UN Chief Leaves Israel Off Childrens' Rights Blacklist

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United Nations Secretary General Bank Ki-Moon has decided not to include Israel or the Israel Defense Forces on its "blacklist" of states and/or organizations that systematically and continuously harm children during time of conflict.

The secretary general's decision to leave the Israeli military off of the list was made against the recommendation of his special envoy on the matter, Leila Zerrougui of Algeria, following intense pressure from both Israel and the United States.

UN agencies in Israel and the Palestinian territories reported an alarming number of child victims in last year's war in the Gaza Strip but were split on whether Israel should be put on a list of violators of children's rights, a UN document said. The final decision on the report was left up to Ban.

Nevertheless, in the report - a copy of which Haaretz has obtained – Ban leveled harsh criticism over Israeli policy, which causes harm to children in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, and called on Israel to reexamine its policy to ensure that past such incidents do not repeat themselves.

"I urge Israel to take concrete and immediate steps, including by reviewing existing policies and practices, to protect children, to prevent the killing and maiming of children, and to respect the special protections afforded to schools and hospitals," Ban said.

"An essential measure in this regard is ensuring accountability for perpetrators of alleged violations. I further urge Israel to engage in a dialogue with my special representative and the United Nations to ensure that there is no recurrence in grave violations against children," he added.