



concerns over the increased use of force:

death and injury of palestine refugees during Israeli law enforcement activities in the west bank in 2013

Introduction

Since the beginning of 2013, UNRWA observed a sharp increase in the number of Palestine refugees killed and injured during law enforcement activities carried out by the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Notably, refugees have been severely affected by the increase in use of force, evidenced by the large numbers of fatalities and injuries that have occurred in and around the densely populated refugee camps.

In 2013, UNRWA noted an increase in the use of live ammunition and in the improper use of measures by IDF. The trend of an increase in the use of force is illustrated by the sharp rise in fatalities and injuries caused by IDF in the West Bank in 2013 when compared to 2012.¹

- 27 Palestinian fatalities, of which over 60 per cent (17) were Palestine refugees were recorded in 2013. In contrast, no refugees were killed by IDF in 2012;
- 88 per cent of refugee fatalities were caused by live ammunition;
- Over 70 per cent of refugee fatalities occurred in or around camps;
- One UNRWA staff member was killed and two others injured by live ammunition during IDF operations in camps;
- 486 refugees were injured² in or around camps, a thirteen-fold increase from 2012 (38);
- 51 Palestine refugees were injured as a result of live ammunition in 2013. In contrast, no refugees were injured by live ammunition in 2012;
- All injuries of refugees by live ammunition occurred in or around refugee camps.

Increase in Israeli Security Forces operations in camps

Throughout 2013, UNRWA recorded an increase in activities of IDF in refugee camps throughout the West Bank. There were 470 search operations in refugee camps, a 60 per cent increase from 2012. Moreover, there were at least 418 Palestinians detained within camps in the West Bank recorded by UNRWA in 2013 compared to 351 in 2012. Such operations are often catalyst for confrontations; in 2013 UNRWA recorded 236 confrontations in refugee camps in the West Bank.

Trend	2012	2013
Refugee fatalities	0	17*
Refugee fatalities by live ammunition	0	15
Refugee injuries by live ammunition	0	51
Refugee fatalities in or around camps	0	12
Refugee injuries in or around camps	38	486

* of 27 total Palestinian fatalities

Refugees killed by Israeli Security Forces

Throughout 2012 there were no Palestine refugees killed in the West Bank by IDF. However, in 2013 there were 17 refugees killed in 14 separate incidents. Refugees account for 63 per cent of all Palestinians (27) killed in the West Bank in 2013. Over 70 per cent of refugee fatalities occurred in or around refugee camps.

There was an upsurge in the use of live ammunition by ISF as a means of crowd control in 2013. For instance, 15 of the 17 refugee fatalities (88 per cent) were caused by live ammunition; while the other two were caused by PCMB. Eleven of the twelve refugee fatalities in or around camps (92 per cent) were caused by live ammunition.

Four of the refugees killed by IDF in 2013 were children under the age of 18, nearly a quarter of all refugee fatalities. One of the refugee fatalities was an adult female.

¹ Figures on total numbers of Palestinians killed from OCHA. Data on injuries and fatalities of Palestine refugees from UNRWA Operations Support Office Programme.

² Injuries denote cases where medical treatment or intervention is required as a result of bodily harm sustained.





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Refugee labourer killed on his way to work while passing through a gap in the Separation Barrier

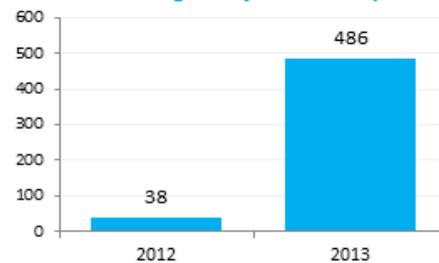
On 12 January 2013 Uday, 21 left his home in Dura village in the West Bank to go to a construction job in Israel. He would routinely enter Israel through a gap in the Barrier in Hebron, commonly used as a crossing point for non-permitted labourers. After Uday and two other labourers passed through the gap, they headed towards a car waiting on the Israeli side to take them to work.

As Uday approached the car he was shot in the back by an IDF soldier. After half an hour, an IDF ambulance arrived to transport Uday to an Israeli hospital, he subsequently died of his wounds. Uday was unarmed and no warning shots were fired. No attempt was made to apprehend or arrest him before he was shot.

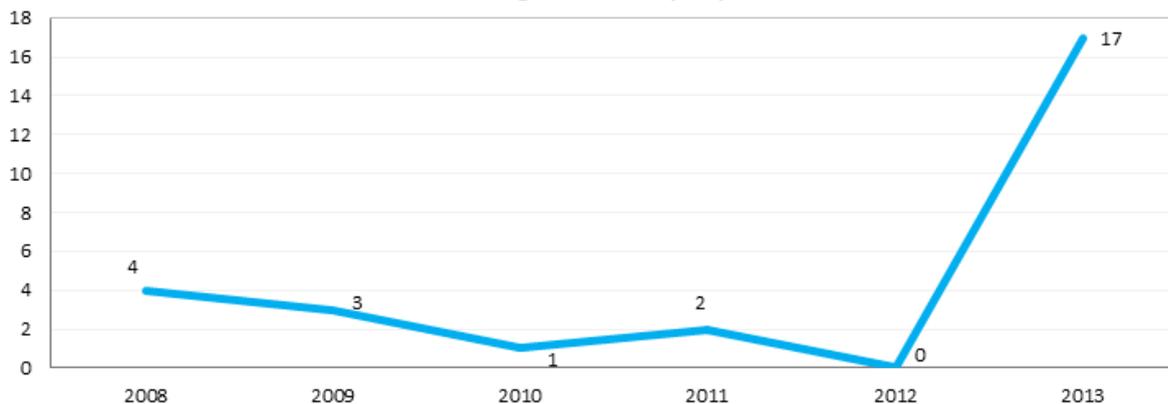
UNRWA staff members killed and injured in Kalandia camp

On 26 August 2013, IDF conducted an early morning operation in Kalandia camp, located just north of Jerusalem. During this incident, three Palestine refugees were killed by live ammunition. One of those killed was an UNRWA staff member who was walking to work at the time. Furthermore, 10 refugees were injured with live ammunition during the operation, including one other UNRWA staff member.

Refugees Injured in Camps



No. of Refugee Fatalities by ISF per Year



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Refugee boy loses eye

On 27 September 2013, 6-year-old Mussab, accompanied by his mother and 14-year old sister, was leaving Fawwar refugee camp to visit an uncle. As the family approached the exit of the camp they saw a number of IDF personnel, however the area was calm. For no apparent reason, two of the security personnel pointed their weapons in the family's direction and fired without warning.

Mussab was shot in the eye with a PCMB. His sister was hit in the knee. The IDF immediately left the scene. Both children were rushed to hospital, and Mussab had to undergo surgery to remove his eye along with the PCMB.



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Injuries of Palestine refugees by Israeli Defense Forces in camps

A sharp increase in injuries of Palestine refugees in camps has also been observed in 2013. Throughout the year, UNRWA recorded a total of 486 Palestine injuries in refugee camps by various means.³ This represents an approximate thirteen-fold increase in the number of Palestine refugees injured in 2012 (38). Twenty per cent (95) of all injuries recorded were children.

There has also been a sharp increase in injuries caused by IDF use of live ammunition in 2013. Throughout 2013 UNRWA documented 51 injuries by live ammunition, a number of which have resulted in severe injury to the victims. For example, on 21 May 2013, a 12-year-old refugee was permanently paralyzed in his lower body after a live bullet shot by IDF in Jalazone Camp hit his spinal cord. All injuries of refugees by live ammunition occurred in or around refugee camps. There were no refugees injured by live ammunition in 2012.

In addition to the UNRWA staff member injured by live ammunition in Kalandia camp on 26 August 2013, another on-duty staff member was injured by live ammunition during an IDF operation in Jenin camp less than one month later.

It should be noted that other serious injuries caused by IDF by various means, such as beating, plastic coated metal bullets (PCMB) and tear gas canisters, can also have devastating impacts on victims.

Israel's obligations under international law

The increase in the number of Palestine refugees killed and injured during IDF activities in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, gives rise to concern under international law.

As the occupying power, Israel is obliged under international humanitarian law to protect the civilian Palestinian population in the occupied Palestinian territory, including from all acts of violence. Under international human rights law, Israel is also bound to respect that "[e]very human being has the inherent right to life", and that "[n]o one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his life".

In the context of these operations, specific international standards apply with regard to the use of lethal force by officials. These include the principles of necessity and proportionality and provide that the intentional lethal use of firearms may only be made when strictly unavoidable in order to protect life.

Children, in particular, are afforded special protection under international law. Israel is obliged to "protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse".

UNRWA calls on the Israeli authorities to ensure that investigations into fatalities and serious injuries are carried out in a timely, thorough, independent and impartial manner. Individuals found responsible must be held to account and the victims or their families should receive full and fair compensation.

³ Such means include live ammunition, plastic coated metal bullets, tear gas canisters and beating.

⁴ See, for example, Geneva Convention Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, 12 August 1949, Art. 27.

⁵ International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, 16 December 1966, Art. 6(1).

⁶ UN Basic Principles on the Use of Force, and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials, (Principle 9).

⁷ 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 19 (1).



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UNRWA is a United Nations agency established by the General Assembly in 1949 and is mandated to provide assistance and protection to a population of some 5 million registered Palestine refugees. Its mission is to help Palestine refugees in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, West Bank and the Gaza Strip to achieve their full potential in human development, pending a just solution to their plight. UNRWA's services encompass education, health care, relief and social services, camp infrastructure and improvement, microfinance and emergency assistance. UNRWA is funded almost entirely by voluntary contributions.