

## **What are Child Soldiers?**

*"...any person below 18 years of age who is or who has been recruited or used by an armed force or armed group in any capacity, including but not limited to children, boys and girls, used as fighters, cooks, porters, messengers, spies or for sexual purposes... It does not only refer to a child who is taking or has taken a direct part in hostilities."* - UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

### **I. Palestinian Child Soldiers**

- ❖ Palestinian children are systematically abused by their leadership which indoctrinates them into living a life of violence.
- ❖ This indoctrination, and often outright coercion, occurs in all sectors of society, whether in schools, on television, or at home.

### **II. Overview of the Issues**

- ❖ While child soldier exploitations are recognised challenges in regions such as Africa, the general public lacks awareness of these same issues that occur within the Palestinian territories.
- ❖ This neglectful injustice cannot continue to go unnoticed.

### **III. It is not just Guns and Ammo**

- ❖ Tools such as knives and rock throwing are introduced to children who are forced to employ them during times of battle
- ❖ Children are deceived by irresponsible adults who sacrifice their safety when building unstable and dangerous infrastructure, including terror-tunnels, which often cave in and claim the lives of the innocent children inside.
- ❖ Children are deployed as human shields by terrorist organizations, like Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad, who purposefully place them in the vicinity of missile launching silos and ammunition storage facilities.

- ❖ Often, these terrorist organizations store their weapons of war in schools and kindergartens, hiding behind the children inside.
- ❖ It is a culture of violence which is instilled into the children from near-infancy, as kids in the Palestinians territories are born into violence and raised to antagonise.

#### **IV. The Injustice does not end when they take off the uniform**

- ❖ It is crucial to recognise that if a child is “fortunate” enough to survive these ordeals, this child naturally experiences severe psychological trauma, great difficulty in adjusting routine life, and is rarely successful in escaping their traumatic stress.
- ❖ The unforgivable individuals who recruit these child soldiers are not simply robbing them of their childhoods, but are rather robbing them of living a normal life altogether.

#### **V. What can be done to Combat this Evil**

- ❖ Sign the open letters asking public leaders to condemn these practices by Palestinian adults who use children as soldiers and resources of war.
- ❖ Visit the website to share our calls to action and materials, which is actively helping in raising awareness
- ❖ Plan your own rallies (you can use downloadable materials from the website)
- ❖ Learn about the various organisations involved in saving and rehabilitating child soldiers.
- ❖ Raise awareness of the issue to friends, family, colleagues, and representatives in government.