



Statement of Lynn Hastings, United Nations Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator in the Occupied Palestinian Territory

1.3 million Palestinian children face risks as they go back to school

Occupied Palestinian Territory, 28 August 2022 – This week, over 1.3 million Palestinian children from the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip will go back to school. It is a moment to anticipate, with so many girls and boys eager to learn and thrive.

But children in the West Bank and Gaza face challenges that many children across the world cannot imagine.

Since the beginning of the year, 20 children were killed in the West Bank, compared to 12 during the same period last year. Currently, there are 56 outstanding demolition orders against schools where at least 6,400 children are taught in the West Bank including East Jerusalem.

In the first half of 2022 in the West Bank, the United Nations recorded 115 education-related violations including, direct or indirect firing of tear gas, stun grenades, and/or rubber-coated bullets, intimidating military and settler presences at schools, detentions, and movement restrictions preventing students from reaching their classes. Nearly 8,000 students have been impacted, increasing the risk they will drop out of school.

The latest escalation in Gaza claimed the lives of 17 children. Schools are overcrowded, with 65 per cent of schools operating on double shifts. The conditions in Gaza for children, including having lived through four escalations in hostilities during their lifetime, increase the need for specialized psychosocial support services.

Despite the many challenges faced, the youth literacy rate of Palestinians is over 99 per cent and 93.8 per cent of children graduating from primary school go on to a secondary education. Palestinian children hold in their hands the potential and drive to reimagine education, co-create new pathways for development, and transform their lives. They are tomorrow's leaders. We must do more to protect and support them, as children must not be exposed to violence or exploited for any purpose.

The United Nations wishes all children a successful and fun-filled year where their fundamental right to education is protected and realized by all. We remain committed to protect children from violence and support them to fulfill their potential.