DCIP meets with UN Commission investigating Israel’s 2021 military assault on Gaza

March 31, 2022

Defense for Children International – Palestine

<https://www.dci-palestine.org/dcip_meets_with_un_commission_investigating_israel_s_2021_military_assault_on_gaza>

Defense for Children International - Palestine met with United Nations investigators in Jordan earlier this week to share information concerning serious breaches of international law in the Gaza Strip during May 2021.

Khaled Quzmar, general director at DCIP, met with members of the UN’s Independent International [Commission of Inquiry](https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/hrc/co-israel/index) on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and in Israel on Sunday, March 27, in Amman. Israeli authorities denied the Commission of Inquiry access to Israel and the OPT, so human rights organizations, including DCIP, traveled to Amman to present evidence to the Commission’s members. Quzmar presented evidence collected by DCIP concerning the 67 Palestinian children who were killed in the Gaza Strip during Israel’s 11-day military offensive that occurred between May 10 and 21, 2021.

The Commission of Inquiry is tasked with investigating violations of international human rights and humanitarian law during Israel’s military assault on Gaza last year. It is led by Navi Pillay, a South African jurist who served as UN High Commissioner for Human Rights from 2008 to 2014; Miloon Kothari, an architect by training who served as the first UN Special Rapporteur on adequate housing from 2000-2008; and Chris Sidoti, an international human rights consultant and an expert in national human rights institutions and in international human rights law and mechanisms.

“Israeli armed forces have been regularly implicated in serious, systematic, and institutionalized human rights violations against Palestinian children living in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip, yet systemic impunity has remained the norm,” said Quzmar. “The Commissioners must pursue accountability by analyzing alleged violations of international criminal law falling within the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court and naming perpetrators.”

Quzmar submitted a 30-page report to the Commission of Inquiry that details the 67 child fatalities that occurred in the Gaza Strip during the 11-day escalation of violence between May 10 and 21, 2021, 60 of which were the direct result of Israeli attacks, according to investigations by DCIP. During the military assault, Israeli forces killed Palestinian children using tank-fired shells, live ammunition, missiles fired from weaponized drones, and other munitions dropped by United States-sourced warplanes. DCIP investigations determined that seven Palestinian children were killed by rockets fired by Palestinian armed groups within the Gaza Strip.

The UN Human Rights Council [established](https://www.un.org/unispal/document/human-rights-council-establishes-international-commission-of-inquiry-to-investigate-violations-in-opt-and-in-israel-press-release/) the Commission of Inquiry during a special session in May 2021 that was held shortly after Israel’s military assault ended. Unlike previous commissions of inquiry and fact finding missions established after Israeli military assaults and the Great March of Return, this commission is permanent and will not only investigate violations of international law that occured during Operation Guardian of the Walls, but also “all underlying root causes of recurrent tensions, instability and protraction of conflict, including systematic discrimination and repression based on national, ethnic, racial or religious identity.”

While international humanitarian law prohibits indiscriminate and disproportionate attacks and requires all parties to an armed conflict to distinguish between military targets, civilians, and civilian objects, DCIP investigations found overwhelming and repeated evidence that Israeli forces committed international humanitarian law violations. Israeli warplanes and weaponized drones bombarded densely populated civilian areas killing Palestinian children sleeping in their beds, playing in their neighborhoods, shopping at stores near their homes, and celebrating Eid Al-Fitr with their families.

Children affected by armed conflict are entitled to special respect and protections under international law, but Israeli armed forces have consistently violated these protections through indiscriminate and disproportionate attacks that result in the unlawful killing and maiming of children amounting to war crimes, according to evidence collected by DCIP.