

# HRW reveals spike in Israeli killings of Palestinian children

Human Rights Watch called last year, 2022, the deadliest year for Palestinian children in the West Bank in 15 years.

The Israeli military and border police forces are killing Palestinian children with virtually no recourse for accountability, the report said.

Last year was the deadliest year for Palestinian children in the West Bank in 15 years, and 2023 is on track to meet or exceed 2022 levels.

Israeli forces had killed at least 34 Palestinian children in the West Bank as of August 22. Human Rights Watch investigated four fatal shootings of Palestinian children by Israeli forces between November 2022 and March 2023. "Israeli forces are gunning down Palestinian children living under occupation with increasing frequency," said Bill Van Esvelde, associate children's rights director at Human Rights Watch. "Unless Israel's allies, particularly the US, pressure Israel to change course, more Palestinian children will be killed." Human Rights Watch researchers, in documenting the four killings, interviewed in person seven witnesses, nine family members, and other residents, lawyers, doctors, staff and fieldworkers at Palestinian and Israeli rights groups, and reviewed CCTV and videos posted on social media, statements by Israeli security agencies, medical records, and news reports.

## Unlawful killings

In the other cases investigated, the security forces killed boys after they had joined other youths confronting Israeli forces with stones, Molotov cocktails, or fire-works. While these projectiles can seriously injure or kill, in these cases, Israeli forces fired repeatedly at chest-level, hitting multiple children, and killed children in situations where they do not appear to have been posing a threat of grievous injury or death, which is the standard for the use of lethal force by law enforcement officers under international norms. That would make these killings unlawful.



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The Israeli newspaper Haaretz reported in January that since "December 2021, soldiers are allowed to shoot at Palestinians who are fleeing if they had previously thrown stones or Molotov cocktails." Responding to Human Rights Watch, the police said their rules of engagement permit the use of firearms against persons who are throwing stones, Molotov cocktails or fire-works only if there is an "imminent risk to life or bodily integrity." Israeli authorities have used excessive force against Palestinians in policing situations for decades. The authorities have routinely failed to hold their forces accountable when security forces kill Palestinians, including chil-

children, in circumstances in which the use of lethal force was not justified under international norms. From 2017 to 2021, fewer than one percent of complaints of violations by Israeli military forces against Palestinians, including killings and other abuses, resulted in indictments, the rights group Yesh Din reported.

Israeli forces killed at least 614 Palestinians whom the UN classified as civilians in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank during this period. But only three soldiers were convicted for killing Palestinians, according to Yesh Din, and all received short sentences of military community service.

The killings take place in a context in which Israeli authorities are committing the crimes against humanity of apartheid and persecution against Palestinians, including children, as Human Rights Watch and other rights groups have documented. The then International Criminal Court (ICC) prosecutor, Fatou Bensouda, opened a formal investigation in 2021 into serious crimes committed in Palestine.

The UN Secretary-General is mandated by the Security Council to

annually list military forces and armed groups responsible for grave violations against children in armed conflict. Between 2015 and 2022, the UN attributed over 8,700 child casualties to Israeli forces, yet Israel has never been listed. The reports have repeatedly listed other forces that killed and injured far fewer children than Israel did.

## 'List of shame'

The stigma attached to the Secretary-General's "list of shame" is considerable, and parties named must create and carry out an action plan of reforms to end the abuses in order to be removed from the list. The UN missed an opportunity to protect children by omitting Israel, Human Rights Watch said. The Secretary-General should use objective criteria to determine the list for 2023.

"Palestinian children live a reality of apartheid and structural violence, where they could be gunned down at any time without any serious prospect of accountability," Van Esvelde said. "Israel's allies should confront this ugly reality and create real pressure for accountability."



The funeral of 16-year-old Muntasser al-Shawa killed by Israeli forces in Nablus

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## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Syria: Israeli attack puts Aleppo airport out of service



REUTERS - An Israeli air attack put Syria's Aleppo airport out of service on Monday, the Syrian Defence Ministry said.

"The Israeli enemy carried out an air attack ... targeting Aleppo International Airport. The aggression caused material damage to the airport's runway and put it out of service," a military source said. The Israeli military declined to comment.

### China, US agree to set up commercial working group: US

AFP - China and the United States on Monday agreed to set up a working group to "seek solutions on trade and investment issues and to advance US commercial interests in China," Washington's Department of Commerce said.

US Secretary of Commerce Gina Raimondo and her Chinese counterpart Wang Wentao agreed at a meeting in Beijing that "the working group will meet twice annually at the Vice Minister level, with the US hosting the first meeting in early 2024," according to a readout from Washington.

### Libyan FM suspended over Israeli meeting



AP - One of Libya's rival prime ministers said Monday he has suspended his foreign minister a day after Israel revealed that its chief diplomat met with her last week - news that prompted scattered street protests in the chaos-stricken North African nation.

Abdul Hamid Dbeibah, who heads the government of national unity in Tripoli, also referred Foreign Minister Najla Mangoush, for investigation over the meeting, which was the first ever between top diplomats of Libya and Israel. Mangoush fled to Turkey following the Israeli announcement of the meeting, according to a Libyan foreign ministry official.

## Biden is 'old,' Trump is 'corrupt': Poll has ominous signs for both in possible 2024 rematch

US President Joe Biden is "old" and "confused," and former president Donald Trump is "corrupt" and "dishonest." Those are among the top terms Americans use when they're asked to describe the Democrat in the White House and the Republican best positioned to face him in next year's election.

Unflattering portraits of Biden and Trump emerge clearly in a new poll by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research, which asked an open-ended question about what comes to mind when people think of them, AP reported.

For Biden, the largest share of US adults - including both Democrats and Republicans - mentioned his age. At 80, Biden is just three years older than Trump, but many Americans expressed real concerns about his ability to continue as president.



AP

## Poland, Baltics will shut Belarus border if 'critical incident' occurs: Minister

Poland and the Baltic states will close their borders with Belarus entirely if a "critical incident" involving Wagner mercenaries takes place, Polish Interior Minister Mariusz Kaminski said on Monday.

EU members Latvia, Lithuania and Poland, which share a border with Belarus, have been increasingly concerned about border security since hundreds of Russian battle-hardened Wagner mercenaries arrived Belarus at the invitation of President Alexander Lukashenko, Reuters reported.

They have called Lukashenko to expel Russian mercenaries from his country and agreed on a plan to potentially shut the border in response to escalating tension, AFP reported.

Poland has also seen an increase in the number of mainly Middle Eastern and African migrants trying to cross the border in recent months and has accused Belarus of facilitating them.

"We demand from the authorities in Minsk that the Wagner Group immediately leave the territory of Belarus and that illegal migrants immediately leave the border area and are sent back to their home countries," Kaminski told a press conference.

"If there is a critical incident, regardless of whether it is at the Polish or Lithuanian border, we will retaliate immediately. All border crossings that have been opened so far will be closed," he said.



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