

20 October 2011



General Assembly

GA/SHC/4016

Department of Public Information • News and Media Division • New York

Sixty-sixth General Assembly
Third Committee
25th & 26th Meetings (AM & PM)

UNDER PROLONGED ISRAELI OCCUPATION, CHILDREN'S DEVELOPMENT 'DEFORMED BY PERVASIVE

DEPRIVATIONS' AFFECTING HEALTH, EDUCATION, SECURITY, UN EXPERT TELLS COMMITTEE

Also Hears from Experts on Human Rights While Countering Terrorism, Religious Freedom, Foreign Debt, Extrajudicial Executions, Internally Displaced

The prolonged Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories had placed a tremendous burden on civilians, and had an even heavier impact on children, "whose development is deformed by pervasive deprivations affecting health, education and overall security," a top UN Official told the Third Committee (Social, Humanitarian, Cultural) today.

Richard Falk, the Human Rights Council's Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in the Palestinian Territories Occupied since 1967, said evidence suggested a pattern of increasing abuse through specific policies that systematically violated the rights of children under international humanitarian law. Further, experts on child development agreed that children suffered more from violations than adults and "the protection of their rights should be of urgent concern to the international community".

Mr. Falk, who was presenting his annual report, said that Israel had again this year refused to cooperate with his mandate and allow him access to the Territories. But, he noted that many children arrested for stone-throwing were subject to Israeli military law. That process, as documented by United Nations agencies, included arrests in the middle of the night, removal of the child from the parent for questioning and abundant anecdotal evidence of abusive treatment in detention.

Related to that had been an alarming increase in settler violence in 2011, he said, with 178 documented injuries to Palestinians during the first half of this year compared to 176 for all of 2010 and with almost daily accounts of vandalism against Palestinian agricultural land and villages.

A further dimension to those activities was frequent settler harassment of Palestinian children on their way to school, which had reportedly discouraged many children and their families from even attending. "Overall, the failure to prevent and punish settler violence remains a serious and on-going violation of Israel's most fundamental obligation under international humanitarian law to protect a civilian population living under occupation," he said.

He recommended that the Government of Israel immediately adopt the non-governmental organization B'Tselem's guidelines to protect Palestinian children who were arrested or detained, as a minimum basis for compliance with international humanitarian law. Further, Israel also needed to develop and implement appropriate detention and imprisonment policies for all Palestinians.

The Special Rapporteur also recommended allowing entry into Gaza urgently needed materials to repair water and electricity infrastructure and an immediate lifting of the unlawful blockade of Gaza. Finally, he recommended that a request be made to the International Court of Justice for an advisory opinion on the legal status of prolonged occupation.