A Dangerous Journey:
Settler Violence Against Palestinian Schoolchildren
Under Israeli Military Escort
2006–2008

South Hebron Hills, Palestine

Some of the Children of Maghaer al-Abeed and Tuba
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A report by Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT) and Operation Dove
August 2008
“We usually start from Maghaer al-Abeed, and then to Tuba, and then to the chicken barns. And there we wait for the soldiers. There we face the settlers. The settlers try to crash into us with their cars. Settlers sometimes catch us, hit us with rocks, and knock us down. The settlers have covered faces and sticks. The soldiers drive ahead of us, the settlers run after us and throw eggs. The soldiers hurry. We ask them, ‘Slowly, please drive slowly.’ And they say no, ‘go quickly!’

Sometimes the soldiers push us and we fall down. Because of that, we drop our bags and run away. The soldiers use bad language. The soldiers who have a kippa make us run fast. When we get home we are really tired. Sometimes we have a good escort, good soldiers. They walk slowly with us.

There is a woman settler. She is a bad woman. One time she met us and she caught us and grabbed my hands and squeezed. I asked for help from the soldiers, and they never helped. The soldiers never care. They are just driving. The soldiers come late.

I have bad dreams of settlers with long hair coming with sticks. When I wake up, thank God, it isn’t real. School time is a bad time because of the settlers.”

--M., girl from Maghaer al-Abeed

“The children face beatings from settlers. Sometimes they spend all day in fear... The settlers must leave. If the settlers are here there is no safety. There is no safety; there is only fear.”

--O., father of school children

“If the army doesn’t go with my children, I am scared for them and the children are scared. The beginning was worse, but after today it seems harder than the beginning. The settlers are still beating the kids.”

--Z., mother of school children

Girl injured while running away from settlers, 2006
1.1 Introduction

During the school year, up to 25 children from the villages of Tuba and Maghaer al-Abeed, located in the South Hebron Hills of the occupied Palestinian territories (OPT), attend primary school in the village of at-Tuwani. The children walk to school, usually on a road that passes between the illegal Israeli settlement of Ma’on and the illegal settlement outpost called Hill 833 (sometimes called “Havot Ma’on” or “Ma’on Farm”). The children use this road because it is the most direct, taking them to school in 20-30 minutes. Alternative routes through the hilly landscape can take up to 75 minutes, but nevertheless are occasionally used for safety reasons. For years armed settlers have harassed and attacked the children on these routes. By the start of the 2002 school year, one-third of the school-aged children from Tuba and Maghaer al-Abeed had stopped attending school in at-Tuwani because of the harassment and attacks.

In 2002, Ta’ayush, an Israeli Jewish-Arab peace group, began visiting the children. They occasionally walked with the children and began to apply pressure on the Israeli military authorities to take action toward a definitive end to settler violence. On 27 September, 2004, a joint team comprising members of Christian Peacemaker Teams and Operation Dove (hereafter “internationals”) began accompanying the children on the short route to school. Settlers attacked these internationals and the children twice in the fall of 2004.

In response to this violence, the Israeli District Coordinating Office (DCO), the section of the army that coordinates civilian affairs in the OPT, made a verbal agreement with the mayor of at-Tuwani that the DCO would begin a daily escort of the school children along the short road from Tuba to at-Tuwani. In November, 2004, the Israeli Knesset Committee for Children’s Rights met to discuss the safety of the children from Tuba and Maghaer al-Abeed during their walk to and from school. The Committee affirmed the need for the military escort. The Committee focused on settler violence and instructed the Israeli police to take full responsibility for prosecuting settlers who used violence against the children. Member of Knesset Avshalom Vilan indicated that if no progress was soon made in these investigations, the Committee would arrange a meeting with the Commander of the Central Command.

The twice-daily escort of the children, in addition to prosecution of violent settlers, should safeguard the children’s rights to safety and education as ensured by multiple international agreements and by Israeli law. However, the Israeli police rarely apprehend or prosecute any of

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1 All Israeli settlements and outposts in the OPT are illegal under international law. Settlements are authorized by the Israeli government but the outposts are not
3 Notes from the Committee meeting indicate that the Committee suggested that the police detain the 10 settlers of Hill 833 and investigate until the culprit of violence on children was found.
4 According to Geneva Conventions, the occupying power bears the responsibility to ensure the safety and the basic needs of those under its jurisdiction. The Israeli High Court has confirmed applicable international law regarding the responsibility of the occupying power to ensure safety and basic rights.


Article 6: States Parties recognize that every child has the inherent right to life. States Parties shall ensure to the maximum extent possible the survival and development of the child.

Article 28: States Parties recognize the right of the child to education.

Article 38: States Parties undertake to respect and to ensure respect for rules of international humanitarian law applicable to them in armed conflicts which are relevant to the child. In accordance with their obligations under international humanitarian law to protect the civilian population in armed conflicts, States Parties shall take all feasible measures to ensure protection and care of children who are affected by an armed conflict.
these settlers. Even with the daily military escort, the children are frequently **victims of violence by settlers** and even the soldiers charged to protect them.

In 2006 a group of influential Israeli intellectuals wrote a letter to Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert demanding that the children’s safety be ensured and the settlers be held responsible for their criminal actions:

"Beyond the shame inherent in the very necessity of providing a military escort for children and the [State’s] helplessness in the face of the assailants, it appears that the escort in its present format cannot protect the children ... A situation in which elementary school children are exposed to attacks from lawbreakers without adequate protection is insufferable. The right to obtain an education is a basic human right, and ensuring its full realization is the responsibility of the State of Israel. We demand that the IDF be instructed to provide the village children with full and adequate protection that will ensure that they get to and from school safely. We call on the authorities to deal with the rioters, the residents of Ma’on and the Ma’on Farm outpost, with the full force of the law, and not to stand in the way of the activists who are assisting the village children".

Furthermore, on 30 May 2006, the Israeli DCO issued demolition orders for 18 illegally built structures inside the Hill 833 outpost. Defense Minister Amir Peretz stated that this action was a direct response to repeated attacks by Hill 833 inhabitants against Palestinian school children. Peretz stated: “We are talking about a very serious trend, one that has no place in Israeli society. We will not permit lawbreakers to continue to target helpless children and everything will be done to bring an end to such incidents.”

Nearly four years later, Israeli authorities have not apprehended any settlers who **used violence against the children**, nor have they evacuated or demolished any buildings in the outpost. The children from Tuba and Maghaer al-Abeed, however, still depend on a twice-daily military escort to reach school and return safely.

### 1.2 This Report

This report describes the children’s daily journey to and from school in at-Tuwani. It highlights infringements on the children’s rights to safety and education. The data demonstrate the Israeli military’s negligence of its Knesset-affirmed mandate to ensure the children’s safe passage. The report includes quantitative data illustrating the military’s level of performance, in addition to personal narratives spotlighting violations of the children’s **rights to safety** and education.

Data in this report were collected during the 2007-08 school year, and includes details of the 2006-07 school year for comparison. This report supersedes the previous report of the 2005-2006 school year.

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For more information on the right to education see: http://right2edu.birzeit.edu/news/article99, Everyone has the Right to Education, Article 26, Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 7 April 2004.

5 Haaretz, *Authors urge PM to protect West Bank kids from Maon settlers*, Amos Harel, November 5, 2006

6 Haaretz, *Next outpost targeted for demolition: Maon Farm*, Amos Harel, May 31 2006

7 IsraeliNN.com, *Peretz: We Will Not Permit Attacks Against Arabs in Maon Farm Area*, May 11, 2006

8 Since winter 2004 internationals have monitored the military escort of the children, recording information including: absence of the escort, tardiness, number of soldiers walking, aberrations in the escort, soldier violence, settler violence, etc. A copy of the 2005-6 School Report can be found at www.cpt.org/files/CPT_OD_2005_2006_school_patrol_report.pdf
2. School Year 2007-08 – Highlighted Events

During the 2007-08 school year\(^9\), settlers used violence on 14 occasions against the children of Tuba and Maghaer al Abeed during the school escort. In each of these 14 cases settlers shouted, threatened, or chased the children. In one of these cases, settlers also threw stones at the children, and in another case a settler exposed his buttocks to the children.

Soldiers pushed a child on one occasion and yelled at the children on at least two occasions. In six cases, soldiers forced the children to run. In the mornings, because of late military escorts, the children were late to school 38.7% of the mornings, and missed a total of 1519 minutes of classes (25.32 hours).

The military escort was also complacent toward settler harassment. Most notably, when settlers built a new gate on the children’s path in early 2008, soldiers began stopping before this gate, further endangering the children by leaving them to walk unaccompanied along part of the road. Settler harassment and attacks on the children were particularly frequent and severe in this area. Furthermore, the gate increased the children’s wait for the escort, as the children cannot see the escort vehicle from their designated waiting place near Tuba.

The army continuously violated their agreement to escort the children in the following ways:

- Soldiers rode in the vehicle and refused to walk with the children.
- The escort often failed to use the shortest route (2.5 km).
- The escort rarely stayed with the children through the entire designated route.
- The military escort soldiers regularly told internationals that the above aberrations were the result of unclear directions about where, when, and how to escort the children.

\(^9\) This report uses information gathered during the school year by Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT) and Operation Dove. For the 2007-08 school year, a total of 329 cases were recorded. A case is defined as a situation where Tuba and Maghaer al-Abbeed children walked from their villages to the at-Tuwani primary school or from the school to their villages. These include school days when the Israeli military failed to provide an escort.
3. The School Year 2007-08  
(2 September 2007 through 5 June 2008)

During the 2007-08 school year the average number of Tuba and Maghaer al-Abeed children going to and from school each day with the military escort was 14 (minimum of 4, maximum of 23). In 90.8% of the children’s trips to and from school, the children were escorted by the military (314 out of 329 cases). In 10 cases the Israeli military either did not arrive for the escort or arrived so late that the children had already taken an alternative route. Of these 10 cases, the children walked alone eight times, were accompanied by internationals once, and were accompanied by an adult relative from their villages once. In all 10 cases, the children (and their accompanier when present) were not able to use the short path, but instead took a longer path. Along this path, children are still vulnerable to settlers, who have attacked them and their parents here dozens of times in the past.

3.1 Children’s safety during their walk to and from school

Settler Violence

Settlers used violence against the children 14 times during the school escort. In all 14 cases settlers yelled, threatened, or chased the children. Here are some detailed descriptions:

![Nationalist–religious settlers from Hill 833]

Thursday, 3 January, 2008: At 11.00 am the children were waiting for the military escort. A group of settlers with horses gathered at the top of the hill, along the short path. Internationals called the military escort office twice. At 11.50 pm the military escort arrived and began to escort the children. As the children neared the settlers, both settlers and the children yelled at one another. No soldiers were walking with the children. Teenage settlers began throwing stones at the children. An adult settler near the tree line of Hill 833 eventually told the teenage settlers to stop. A white settler truck then followed the children and military escort.

Tuesday, 18 March, 2008: During the afternoon escort, a settler was in the field to the left of the road. He had wrapped his face in a cloth and was carrying a large stick. He bent down several times to pick up things off the ground. He yelled at the children as they passed. He also made noises as though herding sheep. A soldier got out of the military escort jeep and walked with the children the rest of the way up the hill.
Saturday, 29 March, 2008: At 12.47 pm the military escort and the children began the walk toward Tuba. One adult settler and three older settler boys followed the children and the escort. The adult exposed his buttocks to the children (and the internationals present). Four other settlers came down the hill from Ma’on to join them, following the children. One settler tried to enter the military escort jeep. The settlers followed the jeep and children up the road, harassing them.

Soldier Violence

Soldiers pushed a child on one occasion and shouted at the children on at least two occasions. In six cases, soldiers forced the children to run. Here is one description:

Sunday, 6 April, 2008: During the after-school escort, internationals heard the military jeep’s horn sounding and soldiers shouting at children to hurry. Two soldiers got out of the jeep and ran up the hill after the children. One of the soldiers pushed a child, who fell and injured his arm.

3.2 Children wait for military escort to and from at-Tuwani and are late for school

Children were late to school on 38.7% of the mornings, and missed a total of 1519 minutes of classes (25.32 hours).

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Number of Cases</th>
<th>Percentage of Total Cases</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
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<td>0 to 5</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>61.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>6 to 15</td>
<td>28</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>100.0</td>
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</tbody>
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In the 45.9% of the cases after school, the children had to wait for the military escort. They waited a total of 2516 minutes (42.27 hours) for the military to arrive and escort them home.

<table>
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<th>Minutes Late</th>
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<th>Percentage of Total Cases</th>
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<td>.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>157</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Summary
Total time late for school = 25.32 hours
Total time children wait for after school patrol = 42.17 hours
Total = 67.49 hours

The above figures take into consideration only the children’s lateness at school, not their total time waiting for the escort to arrive. The children often wait for the morning escort from 7am onward. Therefore, the total time spent waiting is actually greater than indicated above.

When children were ready to go to school or home, but soldiers were tardy, the internationals made calls to the military office responsible for dispatching the military escort. **Internationals made phone calls in 31.7% of the total cases (103 cases).** They often called more than once because the escort vehicle did not appear within a reasonable time from the first call. **In total, internationals made 229 phone calls.**

Despite the Israeli army’s awareness of school starting and ending times, in eight cases the children walked to or from school without the escort. In seven of these eight cases the escort never came. In one case the escort arrived 45 minutes after the start of school, by which time the children were already walking unaccompanied on a longer path. Below is a description of children the having to walk unaccompanied:

*On 29 October, 2007, children were waiting for the military escort at 7.10 am. Internationals called the military at 7.40 am, 7.50 am, and several other times. Finally at 8.45 the military escort arrived. However, the children had tired of waiting for the escort; four went home and five were seen taking the long path to school.*

The army’s tardiness not only caused the children to miss classes, but also left the children at increased risk of settler harassment and attack.

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10 These are phone calls by members of CPT and Operation Dove. Additional calls were made by members of Israeli human rights organizations.
3.3 Other Military Escort Violations

In contravention of the agreement between the DCO and the at-Tuwani mayor, Israeli soldiers did not walk with the children during the escort in 82.4% of the cases (271 times). The soldiers walked in 11.2% cases (37 times), although in eight of these cases they walked only part of the way.

In conversations between internationals and soldiers responsible for the escort, soldiers claimed their orders did not entail walking with the children. On several occasions, soldiers claimed they had explicit orders not to walk with the children.

Chart 1: Soldiers Walking or Not Walking with Children

In 94 cases (of 111 recorded cases) the Israeli military did not complete the escort, meaning they failed to accompany the children along the entirety of the agreed route, between the at-Tuwani end of the path and the east end of the Israeli settlers’ chicken barns near Tuba.

In 92 of these cases the escort stopped at a road junction uphill from the west end of the older settler-owned chicken barns near the Hill 833 outpost. This junction is approximately 500 meters from the far end of the newest settler-owned chicken barns (built in 2006), which is the agreed meeting point. Any meeting point farther west (closer to Ma’on Settlement and Hill 833) leaves the children vulnerable to attack by settlers present in and around the barns. The hilly terrain also impedes the children’s ability to see approaching settlers.

In late February, 2008, internationals began to notice that the military escort vehicle was no longer being driven along the length of the chicken barns to the agreed meeting point near Tuba. Internationals later discovered that settlers had placed a new gate near the west end of the newer chicken barns, across the road formerly used by the escort. The gate is normally closed. After the settlers built it, soldiers regularly stopped there, or at the junction farther uphill.

The gate presents another impediment to the escort, and increases the military’s negligence to accompany the children along the entire agreed route, thereby leaving them unaccompanied in a highly dangerous area.

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11 Of the 111 cases in which internationals recorded this data. These data were recorded only beginning in late winter 2008 when internationals noticed changes in the military escort route.
Below are detailed descriptions of the army’s failure to complete the escort fully:

**Monday, 17 March, 2008:** During the morning escort, the military did not come past the gate. Internationals called the army dispatcher four times to tell them that the children were waiting and the escort must come to the Tuba end of the barns. The jeep was parked near the trees of the Hill 833 outpost. The children waited and several of them walked ahead to see if the jeep had come any closer. Finally, around 8.40 am, internationals observed the children walking along the longer path. The children recounted that when they went to the barns they were unable to approach because a settler was standing near the jeep, talking with the soldiers. The settler shouted at them and threatened them with a rock. Four of the children turned back and missed school for the day. The others took the long path to at-Tuwani.

A member of an Israeli human rights organization said she had been on the phone with the Israeli army since 7.30 am, trying to get the escort to meet the children. The army was unresponsive.
4. The School Year 2006-07
8 November, 2006, until 4 June, 2007

During the 2006-07 school year, an average of 18 children from Tuba and Maghaer al-Abeed walked to school each day with the military escort (a minimum of five children, a maximum of 22). In 94.5% of the children’s trips to and from school, the children were escorted by the Israeli military (241 of 255 cases). In two cases the army either did not arrive for the escort or arrived so late that the children had already left via an alternative route. Below is a detailed description of the army escort arriving late:

Monday, 27 November, 2006: At 8.30 am the army dispatcher told a member of CPT that the army jeep had already gone to Tuba, but that the children weren’t there. At 9.30 am settlers chased the children from the chicken barns to Tuba. The children did not go to school. At 10.05 am soldiers told members of CPT (who by then were near Tuba), that the children had not been there earlier.

Children and military escort at settler chicken barns near Tuba, 2007

4.1 Children’s safety during their walk to and from school
12 documented cases of violence against the children

Settler Violence

Settlers used violence against the children on at least 10 occasions during the school escort, shouting, threatening or chasing the children. At least twice, settlers threw stones at them. Six times children were injured when running away from settlers who were chasing them. One child required surgery for a bone infection, the result of an injury received when she fell while running away from settlers. Below are detailed descriptions of settler violence against the children:

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12 The 2006-07 school year consisted of 124 days of school. The children missed 49 days because of a Palestinian teachers’ strike. The strikes were initiated because the Palestinian Authority was not paying the teachers. The PA stated they did not have adequate funds because the Israeli government was withholding tax revenues and because the US and EU were freezing funding for the new Palestinian government since Hamas’ electoral victory.

13 12 cases of missing data.
Saturday, 11 November, 2006: After school, children waited with internationals for the military escort to arrive. Internationals reported that a military jeep was between at-Tuwani and Tuba, preventing Palestinian farmers from plowing their fields.

Starting at 12.55 pm, internationals and members of Israeli human rights groups began to call the army. At 1.50 pm the escort finally arrived and the children began walking home with the soldiers. At 2.00 pm one father of the children called to say that settlers were in Tuba.

Internationals communicated this information to Israeli activists who then told the Israeli police and army. Internationals also gave this information to an Israeli military officer near them. The officer said that the situation was under control because another military jeep was near Tuba.

At 2.05 pm the children ran toward Tuba in front of the new chicken barn. Settlers ambushed them. The children ran away and several dropped their backpacks on the ground. Later, soldiers picked up the bags (Israeli activists contacted them and asked them to do so). Soldiers delivered the bags to a resident of at-Tuwani. An officer later called the mayor of at-Tuwani and promised that the military escort would pick up the Tuba children tomorrow.

The following morning, one soldier walking with the military escort told internationals that he received unclear orders and nobody told the soldiers that they should wait for the children at the Tuba end of the chicken barns. The soldier also said that he would be present for the after-school patrol today, but that tomorrow there would be different soldiers.

Monday, 27 November, 2006: Members of CPT began phoning the military dispatcher at 7.20 am (the children were already waiting for the escort). At one point, a woman from the office told them that the escort soldiers had already been to the meeting point, but didn’t see the children, so they left. At 9.20 am the escort had not yet arrived. Shortly thereafter, the internationals saw a settler security truck by the chicken barns. About five minutes later, they saw at least three settlers heading toward the chicken barns. A few minutes after that, the internationals watched the children running toward Tuba. The children’s father reported that settlers had chased the children. They did not go to school. Members of the Israeli army later told internationals that the soldiers had not been told to perform an escort at all.

Tuesday, 20 March, 2007: At 1.50 pm a settler chased the children near the chicken barn. One child fell down and injured himself while running away.

Saturday, 7 April, 2007: After the military escort left the children at the chicken barns, settlers attacked the children. Settlers stole two children’s backpacks. Three children were injured when they fell while running away. On Wednesday, 11 April, the children went to the Kiryat Arba police station to file a complaint against the settlers who attacked them on 7 April.

**Soldier Violence**

Soldiers used violence against children on three occasions. In 2 cases soldiers yelled at and/or threatened the children. One time soldiers threw stones at the children. One time a soldier hit a child. Detailed descriptions of army violence against the children are as follows:

Saturday, 18 November, 2006: At 1.30 pm the military escort and the children left toward Tuba. At the chicken barns, the children began to run. Children later told members of CPT that settlers had shouted at them and thrown a rock. One soldier hit a child.
Monday, 4 December, 2006: At 7.17 am the military escort jeep and children arrived at the gate near at-Tuwani. The children were running fast because the soldiers pressured them by sounding the horn. The children arrived exhausted and complained that the soldiers forced them to run. Two girls said the soldiers called them “sharmuta” (which means “prostitute” in Arabic).

4.2 Children are late for school, Children wait for military escort home

The children were late to school 10.7% of the mornings. The children missed a total of 628 minutes of classes (10.47 hours).

In the 29.8% of the cases after school, the children had to wait for the escort. The children waited a total of 2172 minutes (36.2 hours) for the military escort to arrive and take them home.

Summary
Total time late for school = 10.47 hours
Total time children wait for after school patrol = 36.20 hours
Total = 46.67 hours

4.3 Other Military Escort Violations

Israeli soldiers did not walk with the children during the escort in 55.3% of the cases (141 times). This means soldiers walked only 85 times (33.3%). (26 cases of missing data.)

In 2006-07 internationals did not collect data regarding completed patrols.

5. School Years 2006-07 and 2007-08 Compared

During the 2007-08 school year, the children were victims of four more incidents of violence. When the strike-shortened 2006-07 school year is considered, this means that there has been no decrease in the level of violence in the past two years. The children also missed more hours of class, even after taken into consideration the strike shortened school year. They also waited longer for the military after school escort than in the 2006-07 school year.

2007-08 school year: 16 documented cases of violence against the children
2006-07 school year: 12 documented cases of violence against the children

2007-08 school year: In 82.4% of cases soldiers did not walk with children
2006-07 school year: In 55.3% of cases soldiers did not walk with children

2007-08 school year: 1519 minutes of missed classes (25.32 hours)
2006-07 school year: 628 minutes of missed classes (10.47 hours)
2006-07 school year, total number of cases: 13
2007-08 school year, total number of cases: 63
(Graph does not include cases of 0-5 minutes late.)

2007-08 school year: **2516 minutes** children waited for after school escort (42.27 hours)
2006-07 school year: **2172 minutes** children waited for after school escort (36.20 hours)

2006-07 school year, total number of cases: 34
2007-08 school year, total number of cases: 72
6. Conclusions

Nearly four years after the Israeli military’s agreement to provide an escort, and the affirmation of this agreement by the Knesset Committee for Children’s Rights, the situation of the children of Tuba and Maghaer al-Abeed has worsened. The children continue to be harassed and attacked by Israeli settlers and soldiers during their travel to and from school. The Israeli military, which was given a mandate to ensure the safety of the children, has consistently failed to do so.

Military and settler violence and police and military complacency all contribute to the violation of the rights of the children, including rights to security, safety, and education. In addition to missing school classes due to the tardiness of the Israeli military, the children also suffer from nightmares about violent attacks and often express fear about their safety. Moreover, despite ongoing settler attacks on the children, the Israeli police have failed to prosecute settlers who use violence against children.

During the preparation of this report, the children’s 2008 summer camp was taking place. During the first ten days of summer camp, settlers attacked the children four times. On Sunday, 27 July, 2008, several settlers chased the children and threw rocks at them. One settler attacked a member of CPT, causing head injuries requiring hospital treatment. After this incident, one mother of the children said, “The beginning was worse, but after today it seems harder than the beginning. The settlers are still beating the kids.” This incident further demonstrates the fact that almost four years later, the involvement of the Israeli police, military and Knesset has not improved the children’s safety.

In order to ensure the rights of the children, the Israeli government must fulfill its obligation to evacuate the illegal settlement outpost of Hill 833. As long as the outpost remains, the children will remain under threat of attack. Even if the Israeli military begins to escort the children in a safe and timely matter, the children will remain exposed to the outpost’s violent residents. Allowing violent people to continue to live in an illegal residence, perpetrating crimes against children, is intolerable.
7.1 Appendix: The shortest road from Tuba to at-Tuwani

The initial agreement between the Israeli DCO and the mayor of at-Tuwani was that the children and the military escort should use the shortest route to reach the school in at-Tuwani (about 2.5 km).

The shortest route for the children is a road that passes between the Israeli settlement of Ma’on and the illegal outpost of Hill 833 (the tree-covered hill historically named Tel Abu Jundiya). For decades Palestinians used this road to travel not only to at-Tuwani, but also to the nearby city of Yatta, the main economic hub for the region and the location of critical services such as hospitals, secondary schools and public administration offices. This short road is a vital passageway for those travelling by foot or by donkey, as well as tractors and cars transporting goods and people between Yatta and the villages of Msafer Yatta.

In 1982 the settlement of Ma’on was built on one side of this short road and in 2001 the illegal outpost of Hill 833 was built on the other side of the road. In the late 1990s, Palestinians using this road (and other land nearby) increasingly came under attack from violent settlers. Settler violence eventually became so intense that Palestinians were effectively forbidden from using their roads and lands. By 2003 Palestinians stopped using the short road completely. Alternative routes by foot or donkey are at least four times as long as the short road. Tractors and other vehicles are forced to take routes up to ten times longer than the short road. These distances further exacerbate the rising cost of transporting essential supplies such as water, in addition to restricting access to education, health care and other essential services. The long-term survival of communities like Tuba and Maghaer al-Abeed depends upon this road.

Presently the Palestinian lands on which the short road was built are being resurveyed by the Israeli authorities. The land of the road itself is owned by several different Palestinian families. The Israeli Land Administration (a department of the DCO) identifies parts of the road as belonging to the municipality of Ma’on, some as Israeli state land (but not inside Ma’on municipality boundaries), and other parts as private Palestinian land. For more than 10 years, settlers have used violence, land expropriation and illegal development as tactics to increase their land claims. Israeli authorities have prevented Palestinians from working this land by allowing settlers to harass and attack them, by repeatedly declaring the area a closed military zone, and by using obscure Israeli laws to “legally” expropriate some of the land. Further Israeli restrictions upon Palestinians’ land use will force families to leave their homes.
7.2 Appendix: Children’s Route to School


- Yellow Path: children walk unescorted
- Red Path: area where children have been walking unescorted because of military escort noncompliance and settler gate
- Blue Path: area where military escort accompanies the children
- Green Path: longer, alternative path children take when there is no military escort

1. Place where military escort should meet the children (west end of new chicken barns)
2. Old chicken barns
3. Black Point: New closed settler gate
   White Point: Junction where military escort often stops (either to wait for the children in the morning, or to end the escort after school)
4. Settler Gate (built in 2006, now always left open) where the military escort leave/meet the children near at-Tuwani
5. At-Tuwani primary school
7.3 Appendix: Maps of the Area

South Hebron Hills, courtesy www.ochaopt.org.

The area of at-Tuwani, Tuba, Maghaer al-Abeed, courtesy www.ochaopt.org.

For additional information:
http://www.cpt.org
http://www.tuwani.org