

community peacemaker teams
PALESTINE

SPRING SEMESTER REPORT

Semester School
Report
January - June 2023

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مدرسة الفيحاء
Al-Faihaa School

البنات



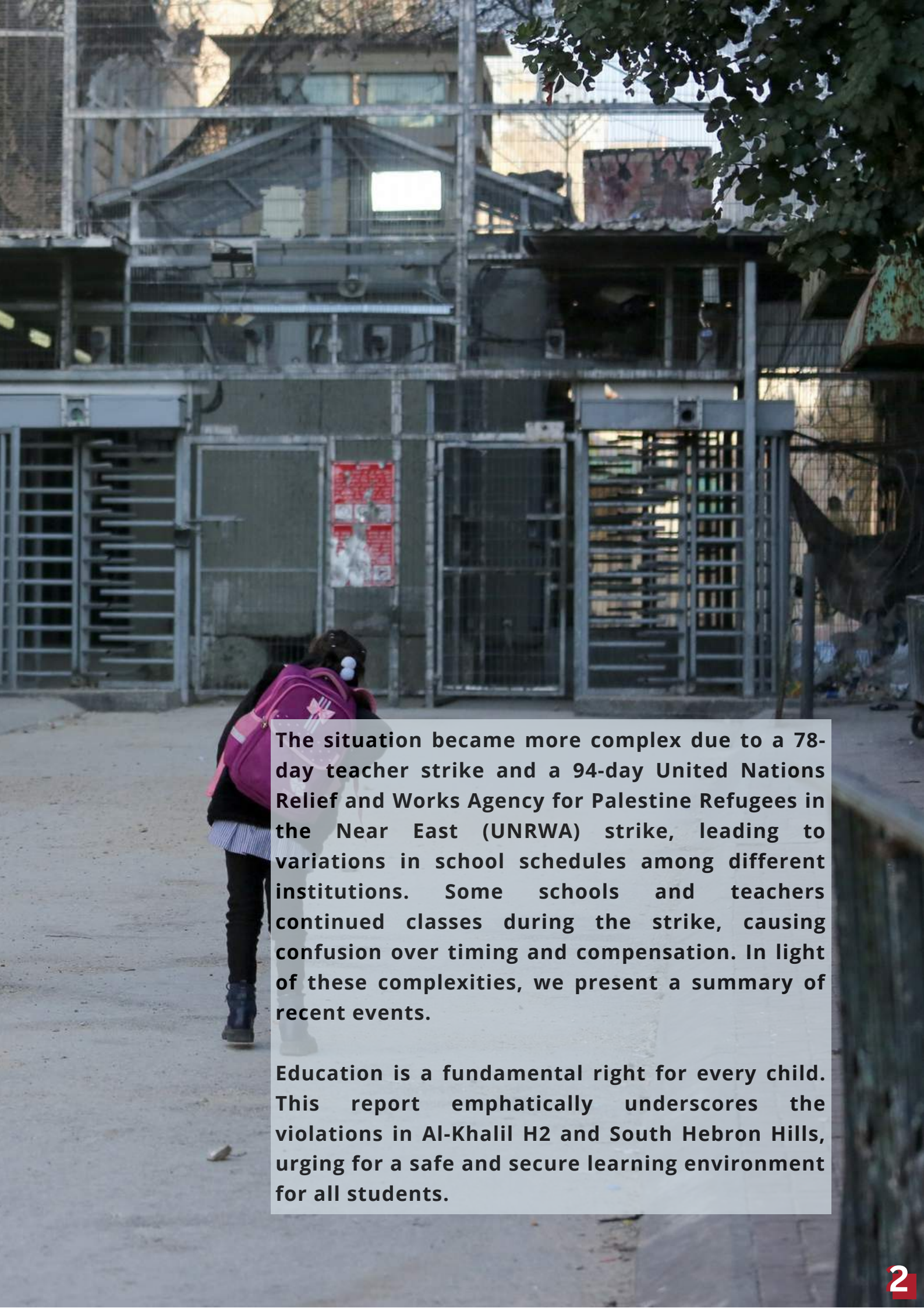
OVERVIEW

Community Peacemaker Teams (CPT) Palestine's accompaniment of students in Al-Khalil/Hebron H2 saw a distressing escalation of Israeli military violence against schoolchildren during the winter semester. The use of tear gas and sound grenades targeting children and other Palestinian civilians was frequent and unprovoked, severely hindering learning. Students in Masafer Yatta/South Hebron Hills have also experienced increased violence from Israeli occupation soldiers and Israeli settlers which has hindered their access to education, as reported by CPT's regular visits to the region.

Alarming data from the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) reveals the presence of approximately 20 Israeli military checkpoints, 8 partial checkpoints, 40 roadblocks, 8 road gates, and 45 other obstacles within H2 in Hebron. CPT, working alongside partners like the World Council of Church's Ecumenical Accompaniment Program in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI), diligently documented violations such as bag searches, child detentions, and the use of force against school students. Throughout the second semester in 2023, we closely monitored Qitoun(209) and al-Salaymeh (160) checkpoints.

Moreover, during the most recent period of CPT school accompaniment, violence against students was exacerbated by the involvement of two particular Israeli infantry brigades in the military occupation of H2. From the end of January until the beginning of March, the Golani Brigade's 51st Battalion was the primary military force occupying the H2 area. Subsequently, the Paratrooper Brigade's 890th Battalion was deployed there, followed by the Nahal Brigade's 932nd Battalion during the summer.



A young girl with dark hair, wearing a black jacket and a pink backpack, is walking away from the camera towards a metal gate. The gate is part of a larger structure made of metal frames and glass panels. Behind the gate, there is a multi-story building with many windows. Some windows are dark, while others are bright. There are some plants and trees visible on the right side of the image. The overall scene appears to be an entrance to a school or a similar institution.

The situation became more complex due to a 78-day teacher strike and a 94-day United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) strike, leading to variations in school schedules among different institutions. Some schools and teachers continued classes during the strike, causing confusion over timing and compensation. In light of these complexities, we present a summary of recent events.

Education is a fundamental right for every child. This report emphatically underscores the violations in Al-Khalil H2 and South Hebron Hills, urging for a safe and secure learning environment for all students.



The First Period: The Beginning of the Semester

The spring semester, beginning on 23 January, brought chilling temperatures but the determination of the schoolchildren remained unwavering despite the hardships imposed upon them. Unfortunately, Israeli soldiers continued to repeatedly close checkpoints essential for reaching the area's schools, causing immense inconvenience for children and teachers traveling to and from school.

During the initial two months preceding the strike, the checkpoints, especially al-Salaymeh (160) and Qortoba (55), were routinely shut down by soldiers. Ostensibly, the reason provided was to administer collective punishment when children threw stones at the checkpoints. In reality, many closures occurred without any justifiable cause. The severity of these measures



was felt acutely by those forced to pass through the 55 checkpoint, where even teachers were denied entry. Furthermore, at the 209 checkpoint, individuals experienced delays and ID checks. Men were subjected to particular scrutiny and harassment when passing through checkpoints.

Numerous people, including many children, were detained and stopped at these checkpoints during this time. One heart-wrenching incident involved the detention of a 17-year-old child on 12 February where the boy's father was forced to wait outside the checkpoint, forbidden from speaking to his son. Similarly, on 17 February, two people were arbitrarily apprehended at the Bab al-Zawiyeh checkpoint (56), with significant uncertainty about when they would be released and little communication from the soldiers involved with those trying to ascertain the detainees' condition.



In addition to detentions, soldiers have frequently resorted to the use of tear gas and stun grenades against children and school buildings. The situation reached a shocking low point on 27 April when four tear gas canisters were fired at children gathering outside their school buildings, resulting in the burning of a Palestinian car near the school premises.

Such actions by the soldiers only exacerbate tensions and sow animosity in an already exceptionally volatile environment.

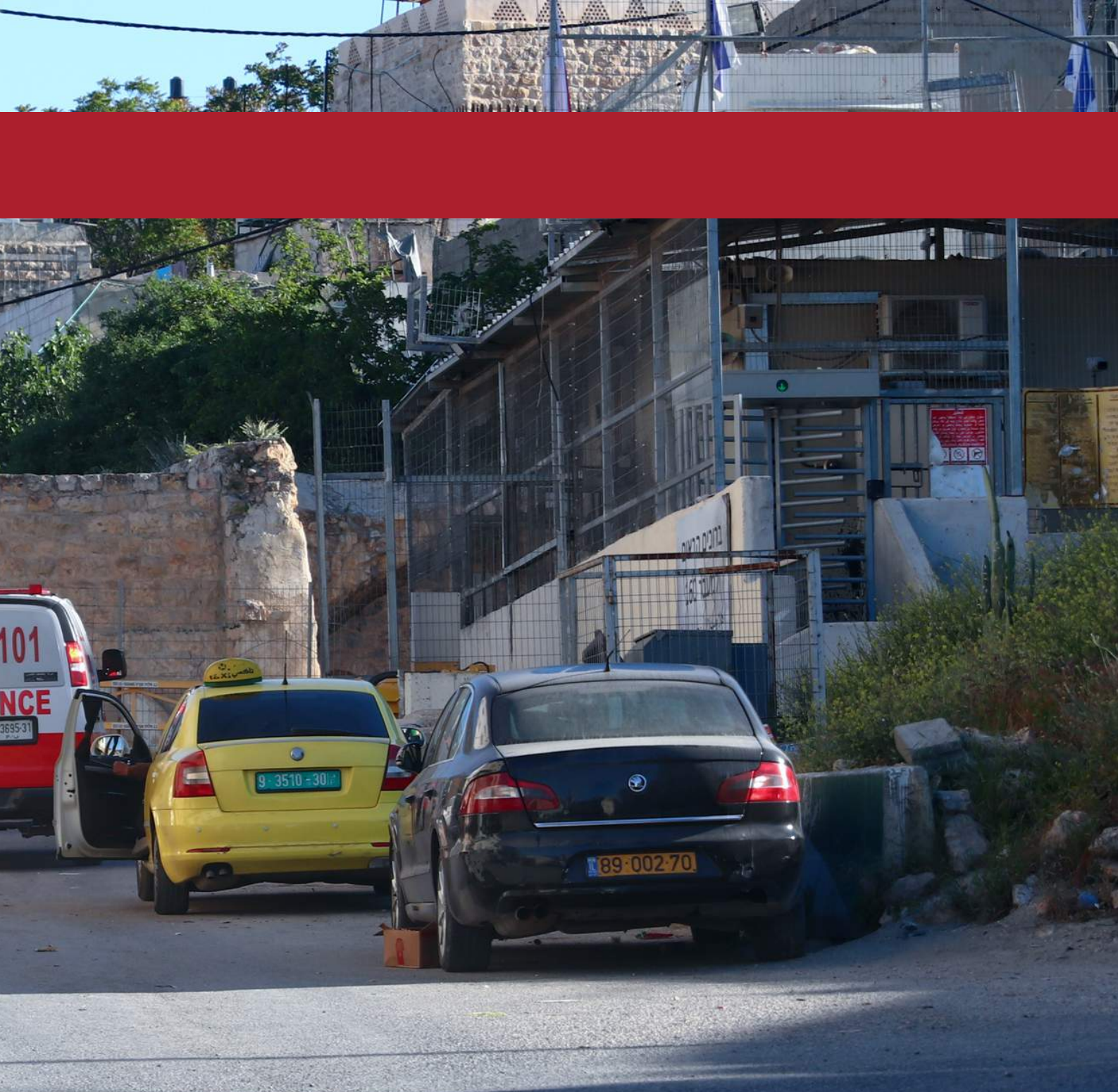
Strike Period

In Palestine, a new teachers' union launched a strike on 5 February during the second semester of the school year. This strike was a result of the Palestinian Authority's failure to fulfill its [promise](#) of providing a cost of living allowance to teachers. The strike was partial, with teachers giving only three classes before allowing students to return home. However, not all teachers participated in the strike, leading to some schools having full school days while others had none. Since the union was newly formed, there was no unified agreement on strike strategies. This led to a disjointed and uneven school schedule for Palestinian Hebronite children.

Simultaneously, UNRWA local staff in the West Bank also initiated a strike. This strike lasted for four months, starting on 4 March. The staff members demanded better pay for all the employees, as [UNRWA](#) had accumulated a debt of \$75 million and anticipated further financial challenges this year.

Finally, after lengthy discussions between UNRWA, the United Arab Workers Union, and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), the strike was [suspended](#) on 6 June. The agreement aimed to address salary policies and the organization's budget.





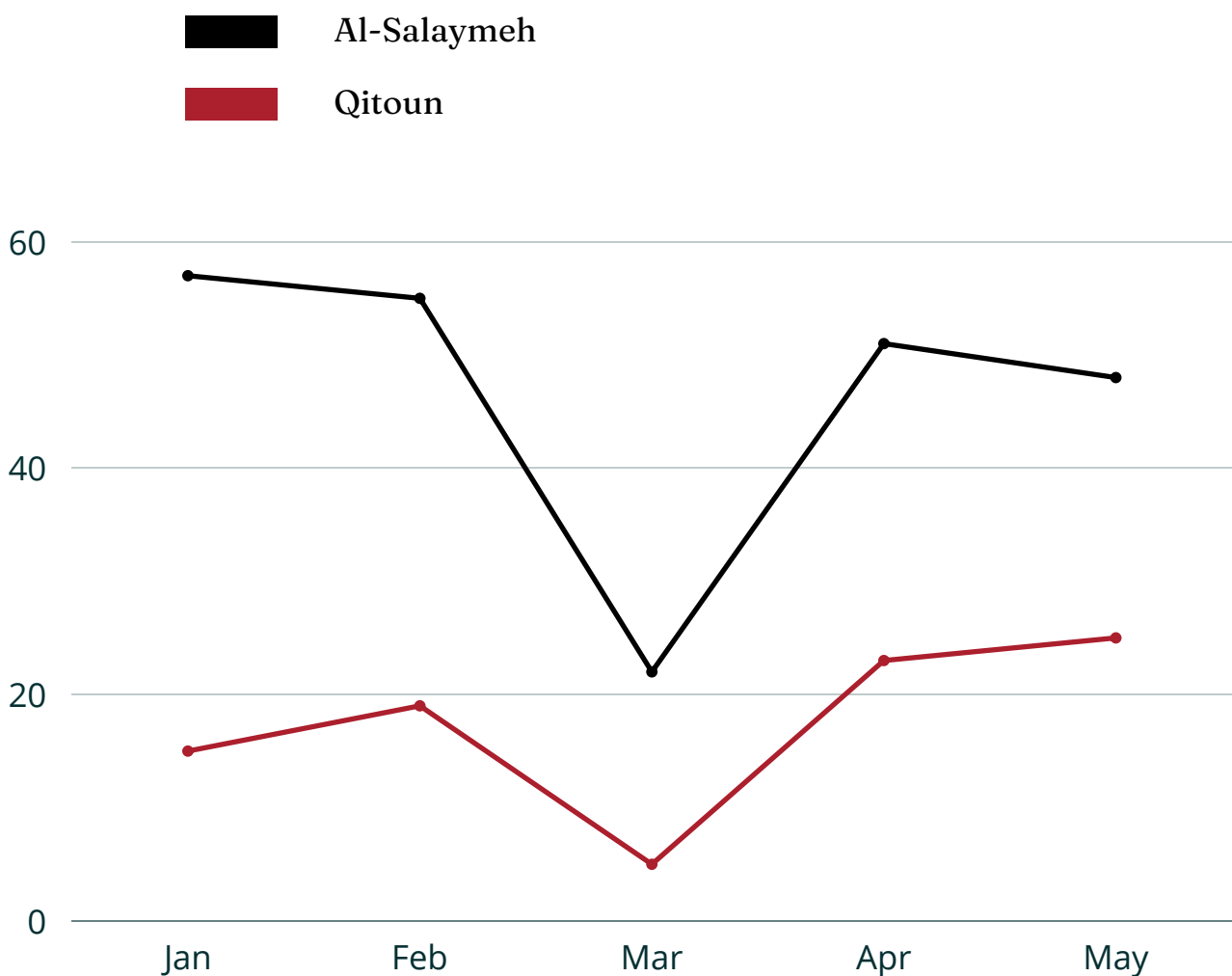
Unfortunately, these strikes have adversely affected students, as they did not receive all the necessary materials for studying and learning. It is hoped that the upcoming school year will be free from strikes and that teachers' rights will be respected and fulfilled.

statistics

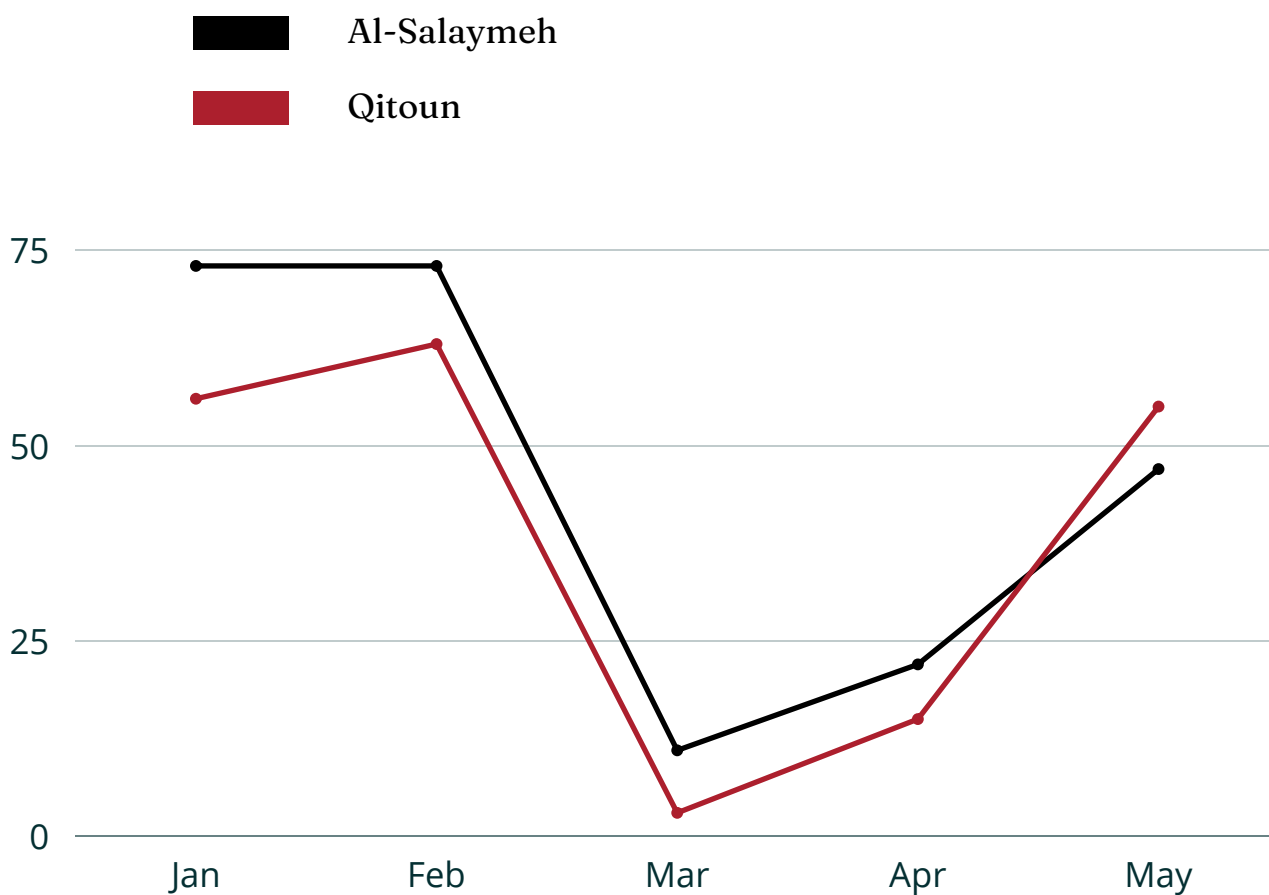
The following data was collected by CPT while monitoring the Salaymeh (160) and Qitoun (209) checkpoints from the start of school (7:00 - 08:00 am) to the end of school (12:00 - 2:00 pm).

These statistics aim to explore the impact of illegal Israeli checkpoints on children and teachers who pass through them daily. The data will cover each occupying brigade's attitude at the checkpoint, and shed light on the most common type of violence that said brigade employs toward schools and children.

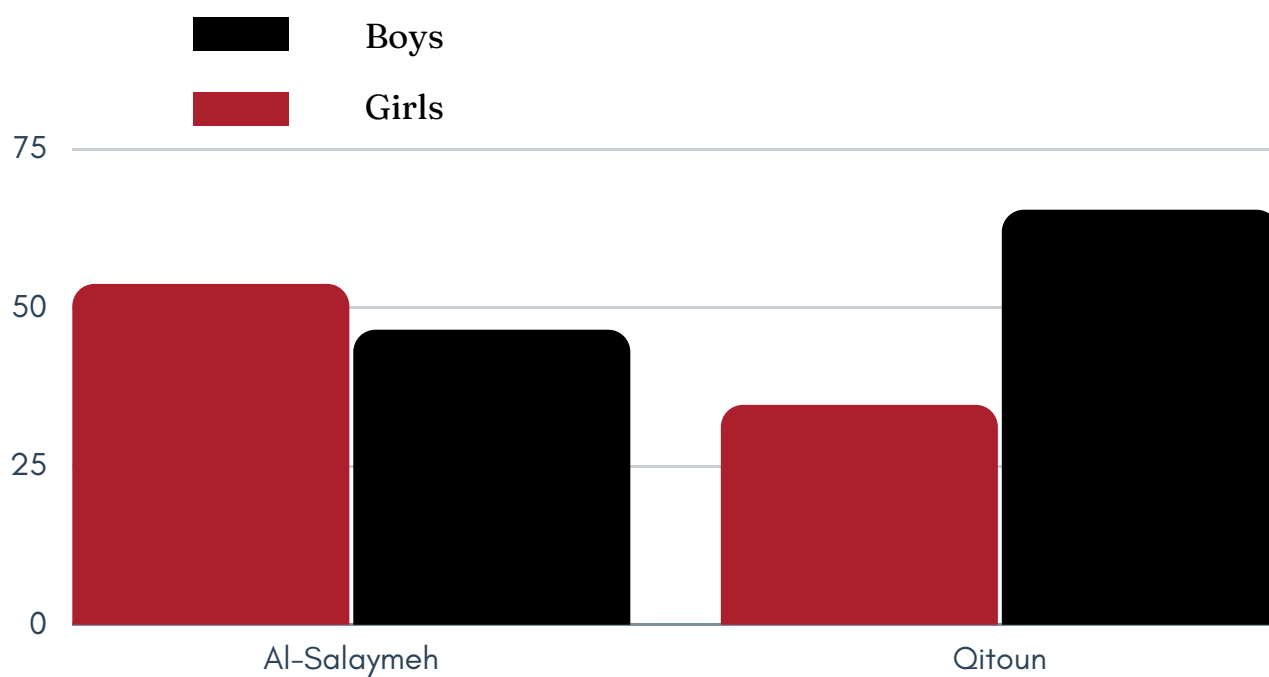
Number Of Girls



Number Of Boys

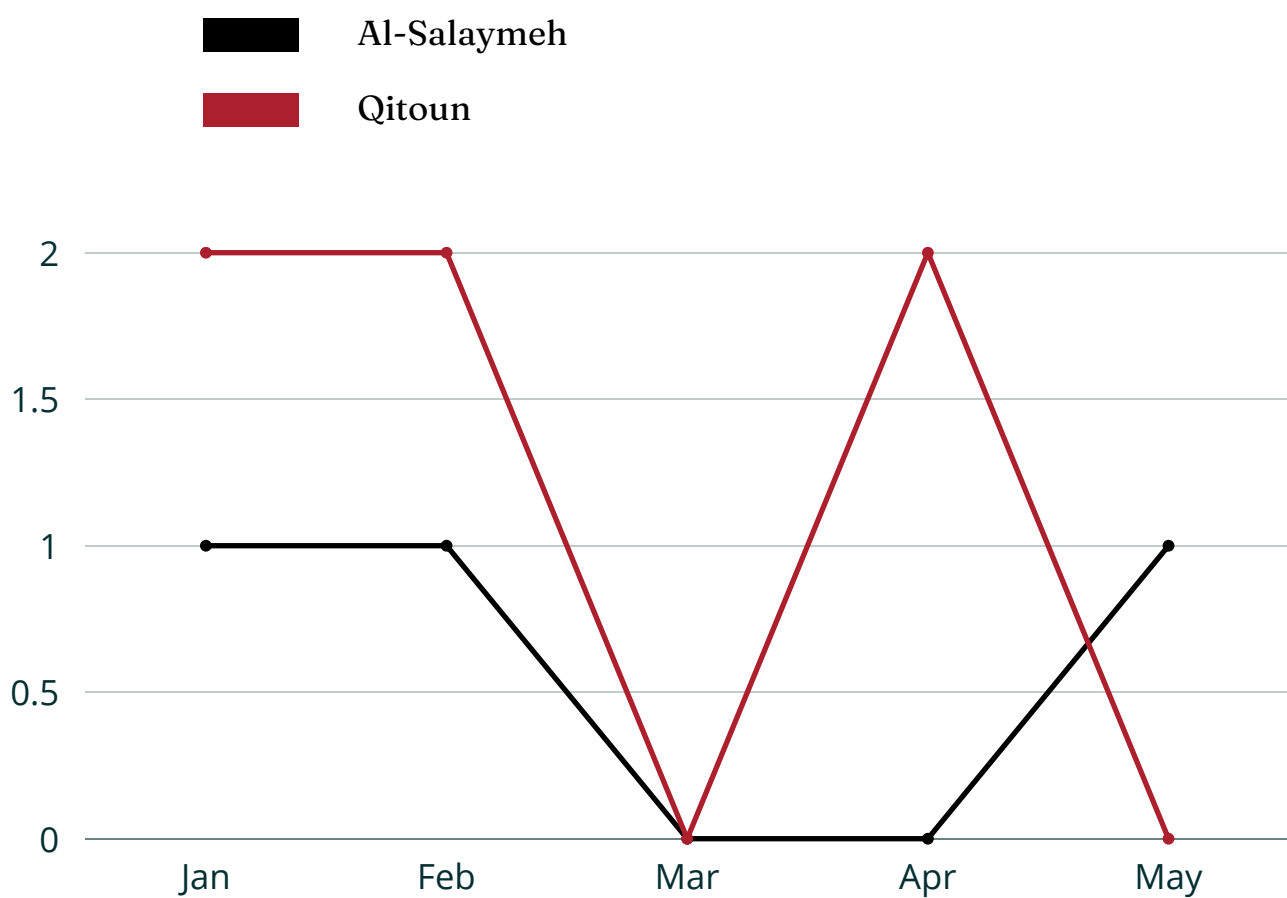


The ratio between the number of boys to the number of girls at Al-Salaymeh and Qitoun checkpoint

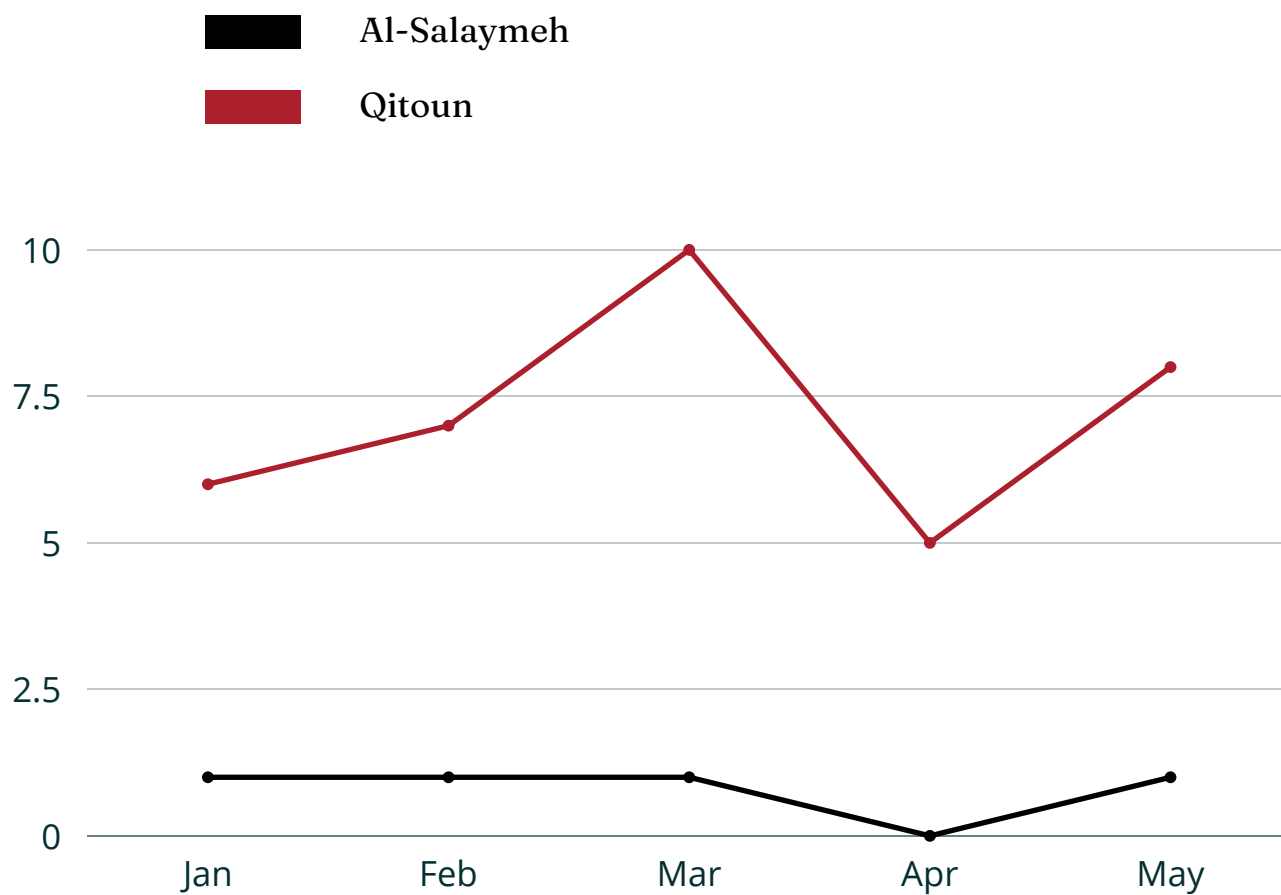


As the graphs show, the number of girls surpassed the number of boys during the strike, because some girls' schools were conducting classes fully, while the boy's schools were closed. After the strike, the number of boys exceeded the number of girls, due to the area having more boys' schools than girls' schools.

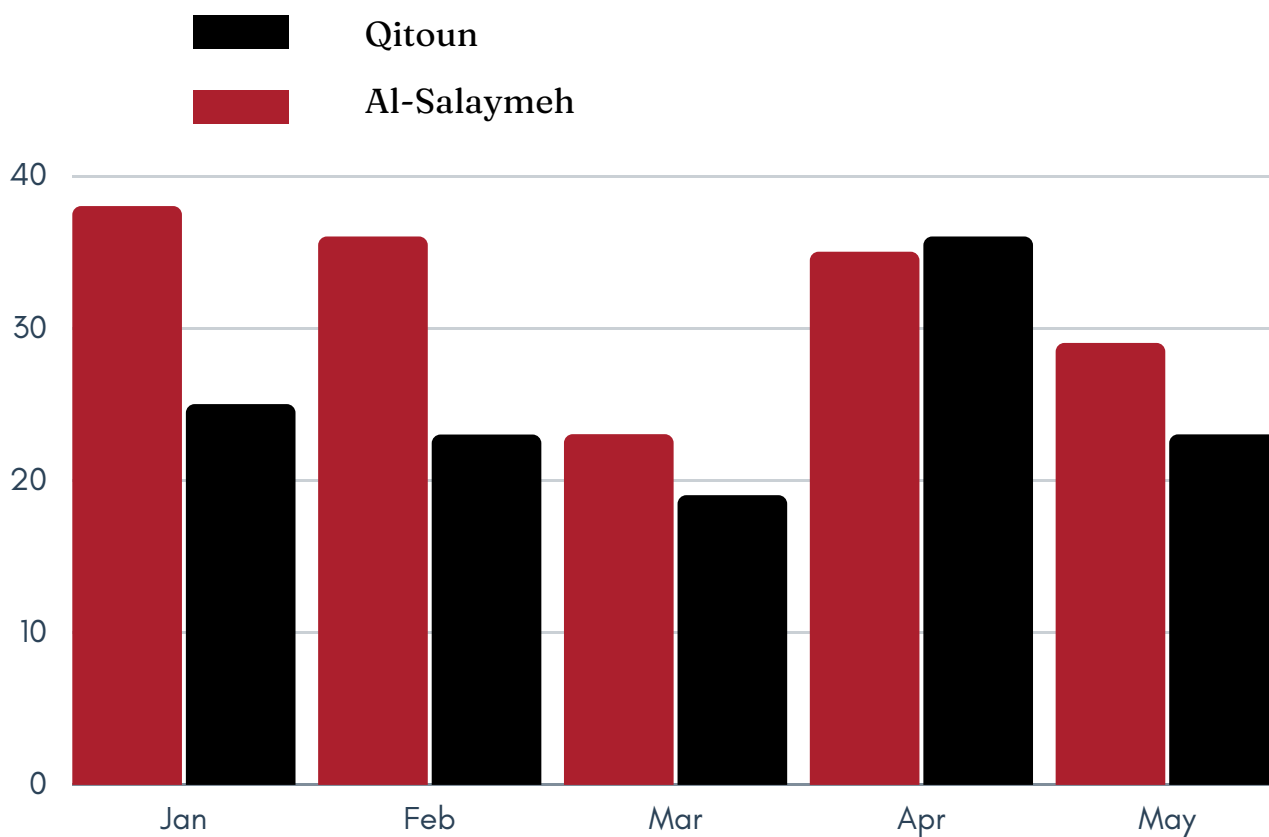
Number Of Female Teachers



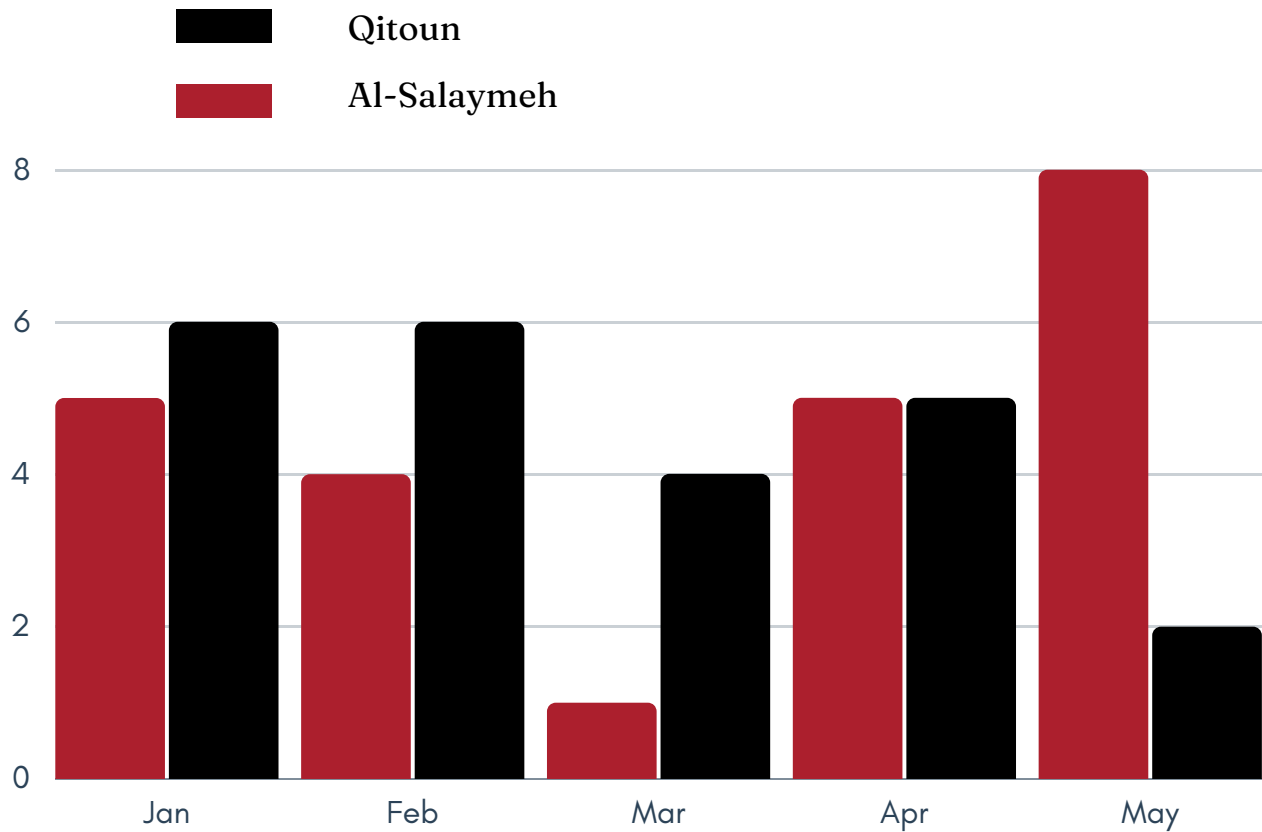
Number Of Male Teachers



Number Of Adult Male

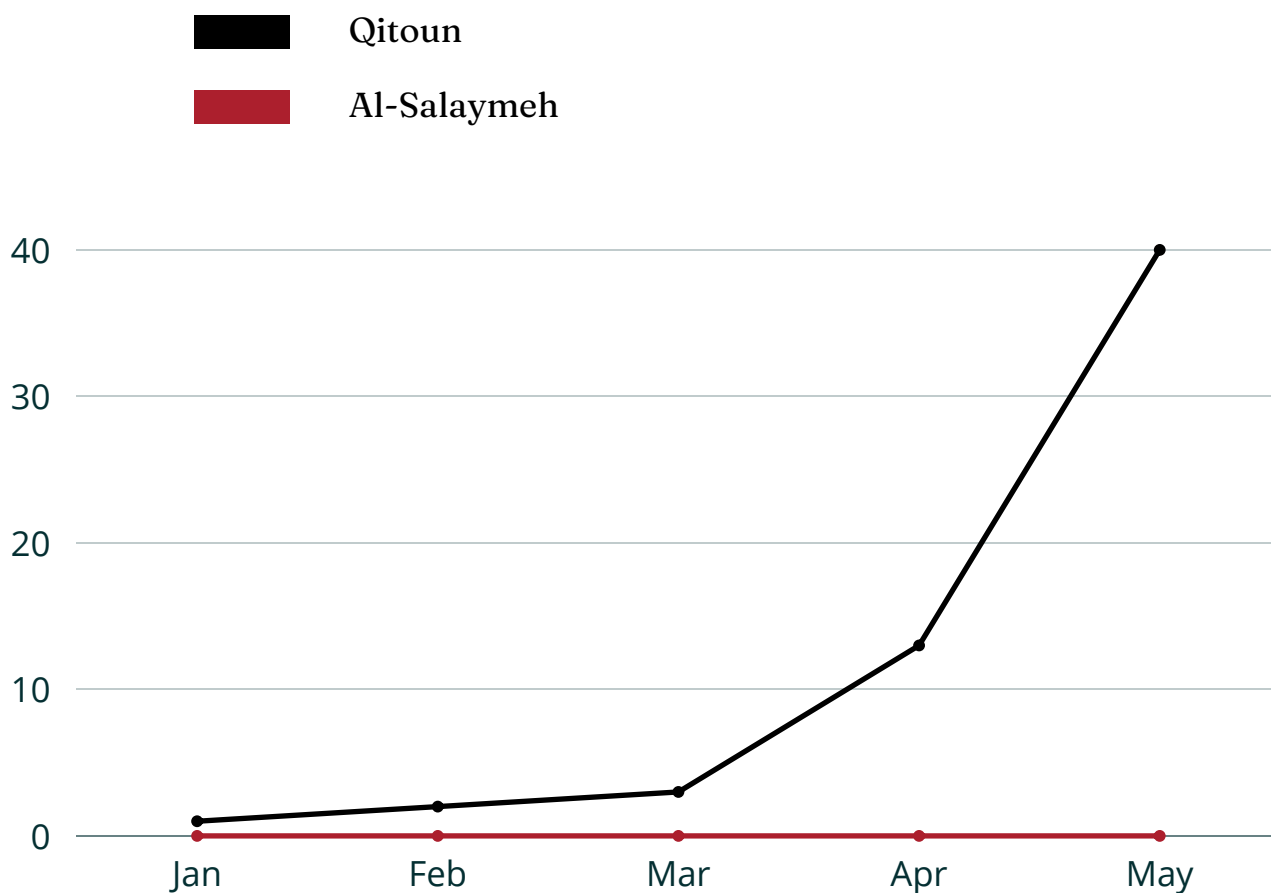


Number Of Adult Female

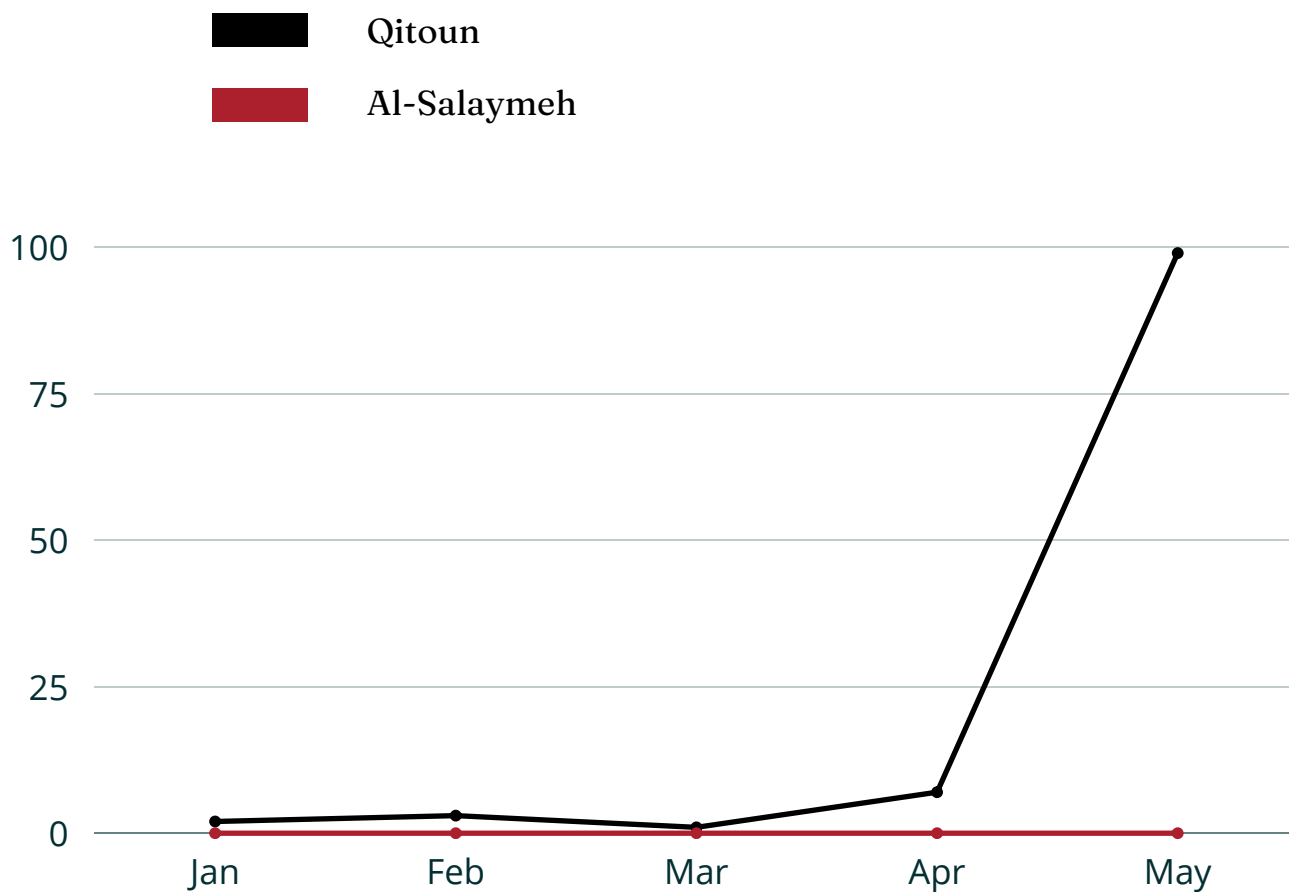


Aside from the basic restriction of movement that checkpoints impose on the Palestinian community, people crossing checkpoints are also subject to the Israeli occupation's use of force. Here are the number of stun grenades and tear gas canisters that the occupation forces threw at children per month, during the monitoring time periods where CPT members were present and documented the clashes.

Number Of Stun Grenades

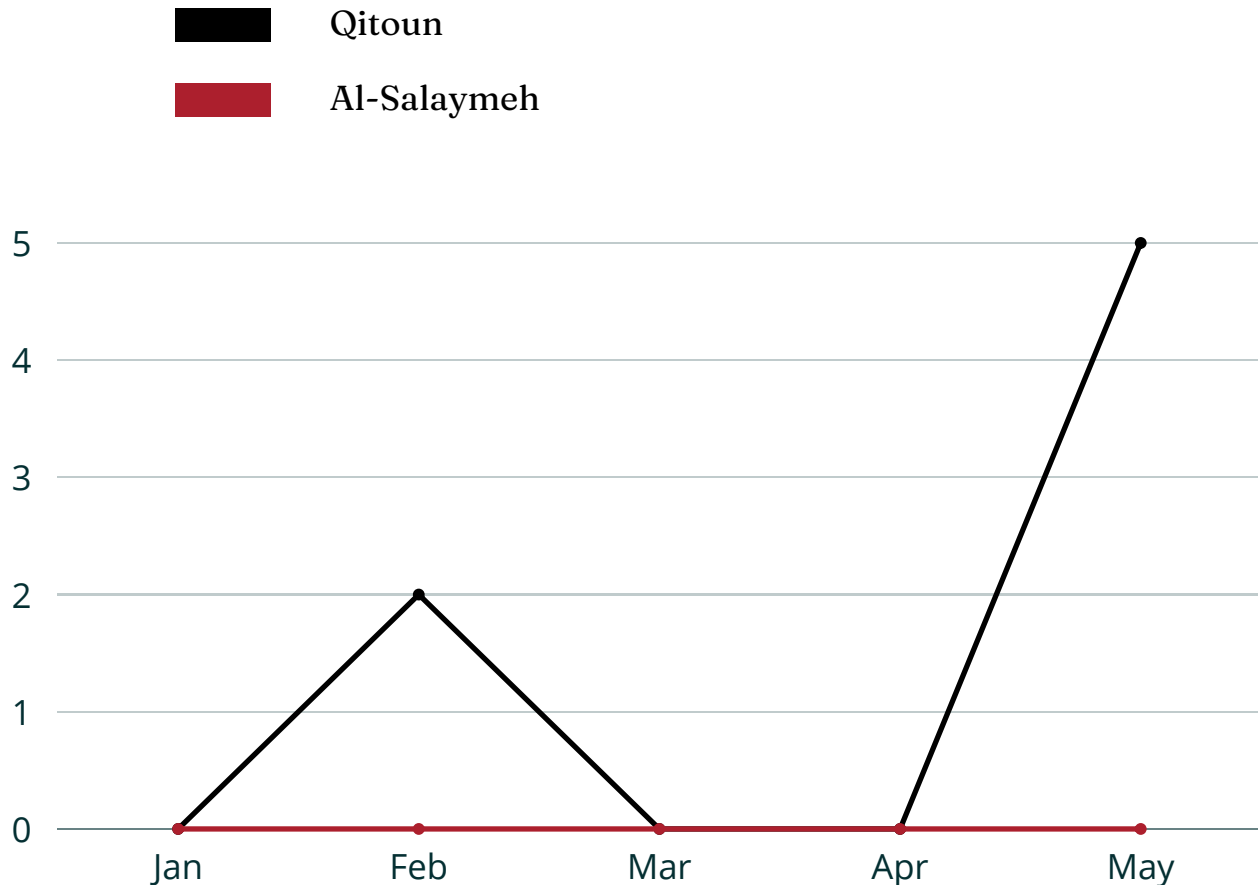


Number Of Tear Gas



CPT also documented the assault, detention, and arrest of children. Below are the numbers:

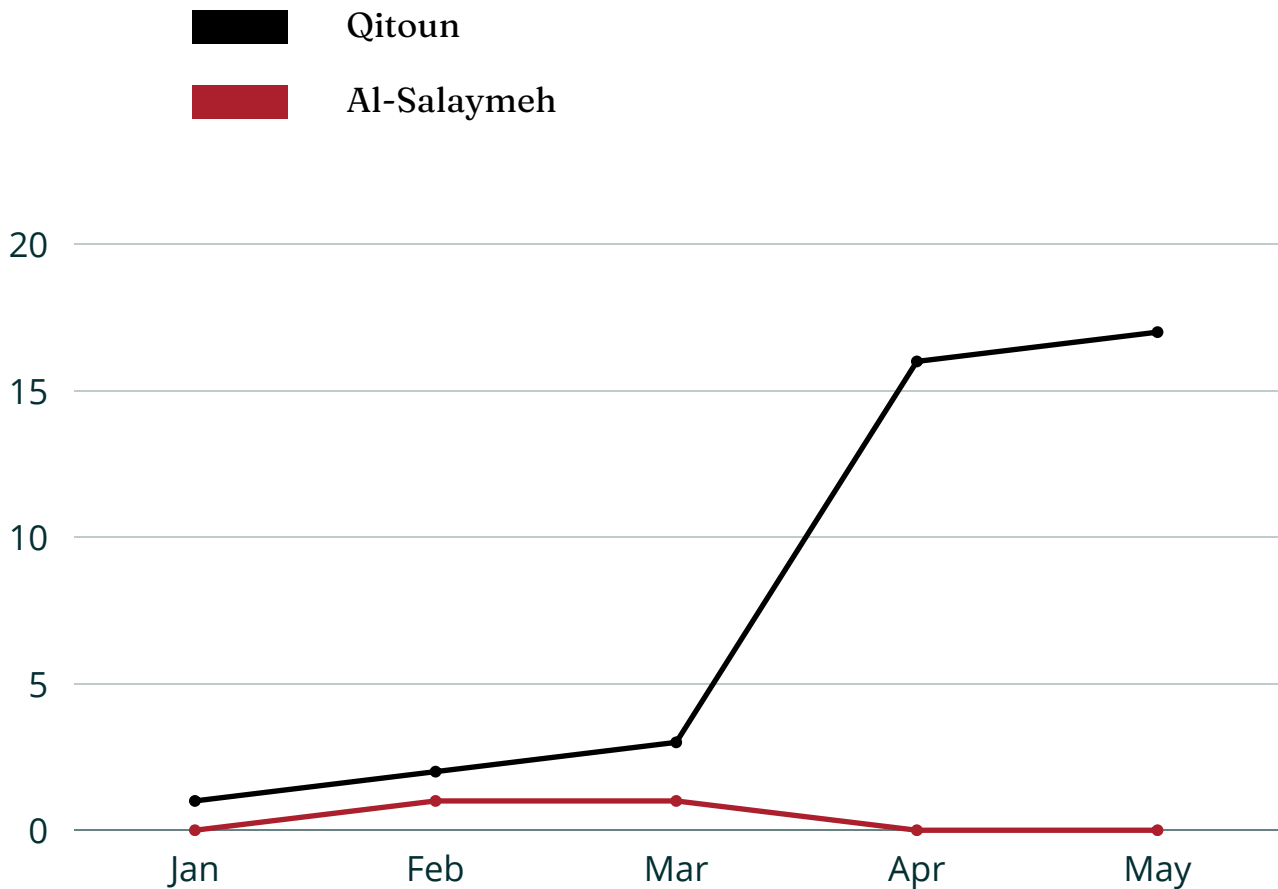
Number Of Child Detention And Arrest



With the reopening of schools after a prolonged strike period, escalating settler attacks, the storming of the old city in Nablus, and the attack on Jenin from Israeli occupation forces, there has been a noticeable impact on the checkpoints in the H2 area. This impact is reflected in the attitude of Israeli soldiers toward the students, and the increased the tension and violent incidents in the school area in the month of May.

Israeli soldiers also closed the checkpoints arbitrarily and delayed people moving through the area for hours. Below is the frequency that CPT documented while present when checkpoint closures occurred.

Checkpoint closure



Through observation of the checkpoints this semester, CPT documented a daily increase in the level of violence and harassment inflicted on children by the occupation. The number of tear gas canisters used within one month alone has reached 99 in May 2023, which is equivalent to an average of 5 tear gas per day. This marks a significant increase compared to the previous semester of last year, during which the highest number of tear gas canisters used in one month was 30.

Violence has increased almost threefold, significantly impacting the health of children and families in the region. Their daily exposure to the occupation and their frequent passage through checkpoints profoundly affect their lives, both mentally and physically, exposing them to various health risks that have a long-lasting impact.



Highlighted Incidents

After the strike and the return of schools to normal working hours, the occupation forces followed a new set of repressive tactics against students and residents in the area like excessive use of force through tear gas and stun grenades as well as an increase in detention and arrest. This is in addition to the policy of collective punishment which often entails closing checkpoints for no less than an hour, forcing Palestinian residents to wait or find lengthy alternative routes. This happens twice per day, when students must cross the checkpoints in the morning to go to school and in the afternoon on their way home.



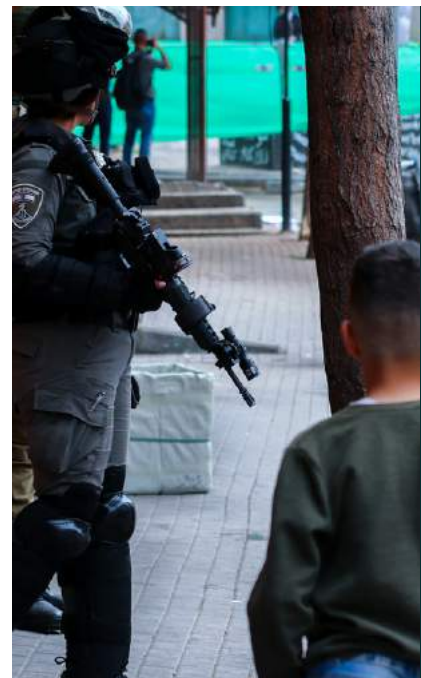
On 22 January, three students between the ages of fourteen and sixteen were detained by border police at the Mafia Checkpoint, which is located near the Fayha Primary School for Girls.

On 23 January, the al-Salaymeh checkpoint (160) was closed during the detention of a student. many young female students were trapped inside the checkpoint with occupation soldiers and suffered harassment from them, only being let through the checkpoint one by one in a needlessly lengthy process.

On 16 February, soldiers threw four canisters of tear gas at students gathering between Hebron (Al-Khalil) School and the neighborhood's UN-run school. One of the cans of tear gas caused a fire after it landed in a parked car.

On 23 February, the Israeli soldiers closed the al-Salaymeh checkpoint (160) for several hours in the morning in a display of collective punishment. This checkpoint is crucial for students coming to school, and students were arbitrarily forced to arrive many hours late or take a lengthy alternative route which is harder and out of the way of their school.


On 27 February Checkpoint 55 which is near Cordoba primary school was closed several times for several minutes throughout the day, keeping students and teachers standing outside in the cold winter weather waiting for the soldiers there to reopen the checkpoint.



On 4 May, Israeli occupation soldiers detonated teargas and stun grenades outside Ziad Jaber school. Soldiers claimed that this was in response to children throwing stones at them. Soldiers tried to enter the schoolyard twice, but the teachers prevented them from entering both times. After failing to enter, soldiers launched 10 canisters of teargas from military vehicles on Hebron's Prayers Road into the schoolyard. Thirty children and five teachers were in the schoolyard at the time the teargas was thrown. When a child passed through a partial checkpoint entering Prayer Road on the way home, soldiers detained him. Although the stated pretext of the soldiers was that the students had thrown stones, the school's vice principal vehemently denied that the student had thrown any stones. Ten soldiers were present on Prayers Road at the time.

On 8 May, an eleven-year-old student of the Ziad Jaber School was detained by occupation soldiers. He was brought to a police station and held for several hours. Prior to the student's detention, soldiers arrived twice at the school during the morning and attempted to enter. However, they were refused entry by a teacher. When school was finished, the student passed the Military Observation Post and was subsequently detained by the soldiers there. He was wearing a blue and yellow jacket, and the soldiers asserted that a student wearing the same jacket had thrown stones at them earlier, therefore claiming this student was the culprit. The teacher stood with him for thirty minutes until his father arrived. He was moved to a police station and held for four hours before being released. Luckily, the soldiers involved checked the area's available security cameras and realized that although the child who threw the stones was wearing a similar blue and yellow jacket, he was of a different height and build, prompting his release.





On 8 May, soldiers launched five canisters of tear gas into the school playground of the Hebron (Al-Khalil) school, claiming that students had tossed stones at them. This forced teachers to evacuate their classrooms to bring students to a different and safer area of the school to avoid inhaling the gas. Soldiers then stormed the school, demanding the school's security camera footage to find which students they believed were responsible for throwing rocks. When the school administrators refused to hand over the footage, the soldiers locked down the school and prevented anyone from leaving or going home for almost three hours.

On 15 May, at 12:30 PM, occupation forces at the Al-Salaymeh checkpoint (160) arbitrarily closed the checkpoint. After half an hour, a military jeep arrived on the scene, and two soldiers who exited the vehicle threw thirteen canisters of tear gas and four sound grenades toward the school compound and at gathered students. At 1:30 PM, after students had left school, another jeep arrived and launched seven canisters of tear gas into the street near the schools compound.

A recent tactic that has become common during the month of May was the deliberate daily attacks by occupation forces against children leaving school. For many days in a row, soldiers would launch tear gas canisters and stun grenades against unprovoked students leaving school, done clearly with the intent to intimidate and terrorize.

On 21 May, five young Palestinian boys, around 15 years old, were denied access to Checkpoint 55. The boys were on their way to school in Bab Al Zawaya and legally should have had the right to cross the checkpoint with no issues. A soldier was asking for their official identification, which they do not have because they were under 16. Palestinians in the West Bank under the age of 16 fall under their parents' identification numbers at checkpoints. During this, a soldier closed the checkpoint for everyone and refused to open it as long as the boys were waiting. The checkpoint was closed between 7:30-7:40 AM where 15 students and four teachers were forced to wait. It was closed again between 7:45-08:10 AM where three additional teachers and 10 students were delayed. After 8:10 AM, there was a shift change of the soldiers operating the checkpoint. One of the new soldiers opened the checkpoint and also let three of the five boys who were previously denied access pass. The other two had given up and left before getting the chance to finally pass, possibly losing a day of school.

Masafer Yatta/South Hebron Hills

In Masafer Yatta, the situation of the area's schools and students is not any better than that of the schools in the closed areas in Hebron. Just as in Hebron, where students suffer from settler attacks when going to and from school, students in Masafer Yatta endure significant hardship and threats of violence. Students in Masafer Yatta must be completely alert and vigilant while making their way to school, afraid of attack from settlers.

Attacks from settlers on schoolchildren have happened many times before, and are a regular occurrence. There are several schools in Masafer Yatta that serve the area's communities, but these schools themselves are also not safe from attacks by settlers and soldiers.





During the first semester of this past school year, occupation forces demolished Esfai School, an important elementary school for the area. The occupation forces demolished the school, forcing the community to build a tent for the students in the bitter cold to serve as a makeshift classroom. The Israeli occupation then confiscated the tent, which led to the community building another tent. In the second semester, the two tents that were built to protect the students from the freezing cold in the winter were confiscated.


The number of students at Esfai school was initially 22 students but now there are only 12 students left. Most of the children moved to another school and some of them had to drop out because other schools are too far from their place of residence.

On 17 June, the Israeli Supreme Court informed the principal of the Umm Qassah School of the institution's imminent demolition. There are more than 60 students in the school, and their fate is unknown. In every village in Masafer Yatta, there is a school, and each village is at least 6-10km away from the next village. If the occupation demolishes a school, most of the students will be deprived of education and be forced to discontinue their studies, or their families must change their place of residence to ensure the continuity of education for their children.

Two days after the demolition order of [Umm Qassah](#) school, on 19 June the occupation forces also gave demolition orders to [Khashm Al-Karm School](#).

Students walk long distances to reach their schools and must pass through settlements where the occupation prevents parents or family members from accompanying their children. Armed Israeli soldiers walk beside the students while they pass through the settlement. This serves to intimidate the students. This is in no small part because the soldiers continually and exclusively protect and do the bidding of the settlers, and do not protect the Palestinian students from any attack or harassment by the settlers.

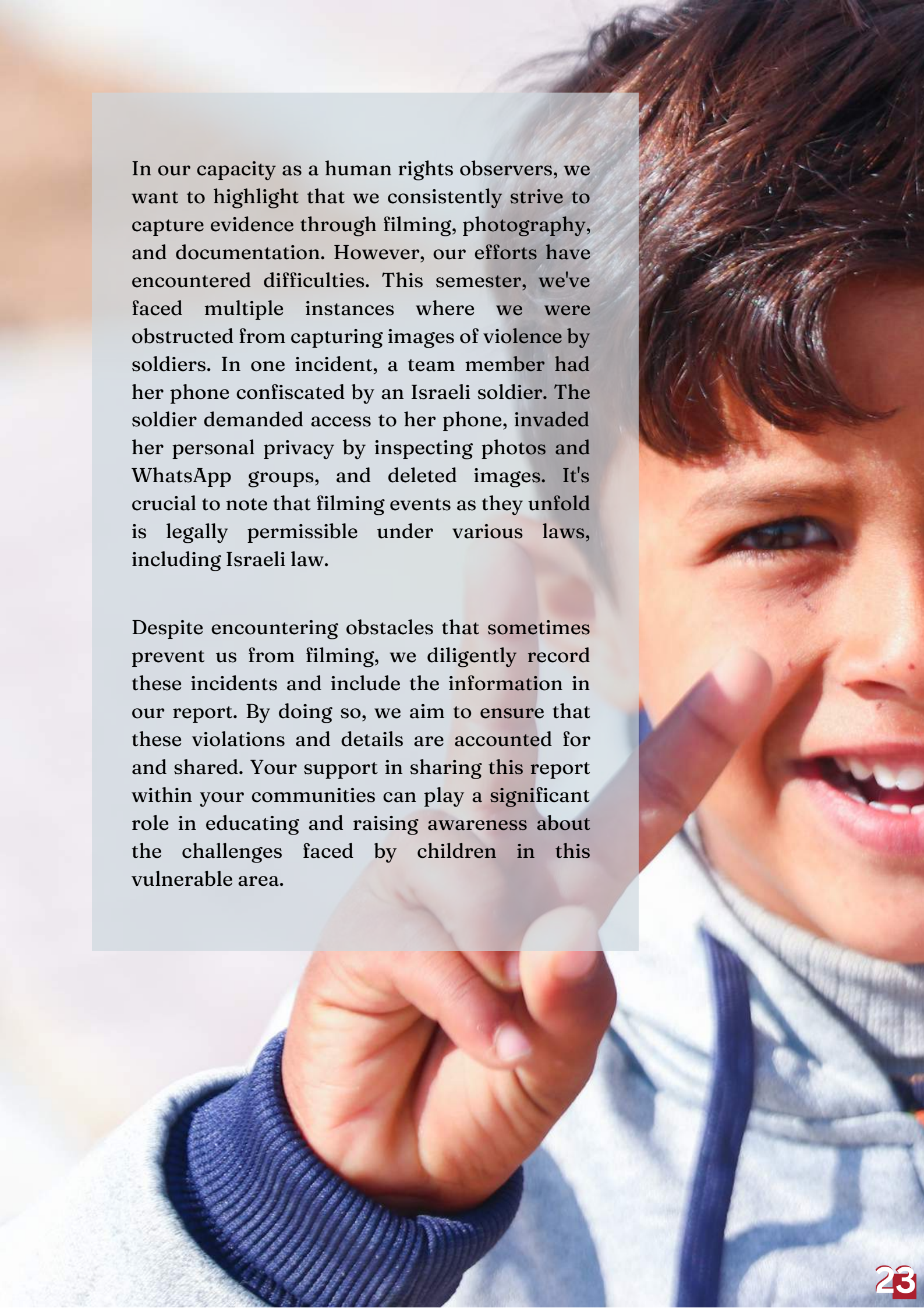


The background image shows a dry, hilly landscape under a clear blue sky. In the foreground, there is a dirt path or field. In the middle ground, a fence with several flags (including the Palestinian flag) is visible. The text is overlaid on a semi-transparent white box.

On 3 May, Israeli occupation forces, based on orders from Israeli settlers from Havat Maon settlement, violently blocked volunteers from the Sumud activist organization from accompanying Palestinian school children of Tuba on their way to school. This was done in an attempt to prevent any activists in the area from monitoring the military's process of "escorting" Tuba's school children through the area's internationally condemned settlements. Passing through these settlements is the only practical route possible for many of Masafer Yatta's children to reach school, but they are under constant and significant threat of being attacked by Israeli settlers. Not only must these children suffer harassment and intimidation from settlers and soldiers, but they must endure it without any accompaniment or support from their families or even international observers in most cases.

To know more about the situation in Masafer Yatta's villages and schools, read [South Hebron Hills: Are we waiting to build a new refugee camp?](#)

The parents' committee has shown unwavering dedication to their work, even in the midst of an ongoing teacher strike. They have taken it upon themselves to prevent any escalation of violence in the area during the morning hours at the schools. For more details about the parents' committee and their activities, please refer to page 19 of our [last school report](#).



In our capacity as human rights observers, we want to highlight that we consistently strive to capture evidence through filming, photography, and documentation. However, our efforts have encountered difficulties. This semester, we've faced multiple instances where we were obstructed from capturing images of violence by soldiers. In one incident, a team member had her phone confiscated by an Israeli soldier. The soldier demanded access to her phone, invaded her personal privacy by inspecting photos and WhatsApp groups, and deleted images. It's crucial to note that filming events as they unfold is legally permissible under various laws, including Israeli law.

Despite encountering obstacles that sometimes prevent us from filming, we diligently record these incidents and include the information in our report. By doing so, we aim to ensure that these violations and details are accounted for and shared. Your support in sharing this report within your communities can play a significant role in educating and raising awareness about the challenges faced by children in this vulnerable area.





Thank You



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Community Peacemaker
Teams - Palestine



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