

CONCEPT NOTE – DRAFT

Childhood in Custody: High-Level Dialogue on Palestinian Children in Military Detention

*Briefing on the margins of the 81st Session of the UN General Assembly
Tuesday 22 September, 3:00-4:15 pm*

Organized by: Save the Children International, The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, Ireland, State of Palestine

Co-sponsors: (TBC, conversations with additional Member States ongoing)

Level of attendance: Heads of State/Government, Heads of Delegation

Format: High-level dialogue and remarks from co-sponsoring Heads of State/Government

Date & time: Tuesday 22 September, 3:00-4:15

Venue: United Nations Headquarters, Conference Room 12

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Objectives

- Share the findings of Save the Children's policy brief, [“Tortured”: The Escalating Abuse of Palestinian Children in Israeli Military Detention](#), which includes data and first-hand testimony from children, caregivers, social workers and lawyers.
- Hear directly from a formerly detained child (pending appropriate safeguarding).
- Build high-level political momentum around this severely under-reported child rights crisis, building on and complimenting the Call to Action on Palestinian Children.
- Elevate the political profile of the issue and invite High-level commitment to the asks outlined below.

Background

Before the escalation of the conflict in Gaza in October 2023, the detention of Palestinian children by Israeli military authorities was already a longstanding human rights concern. An estimated 500 to 700 children from the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, were detained each year prior to October 2023, in a system widely reported to lack basic due-process protections for minors.

Detention has since risen sharply. The UN Secretary-General's most recent [report on children and armed conflict](#) verified 981 Palestinian children detained by Israeli forces in 2025, including 180 held in administrative detention without charge or trial as of 31 December 2025—with additional children transferred from Gaza and held under the “unlawful combatant” designation. As of May 2026, at least [347 Palestinian children](#) were held in Israeli military detention on security-related charges—the highest number in eight years.

[Save the Children's policy brief](#), published in 2025, builds on its 2020 and 2023 research into the impact of Israeli detention on Palestinian children. It draws on the testimony of 165 children detained between the ages of 13 and 17, together with interviews with parents, caregivers, social workers and lawyers.

Children interviewed for the report described physical, emotional and sexual abuse, humiliation and deliberate deprivation of food, and reported that treatment has deteriorated further since October 2023, amounting in many accounts to torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment.

Format

- **Welcome**— Ms Inger Ashing, CEO, Save the Children International (3 Min)
- **Keynote address** — Her Majesty Queen Rania Al Abdullah of Jordan (4-5 Min)
- **Keynote Address** — Taoiseach Micheál Martin (4-5 Min)
- **Child Testimony Video** (pending appropriate safeguarding) (3 Min)
- **UN Principal Remarks TBC** (3 Min)
- **Moderated Ministerial Dialogue by co-sponsoring states** (30 min)
- **Closing** – TBC

Key asks for action

Drawing on the report's recommendations, discussion will focus on concrete steps governments can champion, including:

- The immediate release of Palestinian children held in Israeli military detention and an end to the military detention system for children, including administrative detention without charge or trial.
- Independent investigation of all reports of torture and ill-treatment, with full and unhindered access for the UN and independent monitors.
- Accountability for perpetrators of grave violations against children, including sexual violence.
- Restoration of due-process and family/legal-access guarantees consistent with international juvenile-justice standards.
- Sustained, coordinated diplomatic engagement on this issue, including commitments to support children who have been released—psychosocial support, remedial education, and reintegration programming.
- Establishment of a working group or coalition of the willing to drive these asks forward and maintain political pressure beyond this event.

Expected outcome

A shared understanding among participating ministers of the scale and severity of the crisis, generating concrete commitments and action.

Media & Communications

The event will include a photo op with the key speakers and panelists and accompanying joint press release.

Participants

Room occupancy: 129