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## **Online Seminar: The Suffering of Palestinian Children under Occupation**

Arab Organisation for Human Rights in the UK ([AOHR UK](http://www.aohr.org.uk)) held [an online seminar](#) on Tuesday, December 21, entitled "The Suffering of Palestinian Children under Occupation" to discuss the ongoing Israeli violations against Palestinian children.

The [seminar](#) was moderated by the Palestinian activist Aseel Barouq, who started her speech with pleas of Palestinian children who were forcibly displaced after their homes were demolished by the occupation authorities.

Barouq mentioned the heinous Israeli crime that shook the world with the killing of the Palestinian child "Mohamed Al-Durra" in Gaza in 2000 during the second Palestinian uprising, after soldiers killed him in cold blood despite his father's distress, noting that this is a recurring scene that children continuously live under occupation.

In his speech, Palestinian activist Ayed Abu Eqtaish - Director of the Accountability Program in the Defense for Children International in Palestine - spoke about the rights of Palestinian children in international law, and the various mechanisms used to protect the rights of these children under occupation.

At the beginning of his speech, Abu Eqtaish criticised the classification of the Organisation for the Defense of the Rights of the Children of Palestine as a terrorist organisation by the occupation authorities, noting that it only aims to protect the rights of children in the occupied and Palestinian-controlled areas, by monitoring and documenting the violations they are exposed to, whether by direct targeting such as killing, or by restricting them in various ways of life, such as depriving them of education, treatment and transportation.

Abu Eqtaish explained that they were able to monitor the killing of 2,200 Palestinian children since 2000, noting that nearly two-thirds of them were killed in Gaza, which is



under siege, especially during periods of Israeli attacks on the Gaza Strip, as happened in May this year.

He pointed out that Israel uses lethal force against the Palestinians and does not adhere to the principle of proportionality in the use of weapons.

He also addressed in his speech the [arbitrary arrests](#) and unfair trials that children are subjected to. Around 700 Palestinian children are arrested and tried annually, and receive illegal treatment, torture and humiliation since the first day of arrest.

Abu Eqtaish pointed out that through documentation of the past period Israeli authorities use more psychological pressure methods to extract statements from Palestinian children or abuse them.

The prominent American politician, Professor Norman Finkelstein, highlighted the Israeli aggression on Gaza in 2008, 2014 and this year, noting that despite the presence of many human rights reports as well as the United Nations, which documented and condemned the violations of the occupation against civilians in Gaza, not a single Israeli official was subjected to real legal accountability for these crimes.

"As far as I know, in the aggression that killed 350 children and destroyed 6000 homes, three Israelis were held accountable for stealing a credit card... In the aggression that killed 550 Palestinian children and destroyed 18,000 homes, three Israelis were referred to investigation for questioning over stealing a few hundred dollars - about six hundred dollars", Finkelstein added.

Stressing that "These are the issues that Israelis face. Not a single Israeli leader has been prosecuted, not a single Israeli soldier has been criminally convicted... No country in the world can continue with impunity like the State of Israel."

Finkelstein continued, "Israel has imposed a blockade on Gaza for more than a decade, even since 1948 because we must not forget that 70 Gazans are refugees under international law, 70 years of occupation have turned 70% of the population into refugees...successive generations. They were children and today they are grandparents to children living the same suffering.. we are talking about 70 years of asylum and then compounded by the medieval siege imposed since 2006... almost 15 years of the immoral and illegal blockade of Gaza completely, and yet there is full impunity of punishment, there is no accountability for any official in Israel."



Finkelstein also spoke about Israel's brutal crimes there, saying, "There are huge reports documenting Israel's targeting of hospitals, ambulances, and medical personnel...The massive return marches in 2018 were the biggest proof of that, however, none of the perpetrators of these crimes was held accountable."

The 15-year-old Palestinian girl [Jana Al Tamimi](#), nicknamed the youngest journalist in Palestine, spoke about her personal experience as a child who grew up and spent her entire life under occupation.

Jana said; "Living under the Israeli occupation means that literally all aspects of your life are in danger, and none of your basic rights can be guaranteed... Being Palestinian means that you are a second-class citizen subject to discrimination and racism at all times."

She added, "Childhood is completely violated, and all rights such as the right to education are violated. For example, my school, which is 30 minutes away from home at most, but I take at least three hours to reach the school because of the Israeli checkpoints everywhere. We are not even able to go to school normally."

"The right to move anywhere is being violated because of these military checkpoints. We do not feel safe even in the presence of our parents. The right to adequate health care is also being violated," she added.

She indicated that the situation in the occupied territories is terrifying for children in particular, where [schools](#) are attacked and assaulted by occupation soldiers with live bullets and other weapons that rob children of any sense of safety, as well as the fact that many [children](#) are homeless after their families were forcibly evicted from their homes.

Al Tamimi also spoke about the arbitrary [arrests](#) of children, according to which their rights to a fair trial or dignified treatment worthy of being children are violated. Al-Tamimi described the charges for which children are arrested are "stupid and illogical" for sharing pictures or videos documenting violations of the occupation soldiers on social media.

She explained that children are subjected to beatings and torture from the moment of arrest, and they are deprived of communication with a lawyer, as well as completely



deprived of receiving family visits, in addition to the psychological pressure and intimidation that children are exposed to inside detention facilities and in interrogation sessions.

Al Tamimi also shed light on the suffering of the children of the Gaza Strip, which Jana described as "the largest open prison in the world", where electricity is constantly cut off, and the medical system is tattered by the occupation by targeting hospitals, or deprivation of treatment due to the lack of necessary medicines thanks to the continuous siege for more than 15 years, in addition to depriving them of the right to education and movement like the rest of the children of Palestine.

In her closing speech, Al Tamimi appealed to peoples and activists around the world to support the children of Palestine, show solidarity with them, and convey their pleas and suffering to the whole world in order to save them from the miserable life they live under the occupation.

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