in Area C; thus, neither the schools nor the municipality have the power to address the safety problems related to traffic. Speed bumps, sidewalks, traffic lights, and a crossing lane – all manners of redress are at the discretion of the Government of Israel (GoI). Yet, when petitioned, the GoI has proved unwilling to tackle concerns about the students' safety, as any effort to slow the traffic would, in the eyes of the settlers, make them vulnerable to having stones thrown at their cars.

The military presence also affects the school's neighbouring families. Asma lives with her husband and three young children in a house next door to the elementary school. It is in her driveway that the army parks their jeeps. "I am afraid to go out when the soldiers are there. And we cannot go to our windows because they shout at us to get back." Her children go out the back door to get to school. "The older two children are used to it", she says, "but the youngest is only four and he is still very afraid of the soldiers." She described a time two years ago when the soldiers came at 5:00AM and put the whole family in the back room until midnight while they used the house as a military outpost lookout point to see if boys were throwing stones.



*An EA walks with a group of students to their school along the edge of a bypass road in Tuqu' that is frequently used by Israeli settlers and soldiers. Adele Toit © EAPPI*

**Mohammed, a father of two, says:**

I am worried every day. You never know if your children will return from school. The military affects the children in different ways. Psychologically many children have nightmares and are afraid. Soldiers often put up checkpoints to examine students' IDs on their way to school, and they often threaten the faculty that they will shut down the schools completely.

Thirteen-year-old Zeynab describes one encounter, "one day when I was leaving school, a soldier came up to me and asked me about my brother. He pressed the barrel of his gun to my shoulder. When the soldiers are far away, I am not afraid. When they come close, I am afraid."

Fourteen-year-old Fadeelah shares a personal experience: "It was midnight on a Sunday. The soldiers came into our house and took my brother. They kept him for 6 months and beat him; he was just 17. He came back different. He didn't finish school; he just started working. When I see the soldiers I think about my brother."

Almost every child to whom we spoke had a story of a family member being taken in the night, and said that they were questioned or beaten by Israeli soldiers.

## Students & Settlers

Chris Cox

EA, Hebron: June-September 2012

Cordoba school is situated opposite an Israeli settlement in the old city of Hebron. Over the past decade, Cordoba students have found themselves on the front line of a campaign of harassment, violence and intimidation from settlers.

Just two days into this year's new term at Cordoba School in Hebron, nine-year-old Aisha was bullied by Israeli settler youths on her way home from school.

"They shouted at me and my friend that we look like pigs and dogs," she said. "Then they pretended to cut their throats with their hands." Aisha reports this with a nervous smile, and denies that she is scared of the settlers. But her mother, Um Yousef, looks on with concern.

In June, Aisha was walking home from school when three settlers, one of whom Aisha said was a girl around eighteen years old, pushed her over and physically assaulted her. She said they also beat another girl that she was with. The family did not report the incident to any authorities or human rights organizations.

"It's too small to mention," said Um Yousef. "We know it's not normal. But we want to get on with living and surviving."



*An Israeli soldier checks students bags as they pass through Military Checkpoint 56 on their way to the Cordoba School in Hebron. © EAPPI*

Aisha is the youngest of four children that Um Yousef has sent to Cordoba School, which is located in the Israeli-controlled 'H2' area of Hebron. The area is home to 30,000 Palestinians and 500 Israeli settlers. The latter, who are protected by some 3,000 Israeli soldiers, have for years subjected the local Palestinian population to a campaign of harassment and violence.

Um Yousef said her 13-year-old son, Ahmed, has experienced nightmares and bedwetting as a result of harassment from settlers. In September this year, she says he was walking with his older sister when he was shoved over by a settler youth. When he tried to defend himself, he was arrested and taken to a nearby Israeli police station, while the settler was not detained or even scolded by the police.

Those incidents that do get reported rarely result in legal action against settlers. "Sometimes the Israeli police film incidents, but they do nothing. And sometimes they may arrest a group of settlers, but then they are released without court hearings, fines or imprisonment," said Um Yousef.

Annual figures compiled by Israeli human rights group Yesh Din about complaints of settler offences against Palestinians have repeatedly shown that nine out of 10 police investigations fail to lead to a prosecution.

"At Cordoba school there have been daily difficulties for a long time," explained Hisham, a field officer in Hebron for the Palestinian human rights organization Al-Haq. "Settler children try to block the way of Palestinian children. They grab their bags and try to beat them."

According to Hisham, these incidents usually go unpunished because Israeli civil law prevents the arrest of minors. "Sometimes settler parents even watch and cheer [their children] on," said Hisham. However, when Palestinian children push back they get arrested because they are subject to Israeli military law.



*Two girls from the Cordoba School in Hebron walk past members of the Israeli Border Police on their commute to school. Chris Cox © EAPPI*

A recent report by Richard Falk, the UN's 'Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in the Palestinian Territories Occupied Since 1967' describes, "constant high tensions between Israeli settlers and the indigenous population, including young schoolchildren who are often threatened or even assaulted by Israeli settlers on their way to school."

Numbers from a UNICEF-led working group on violations against children found that in 2011, one Palestinian child was killed by settlers in Hebron and nine were injured by settlers. In 2012 so far, seven boys aged 9 to 17 have been injured in settler-related incidents in Hebron.

These numbers only include cases where children required medical treatment and not minor incidents of attacks and harassment, as those often witnessed by organizations monitoring rights on the ground, including EAPPI.

Ten years ago, settler attacks against children became so bad that the school nearly closed, explains Riad from Defence for Children International (DCI). "In 1994, the school had 480 pupils. By 2004, after a decade of harassment and attacks by settlers, that figure had dropped to 83, and the school nearly closed. Many parents pulled their children out of the school, and instead sent them to schools in the H1 area, on the other side of the Israeli checkpoint."

Today there are around 150 pupils, thanks to several interventions. International organizations like EAPPI, Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT), and the Temporary International Presence in Hebron (TIPH) station people along the route that children walk to deter settlers from harassing the children. Meanwhile, the school has waived school fees for children at Cordoba, to encourage parents to send their children there.

On the first day of the new term at Cordoba this September, the girls walked arm-in-arm through the checkpoints and past the soldiers. The boys ran boisterously down the street. There was a feeling of confidence and optimism, and enthusiasm for school. The route to Cordoba is now lined with observers, and teachers at the school say this has helped reduce the number of attacks and made pupils feel safer.

Naser, an Arabic language teacher at Cordoba School, said that there are fewer attacks these days. The children come to school in groups, the little girls linking arms as they walk past the soldiers and settlements.

However incidents of settler harassment or attack still occur. Badia Dwaik, a community activist with a background in social work said, "It is not just about the physical attacks. It's about the psychological effects: the nightmares, the bedwetting and so on. This is what doesn't get acknowledged when reports only focus on acts of violence. Just seeing armed settlers and soldiers creates a violent environment for children commuting to and from school, which surely has psychological effects on them."

## Students in the Seam Zone

Marie Soederstroem, Natalie Maxson, Ane Bele, Kate Cargin & Juliane Moeller  
EAs, Jayyus: June-November 2012



*A student from Arab ar Ramadin al Janubi's drawing of his daily commute to and from school.*  
Natalie Maxson © EAPPI

The Barrier in the Qalqiliya Governorate digs deep into the West Bank. As a result, three "Seam Zones" have been created - closed areas stuck between the "Green Line" that delimits Israel from the West Bank, and the Barrier built by Israel partly inside the West Bank. Approximately 57,000 Palestinians live in such enclaves, cut off from the wider West Bank. The families have to apply for Israeli permits to continue living in their own homes; their relatives cannot visit them without a permit, which is extremely difficult to obtain.

Families are forbidden to leave the tiny enclaves, unless they cross on foot through checkpoints in the Barrier towards the West Bank. They have to wait, sometimes for hours, any time someone in the family needs to buy food or, go to work, attend school or even visit a hospital.

The community of 'Arab ar Ramadin al Janubi is one of these isolated communities, located close to the Alfe Menashe Settlement. The people of 'Arab ar Ramadin al Janubi have not been able to build a school, as it is nearly impossible for Palestinians living in Area C of the West Bank to obtain building permits from the Israeli Civil Administration. Many structures in the village already have pending demolition orders. Thus, the children from this community must go to schools in a neighbouring village on the other side of the Barrier, which requires the students to pass through a checkpoint to access their schools.



At the checkpoint, soldiers armed with assault rifles and sometimes accompanied by dogs board school buses to check the children's documents and bags. They often speak to the children in Hebrew, a language the latter do not understand, and there are reports of soldiers shouting at children because they failed to answer questions that they could not understand.

They may also call an older student to exit the bus for an unsupervised body search in a small room at the checkpoint, while the rest of the students wait. In the past, there have been reports of incidents where male soldiers have conducted body searches on adolescent female students, and as a result, families have begun pulling their girls out of school upon reaching their teenage years to avoid this from happening to them.



*Israeli Soldiers board a school bus at the Habla Gate near Qalqilya. Ane Bele © EAPPI*

Furthermore, students from the Seam Zone who are 16 and older must present an ID card, a permit, and an electro-magnetic card that contains biometric information. Students under the age of 16 must furnish their birth certificates, and photocopies of their parents' ID cards, electro-magnetic cards, and permits if available. Those who forget their documents in the morning are prohibited from going to school, and those who lose one of their documents during the school day are prohibited from returning home in the afternoon.

According to teachers, this extensive search of the bus and its passengers often makes students late for school and unable to concentrate when they arrive, which leads to overall poorer grades when compared to other students.

Moreover, many of the people from 'Arab ar Ramadin al Janubi do not have permits; thus, they cannot cross the checkpoint, as they would not be allowed to return to their homes. This prevents parents from accompanying their children on their commutes, meeting with teachers to discuss their children's studies, or picking up a child who may be ill, and even if a relative of a student has a permit, he or she cannot go to the school mid-day to tend to an ill child, because the checkpoint is only open from 7:00AM-9:00AM and from 1:00PM-2:00PM. The time restriction also prevents students from the Seam Zone from participating in extra-curricular activities, class trips, summer camps, etc.

When asked what can be done to help change this situation, a social worker at the school said, "We want to help them, but the real problem is the checkpoint. I cannot make the soldiers leave or instruct them not to bother the children."

The Director of Education in Qalqiliya said that they are trying all that they can, but there is little that they can do to help Palestinians living in the Seam Zone as they are out of reach. He did however highlight a pilot project that was implemented in October 2012 in 'Arab ar Ramadin ash Shamali, another nearby Seam Zone community.

In this village the MoE donated four large tents to be used as a makeshift school for 24 first through third grade students from the community. Though tents are not immune from demolition, they are less likely to attract attention, and if they are demolished, they can be re-erected with minimal cost and time. The MoE is also providing salaries for four teachers from the community to operate the school.

This means that teachers do not need permits to access the community and that children can be taught in their own dialect, which is Bedouin and differs from that spoken in neighbouring villages, where they previously used to commute to, in order to pursue their education. Mousa, a second grade teacher said, "It feels very good to be teaching in my community. I saw how my family struggled when I was younger, and I don't want this generation to suffer like mine did. So I decided to go to school and become a teacher."

The school is popular with both parents and children. The parents visit the school and offer to help. They are happy that their children are near to them, and that they are performing better in class as they have a less tiring commute and can concentrate more. If this school is not demolished, the MoE plans to expand the project to cover all of the elementary grades, and the model could be replicated in other communities. Yet, one teacher says, "This is a remedy not a solution. I hope that in time we will be able to build a school building here with proper facilities and utilities like electricity, water, computers, and a library."



## Demolishing Dreams

Jenny Sprong and Sietske Broekhuizen  
EAs, Jerusalem: September-November 2012

The school bell rings. A little girl climbs through a cramped drainage pipe underneath a highway and starts walking home into the arid hills northeast of Jerusalem until she is only visible from the reflection of the sun on the sparkles of her pink school bag. A few years ago, an Italian NGO and a group of volunteers built a school out of dried mud and old car tires for her community, so that children would no longer have to commute along the highway to the nearest school in Jericho, 14 kilometres away, a dangerous trip that caused the death of four children. However, settlers living in the settlement of Kfar Adumim on top of the hill that overlooks her village have petitioned to have the school demolished.

Abu Khamis, the spokesperson of the Jahalin Bedouin Community in Khan al Ahmar an area half-way between Jerusalem and Jericho, says the school is the pride of his community: the 'Tire School', built by NGO Vento Di Terra (Wind of Earth) in 2009 with the help of international, Israeli and Palestinian volunteers, serves 90 first through fourth grade students (half of whom are girls) from the five Jahalin Bedouin villages in Khan al Ahmar.



*The Tire School in Khan Al Ahmar. Sietske Broekhuizen © EAPPI*

Before the school was built in 2009, parents would only allow their boys to go to school because of the dangers of the commute, which caused the death of four children. Abu Khamis points to his son: "He would go away in the morning, and come back in the afternoon. Weeks later we found out that he was hiding in the hills during the day, because he was afraid that if he went to school, he would share the same fate as his friends."

Khan Al Ahmar is cut into two by a major highway linking Jerusalem to the Dead Sea. It separates the settlement of Kfar Adumim, the Tire School and three of the Jahalin Bedouin villages in Khan al Ahmar from two other Jahalin Bedouin villages in Khan al Ahmar and the Ma'ale Adummim and Mishor Adumim Settlements. Even though the community is located right next to the highway, they are forbidden from accessing it by the Israeli Civil Administration.

The Tire School is located in an area that is demarcated for the E1 Plan, which aims to expand the Ma'ale Adummim settlement across the highway, physically linking it to East Jerusalem. If implemented, this plan would result in the displacement of the five Jahalin Bedouin villages in Khan al Ahmar as well as 15 other Jahalin Bedouin Communities in the area. The E1 plan includes building 15,000 residential units in settlements, a large police station (already built), a large industrial zone, hotels, and a large Jewish cemetery to be shared by residents of Ma'ale Adummim and Jerusalem. This plan is faced with widespread international opposition, including from the UN Secretary General, the Government of the United States and the European Union.

Unlike the other Palestinian-owned structures in the area, which are temporary structures (i.e. tents and makeshift shacks), the Tire School is technically a building, and it is therefore interpreted by the ICA as lacking a building permit, something that is nearly impossible for Palestinians to obtain in Area C. Thus, the community and its friends built the school without a permit, using 2,200 used rubber tires, filled with dirt and plastered with mud to create the school's walls, and immediately upon completion the ICA issued a demolition order for the Tire School.

This means that bulldozers can come at any time and destroy the Tire School. However, the orders have been pending since 2009; thus, in the summer of 2012 settlers from Kfar Adumim filed a petition demanding that the ICA immediately enforce its demolition orders before the start of the new school year in September 2012. Yet, on Thursday, 11 October 2012 the Israeli Supreme Court rejected the petition, but fell short of revoking the Tire School's demolition order, or the demolition orders of the 20 Jahalin Bedouin Communities in the area. The community believes that the GoI is focusing its efforts on how to demolish and relocate the 20 communities including the Tire School, rather than just demolishing the Tire School alone.

In the meanwhile: breadwinners in the Jahalin Bedouin Community in Khan al Ahmar are largely unemployed, as their former employers in the nearby settlements fired them in retaliation for building the Tire School; students from two of the three Jahalin Bedouin villages in Khan al Ahmar have to crawl through a small drainage pipe under the highway to get to the Tire School; and settlers are keeping a close eye on the Tire School. Halimeh, the Principal of the Tire School said, "Yesterday the settlement guards came and drove into the village, just looking around. They come here regularly. Sometimes they take pictures of the school. They hardly ever say anything. We don't like it, but what can we do about it?"

The Jahalin have lived in hills northeast of Jerusalem for more than 60 years, long before the establishment of the settlements [Ma'ale Adummim – established in 1975, Kfar Adumim – established in 1979, and Mishor Adumim – established in 1998] that are seeking to demolish their homes / school, and forcibly displace them.



*Curious students of the Tire School in Khan Al Ahmar. Sietske Broekhuizen © EAPPI*

The Jahalin Bedouins are originally from Tel Arad in the Negev Desert. In 1951 they were forcibly evicted from their ancestral lands and made refugees for refusing to serve in the Israeli Military. They found refuge in the hills northeast of Jerusalem and registered as refugees with 'UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East' (UNRWA). The Jahalin chose to live in this area due to the year-round surface waters of Wadi Qelt, vast grazing fields, and close proximity to Jerusalem's livestock market. However, due to settlement expansion, their access to grazing fields and water (and subsequently their main source of livelihood) has been increasingly reduced. Moreover, like all West Bank Palestinians, the Jahalin Bedouins have had restricted access to East Jerusalem and its livestock market since the establishment of the Barrier in 2000.

## Preventing Progress

Dominika Blachnicka - Ciacek

EA, Jerusalem: September - November 2012

When visiting the Nabi Samwil Elementary School, you will easily find the schoolyard where boys play football and girls play hopscotch, but you may have a difficult time finding the school, unless you happen to see the principal announcing an end to recess and calling the students back to class. This is because here the school and classroom are one-in-the-same.

The village school in Nabi Samwil (Arabic for Prophet Samuel) was originally located in the large mosque in the village, which also contains the Tomb of the Prophet Samuel. However, in 1970 the ICA forced the school out of the mosque, so as to convert this section of the building into a synagogue. Thus, the school was relocated to a one-room house that was abandoned by a family that fled the village to Jordan during the Six-Day War in 1967. Ever since then, the ICA has refused to grant building permits for any Palestinian construction in the village, leaving dozens of young couples with no other option other than to find housing elsewhere, and keeping an ever-growing student-body in the same room for more than 40-years.

This single room is a classroom, hall, cafeteria, office for the two-person faculty, and a place to store stationary and other teaching equipment. The building itself cannot be demolished because it was built before Israel occupied the West Bank in 1967, but any new structures must have a building permit issued by the ICA prior to construction; it is nearly impossible for Palestinians to obtain a building permit in Area C of the West bank, which is under Israeli administrative and security control.





Khalil, the school's principal, tried to avoid demolition by erecting a tent to use as a second classroom, but he said, "As soon as we put-up the tent, (Israeli) soldiers came and told us to take it down immediately. We tried again at a later date, but the same thing happened. They won't let us build anything. They just want us to leave." However, he could not forego building latrines for the students and as he had expected, upon completion of the rest rooms, the structure received a demolition order. He is now pondering as whether or not a shipping container would be considered by the ICA to be a structure or an object, if it is considered to be the latter, he will try to make a second classroom in such a container.

The village's problems were further exacerbated in 2008 when the Barrier severed Nabi Samwil and its 220 residents from the rest of the West Bank, isolating it in the "Seam Zone" between the Barrier and the Green Line, which delimits Israel from the West Bank. Soon after, a military checkpoint was installed at the entrance to the village, and soldiers started denying entry to any Palestinians other than the residents of the village. This meant that teachers no longer had free access to the village, and only two teachers – Khalil and Yusef were granted permits to enter.

Thus, due to the lack of space and teachers, the school is only able to teach 25 first through third grade students. Students in grades 4-12 must travel through the checkpoint each day to the closest school in a neighbouring village, which is in-sight from the village, but takes an 8-kilometer trip to get there due to a detour around the barrier.



*Israeli settlers look into the schoolyard of the Nabi Samwil School.  
Dominika Blachnicka-Ciacek © EAPPI*

Though the school is located in Area C, which is under Israeli administrative and security control, it receives no financial support from the GoI. Moreover, the MoE cannot reach the school because it is on the other side of the Barrier; thus it has only been able to pay Khalil and Yusef's salaries and donate textbooks.



*A recently built settlement housing unit behind the one-room Nabi Samwil School. Dominika Blachnicka-Ciacek © EAPPI*

A new building has been erected in the village, in which Israeli settlers reside. Teachers said that the children are used to the constant presence of settlers watching their every move, and they learned to psychologically block-them-out as they play. Khalil said that the settlers recently spray-painted racist graffiti on the school, but he and Yusef quickly painted over it so as not to upset the children. Yusef added, “We want to create a little safe haven for the kids at the school, even if the village is not always safe for them to play in.”

## The Daily Risks

Lea Pakkenean, Genesis Antonio, Mathilde Aarseth, Anne Cazemier, Alexandre Quintino, and Eva-Marie Hakansson

EAs, Yanoun: September-November 2012

Ten years ago, the Israeli military destroyed a pedestrian path that served the students of three schools in As Sawiya, claiming that the road was a security risk because it was too close to the Israeli settlements of Eli and Ma'le Levona, which were built in contravention of international law. The students were left with no alternative walkway to school, forcing them to walk along Route 60, the main road connecting East Jerusalem and Ramallah to the largest city in the northern West Bank, Nablus. The traffic on this road is always heavy, but especially so during the rush hours when the students from As Sawiya and Luban villages are walking to and from school. Looking at the road one sees school children of all ages walking next to passing trucks, buses, and cars. The frequent accidents on this road have earned it the name of "Death Road" amongst locals.

According to Zeidan, a teacher at the As Sawiya Co-ed School, his student, Mohamed (age 17) was returning from school one afternoon with his friend, walking on Route 60 when a bus serving one of the nearby Israeli settlements crashed into him. His friends rushed to inform the faculty and his parents. Mohamed suffered a head injury and broke an arm and leg, having had a platinum plate installed in the latter. The accident happened almost one-year ago, and he is still unable to walk without crutches.

Mohammed's father, Mustafa said, "I went to report the accident at the police station at the Ariel settlement, the officer there said to me: 'The problem is not the bus, the problem is your son.' When I asked him: 'Where should my son walk?', he replied: 'Not on the road.' The children have no choice: there was a walkway, but the military destroyed it."

The settlers are also a safety concern for the children. On several occasions settlers have thrown things at the students while speeding by on Route 60. Mahmoud (age 13) was walking on the road with his four-year-old sister when some settlers threw a sound bomb at them. On another occasion Raja (age 16) was rushed to the hospital because a stone was thrown at him from the window of a passing settler car.

Hamouda (age 15) was on his way to school one morning, when an Israeli military vehicle had stopped and soldiers came out and pulled him into their vehicle. He said, "I thought I was going to be arrested and I remembered all the stories I had heard about prison." Yet, luckily a teacher who speaks Hebrew was at the scene and negotiated his release.

These are the difficulties the 446 first through twelfth grade students at the As Sawiya Co-ed School face on their daily commutes to access education. However, their safety concerns do not end when they reach their school.



*EAs walk with a group of students from the Seam Zone along the edge of a bypass road past an Israeli Settlement to their school on the West Bank side of the barrier. Emmet Sheerin © EAPPI*

There is a frequent presence of armed soldiers and military vehicles in and around the school. Soldiers enter the school at least on a monthly basis and they often stand by the school and check the children's book-bags. "The younger children cry, the older ones ask why the soldiers are here. Yet, all the students come to school with a lot of stress. They are unable to concentrate and this results in poor grades," said Adnan, the school's principal.

"Even entering the school is a challenge. The soldiers permanently closed the school's main gate, but left two other gates open. When the soldiers are at the West Gate, we try to use the East Gate, and when they are at the East Gate, we try to use the West Gate", said Zeidan. Then sometimes the soldiers drive through the schoolyard in armoured vehicles while the children are playing. This causes a lot of fear and distress among the children: "They get shocked, scared, frustrated. We do all we can to lead the students to classrooms and keep them safe", said Zeidan.

After ten years, the PA finally received permission by the ICA to rebuild the pedestrian walkway, and construction has begun, but the dangers that settlers and soldiers pose cannot be fixed so easily.



### III. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Crosscutting Issues

As illustrated in the case studies in this report, the primary humanitarian issues hindering access to education in the oPt are:

- **Harassment & Violence by Israeli Soldiers and Settlers:** experienced by students at checkpoints, on the commute to-and-from school, and even at school. This is a leading factor for student dropout, especially for girls, and psychosocial distress amongst children of both sexes.
- **Long Commutes along Settlement Bypass Roads:** where cars have hit commuting students and/or had dangerous objects thrown at them by passing settlers. This is a leading factor for family separation and/or displacement, as families become inclined to move to communities that are closer to their children's schools or at least send their children to live in these communities.
- **Demolition & Stop Work Orders:** that prevent communities from building adequate facilities to educate their children; thus, making these students commute to other communities to access education, and along these commutes they may experience the harassment, violence, and dangers mentioned above.

#### Recommended Interventions

The Education Cluster, which is co-led by UNICEF and Save the Children and composed of local and international organizations, as well as UN agencies, has identified the following recommended interventions to counter the crosscutting issues noted above:

- **Protective Presence:** has been proven by EAPPI and other organizations to be beneficial in deterring harassment and violence by Israeli soldiers and settlers towards schoolchildren. Protective presence, as practiced by EAPPI, encompasses: visible international accompaniment at checkpoints, routes to schools, and at schools; monitoring; data collection; reporting; and dissemination of information to actors for appropriate intervention.
- **Vehicular Transportation:** is an effective means of preventing incidents of car accidents involving schoolchildren walking along or crossing settlement bypass roads; and shielding them from violence and harassment by Israeli soldiers and settlers during their daily commutes.
- **Human Rights Advocacy:** is used by EAPPI, UNICEF and other organizations as a proactive measure to apply pressure on the GoI not to execute demolition orders on schools. Advocacy can also be used as a reactive measure to solicit international responses against such demolitions when they take place; thus making future incidents less likely to occur due to the political costs. If demolitions of schools

could be established as a 'red-line' for ICA, communities may be able to teach their children locally, without having to send them on long commutes that make them vulnerable to harassment and violence.

- **Legal Aid:** is needed to help schools threatened with demolitions and/or stop work orders to file legal appeals and submit plans to the ICA.
- **Psychosocial Support:** is needed to help schoolchildren fearing harassment, violence and displacement. By training faculty to identify students who are in need of such support and how to address their problems, students can receive on-going support that will help them overcome psychosocial obstacles and excel in school.

## Expected Outcomes

From experience the recommended interventions noted above have decreased the:

- Dropout rate for boys and girls in identified vulnerable communities (especially for those pursuing secondary education).
- Number of incidents of settler and/or military harassment and violence directed towards schoolchildren in identified vulnerable communities.
- Frequency of delays at checkpoints that schoolchildren must cross through to access schools.
- Amount of traffic accidents involving commuting schoolchildren.
- Number of cases of family separation and/or displacement due to protection issues affecting access to education.
- Occurrence of school demolitions and attacks.

These interventions are being coordinated, executed, and monitored by UNICEF and its partner organizations, such as EAPPI through its joint project with UNICEF, 'Enhancing Access to Education in the West Bank' which protects students from harassment and violence by providing schoolchildren with a protective presence and internationally advocating for their right to safely access education. This report is an outcome of this project, which also enhanced access to education for 1,361 children in six different locations across the West Bank that were strategically selected by the MoE and Education Cluster.

# APPENDICES

## Appendix I

### MRM Data, October 2012

Attacks on Schools in the oPt by Year:

Reporting Period	Number of Attacks on Schools	Number of Children Directly Affected
2009	10	Unknown
2010	24	7,071
2011	46	7,843
2012 (Jan. – Aug.)	17	9,357
<b>Total</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>24,271</b>

Incidents of Denial of Access to Education in the oPt by Year:

Reporting Period	Number of Incidents	Number of Children Directly Affected
2009	7	14
2010	41	61,707
2011	39	30,900
2012 (Jan. – Aug.)	24	4,138
<b>Total</b>	<b>111</b>	<b>96,759</b>



*School children in Hebron passing through Military Checkpoint 56 on their commute home from the Cordoba School. Chris Cox © EAPPI*



# Endnotes

## NOTES:

1. Nicolai, Susan (2007); *Fragmented Foundations, Education and chronic crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory*, IIEP – UNESCO, Paris
2. Ibid
3. According to the definition in the Field Manual of the global Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (February 2011), incidence reported as attacks on schools include the targeting of schools facilities that cause the total or partial destruction of such facilities. Other interferences to the normal operation of the facility may also be reported, such as the occupation, shelling, targeting for propaganda of, or otherwise causing harm to schools facilities or its personnel.
4. The MRM, Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism, in the oPt monitors, verifies and records incidents of grave violations against children, including education related violations.
5. Ibid. Reported incidents do not cover attacks on schools occurring inside of Israel and affecting Israeli schoolchildren.
6. UN OCHA, Humanitarian Monitor, July 2011. See also UNICEF Press Release, “Over one million go back to school in occupied Palestinian territory, Schools continue to fight for survival in Area C of the West Bank”, 4 September 2011.
7. Education Cluster Vulnerable Schools Management Sheet
8. Information provided by the MRM Working Group. Reported cases do not cover incidents s occurring inside of Israeli, affecting Israeli schoolchildren.
9. MRM data from CAAC (Children Affected by Armed Conflict), 2010 Annual Review for oPt - UNICEF
10. MRM data from CAAC , July 2011





# EDUCATION UNDER OCCUPATION

Many school children in the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt) have restricted access to quality, protected education due to military checkpoints, settler harassment, and restrictions imposed by the Government of Israel that prevent many schools from building necessary infrastructure.

The case studies that form this report were written by Ecumenical Accompaniers (EAs) via information that they gathered first-hand while accompanying children on their commutes to and from school, displaying a visible presence at a number of West Bank / East Jerusalem checkpoints and schools; documenting data and cases of harassment to share with concerned organizations for advocacy and intervention purposes; and intervening when necessary to prevent and/or deescalate harassment in order to facilitate better access to education.

This report is the direct outcome of a joint project between UNICEF and EAPPI that enhanced access to education for 1,361 children in six different locations across the West Bank.

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