

# Education-Related Incidents in oPt<sup>1</sup>

## Annual Report

### January – December 2019

#### Overview:

In 2019, the Education Cluster recorded 328 education-related incidents affecting 19,913 students. This represents an increase in the incidents targeting schools and students compared to 2018<sup>2</sup>. The months of March and April recorded the highest number of incidents (101 incidents) in the first half of the year, while another major spike was noticed in November with 61 education-related incidents (around 20% of the total number of reported cases).

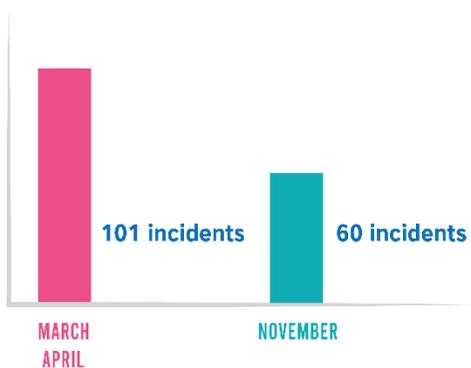
**IN 2019**  
**328 education related incidents affecting 19,913 students**



Education-related incidents in oPt include: attacks on schools, military use of schools, threats of attacks on students and school staff, lost school time due to delays at checkpoints, military presence at school entrances, closed military areas in addition to use of live ammunition and tear gas in and around schools, school search, detention in educational context, confiscation of education items, school demolition and stop-work orders as well as settler related violence against students, staff and education facilities.

**In the West Bank**, 325 cases were recorded including 151 in Hebron governorate alone with 83% of the incidents in Hebron taking place in H2 area. Bethlehem Governorate reported 57 incidents mainly in Area C (Al Khader, Tuqu’ and Al Minya). Nablus and specifically south Nablus villages (Urif, Burin and As Sawiya) reported 49 incidents.

#### Months with the highest incidents



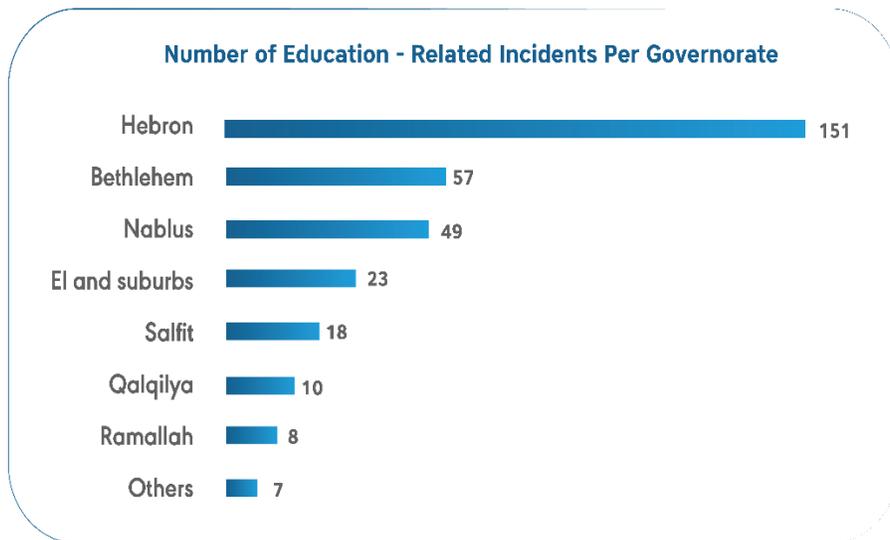
East Jerusalem remains one of the hotspots in terms of education-related incidents with 12 recorded cases in 2019. These incidents include 3 cases of settler intimidation to students and school staff while commuting to school as well as a detention of a student from the school premises. A major incident took place on November 20, when the Israeli police

<sup>1</sup> Data Source: Education Cluster Database

<sup>2</sup> 206 education-related incidents were documented in 2018.

entered the East Jerusalem Directorate of Education office located inside Dar Al Aytam School premises in the old city of East Jerusalem. They raided the Planning and Monitoring departments and confiscated several financial documents and a laptop. They detained Sameer Jibreal, the Head of the Directorate (he was detained for two days, released on a bail and spent 5 days in house arrest). The Israeli police posted a closure order for the directorate on the main gate for six months. The school was evacuated during the incident with no reported injuries or detention among students. Classes resumed on the following days after the incident. The directorate office remains closed.

**Figure1:**



**Gaza Strip** schools were also impacted by escalations that took place in May, November and December 2019. In May, 12 schools sustained minor damages due to Israeli airstrikes and all Gaza Strip schools closed on May 6 and 7 impacting around 580,000 school students and 70,000 Preschool children. November also marked 3 days of schools’ closure between the 12 and 14. According to the Education Cluster Assessment Teams<sup>3</sup>, 15 schools including one UNRWA school sustained with minor damages (broken window glass, doors and cracks in the school and classroom walls) due to the Israeli airstrikes in the vicinity of the schools.

In addition, on December 19 early morning, one MoE school sustained minor damage during an Israeli airstrike targeting nearby locations. The damages included: broken windows and cracks in the classroom walls. In addition, the ISF fired tear gas canisters towards the Palestinian territories in Eastern Khan Younis (Al Qarara) affecting students of Al-Marri School for Girls and Boys. Another private school, The Right to Live school for



<sup>3</sup> The Education Cluster newly formed an assessment team from the cluster partners. The team is composed of 12 persons, 2 persons per governorate. The team role is to verify the level of damages of the education facilities and assess its needs that reported by MoE.

Children with Disabilities- Khan Younis suspended the school day due to heavy tear gas spreading in the classrooms.

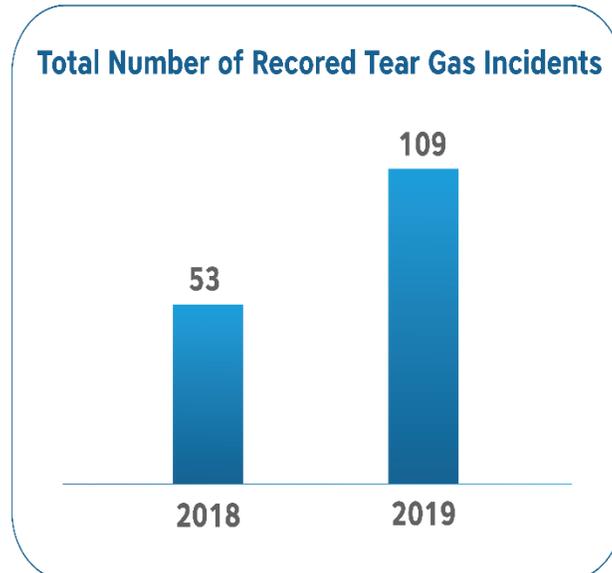
## Types of Education Related Incidents:

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- **Tear gas firing on Schools and Students:**

Around 33% of the reported education-related incidents (109 cases<sup>4</sup>) involved firing tear gas canisters on schools' premises and/or students while commuting to schools affecting 6,653 students. This reflects a significant increase in the number of tear gas cases compared to the year 2018 (53 cases).

**Figure 2:**



The months of April (26 cases) and November (29 cases) recorded highest numbers of tear gas incidents in 2019. **H2 – Hebron schools** are the most impacted by tear gas firing with **69 recorded cases** affecting around **2,600 students**. Hebron Basic School for Boys alone recorded 30 cases impacting the 431 school's students.

On April 7, at approximately 7:30 a.m., stun grenades were being heard outside Hebron Basic School for Boys, close to the entrance and the main street. The teachers immediately closed the school's main. About a minute later, the Israeli soldiers threw three sound bombs towards the entrance of the school and then fired four more tear gas canisters into the schoolyard and the vicinity of the school. The teachers tried to secure the students and evacuate the school. However, due to the intensity of the gas, about 200 students and 5 teachers suffered from suffocation. 12 students and the five teachers were taken by private cars to Mohammad Ali Al

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<sup>4</sup> These incidents also include cases recorded against 2 schools in the ARA in Gaza.

Muhtaseb Hospital and then were transferred to Hebron Governmental Hospital, while the rest were medically treated in the school. The school day was suspended.

In another incident, on November 5, the ISF stationed on the rooftop of a house nearby Hebron Basic School for Boys and fired tear gas canisters and sound bombs towards the school. 50 students and 5 teachers required medical treatment on the field by PCRS in addition to the disruption in the school routine and a loss of the school day.

**Table 1: Number of reported tear gas incidents in the most impacted H2 schools:**

Name of the School in H2	Number of Recorded Tear Gas Incidents
Hebron Basic School for Boys	30
Khadija Bint Khuwailed Basic School for Boys	8
Al Nahda Basic School for Boys	7
Tariq Bin Ziad Basic School for Boys	6

Schools located in Area C and Jerusalem suburbs were also affected by firing tear gas canisters including Urif Secondary School for Boys in South Nablus (9 incidents) and Tuqu' Secondary School for Boys in Bethlehem (5 incidents). In one incident, on February 10, Israeli soldiers and the security guard of the nearby Yitzhar settlement stationed around the school and fired tear gas towards the school and the students. The parents of children came to school to protect their children. Clashes erupted, during which soldiers fired tear gas canisters and rubber-coated metal bullets at the school. The classes were cancelled, and the students were evacuated around 11:20 am.

Anata and Abu Dies recorded multiple cases of tear gas firing in 2019; on December 1<sup>st</sup>, 3 schools in Anata were evacuated due to heavy tear gas firing. This incident led to the loss of school time in addition to multiple cases of breathing difficulties among students and teachers due to tear gas inhalation.

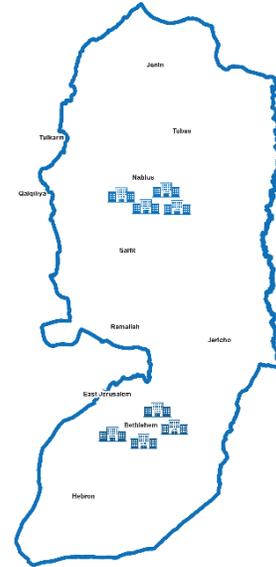
The total number of loss school time **due to firing tear gas** on schools and/or students is **around 143 classes**, including cases in which students lost full school days after evacuating the school premises due to heavy tear gas firing.

- **Military presence around schools:**

Military presence around schools in the West Bank continues to be a threat to students and school staff. Most affected schools are the ones located in Area C in close proximity to settlements or main roads accessed by settlers. Military presence around schools causes an increase in tension between soldiers and students.

leading to the eruption of clashes. Affected schools include:

- **Tuqu’ Secondary School for Boys - Bethlehem**
- **Al Minya Basic Co-Ed School - Bethlehem**
- **That Al Nitakain Basic School for Girls - Bethlehem**
- **Al Jurmok Basic School for Girls - Bethlehem**
- **Asawiya Al Lubban Co- Ed Secondary School – South Nablus**
- **Al Lubban Secondary School for Girls – South Nablus**
- **Urif Secondary School for Boys – South Nablus**
- **Burin Secondary Co- Ed School– South Nablus**



- **Detention of students:**

In 2019, 69 students were arrested or detained either from the school buildings or while commuting to schools. Around 55% of the detention cases were from Asawiya Al Lubban Secondary Co-Ed School. Tuqu’ Secondary School comes in second with 8 detention cases among students.

On November 11, at approximately 12:30 p.m. a group of students were leaving Asawiya Al Lubban Secondary Co-Ed School when they came across Israeli soldiers on the sidewalk of the main street connecting Nablus to Ramallah. Around 12 soldiers stopped 2 students and physically assaulted them. Then, they took one student to Shilo military camp, where he was kept for four hours before being released.

On April 16 at 1:40 pm, the ISF arrested a student close to Al Khansa Elementary School in Bethlehem while he was returning from school. The soldiers accused him of throwing stones at them in the morning, although the student was ill that day. He was held for about half an hour before he was released after a teacher and the school principal intervened.

In another incident in Isawiya – East Jerusalem, on November 2, a student was physically assaulted, arrested by force from the school and taken to an interrogation center before appearing in court. He was released the following day on a bail of five thousand NIS and was placed under house arrest for three days. Isawiya Parents Council declared a strike in all Isawiya schools in response to the continuous Israeli incursions in the neighborhood and schools.



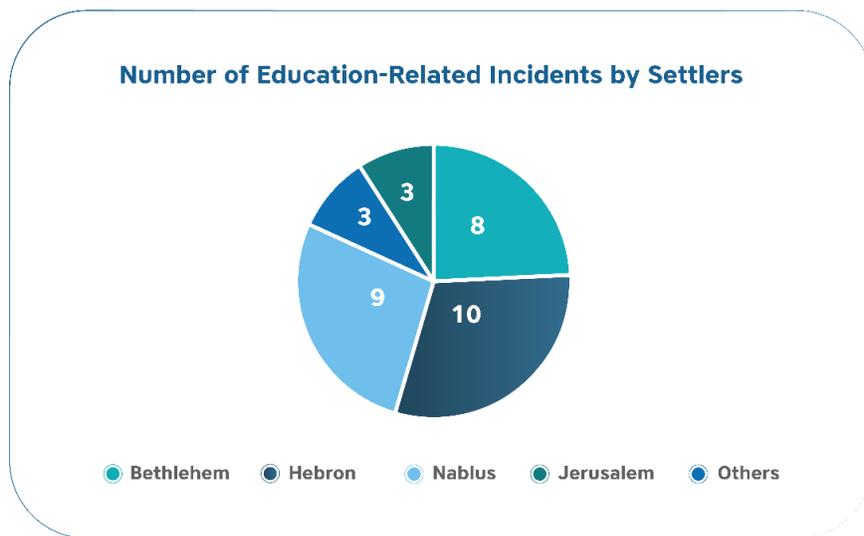
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In H2 – Hebron, on March 19, at 1:30 pm, the Israeli soldiers chased two students from Ziad Jaber Basic School for Boys outside the school premises. The soldiers kept chasing the students until they reached back to the school building. The school staff including the counsellor and the school secretary tried to defend the students from being arrested as the soldiers were accusing the children of throwing stones. The soldiers called for backup and insisted on detaining the students and took the 9 -year-old boy away to the Jaber checkpoint next to the school. One soldier remained in the school principal's office and tried to take the other child with them. After the school administration reached out to the civil administration and the MoE, the student was released after an hour of detention.

- **Settlers intimidation for students and school staff:**

Settlers related incidents include: settler’s intimidation to students while commuting to school, threats of violence to students and school staff, physical and/or verbal assault of students and school staff in addition to vandalizing school premises. In 2019, there were 33 cases of settlers’ violence against schools and/or students. Most of the incidents took place in H2- Hebron, Bethlehem mainly Tuqu’ and Al Minya areas in addition to multiple cases reported in Urif – South of Nablus.

**Table 2: Breakdown of education- related incidents by settlers per governorate:**



In one incident on July 7, five masked Israeli settlers reportedly from Itamar settlement forced their way to Awarta village (Nablus), vandalized seven Palestinian vehicles and sprayed slogans on wall of Awarta Secondary school, "Ajyal Al mustaqbal" kindergarten and a residential house.

In another case, on March 5, at approximately 12:00 p.m., a group of around 30 settlers gathered on a hill about 500 meters from Urif Secondary School for Boy. Immediately after that, the school was evacuated. The settlers then started coming down towards the school, which was completely evacuated in the middle of the fifth period. They stopped outside the main gate and started to throw stones at the school, while the teachers

were still inside and were trapped for more than an hour. There was a heavy firing of live bullets, rubber bullets, and stun grenades by the Israeli soldiers, who arrived after violent clashes broke out between the locals and the settlers. While trying to leave, one of the school staff was shot at by one of the soldiers. The head of the village council arrived and talked to the soldiers, teachers managed to leave at around 2:30 p.m.

Another incident in Urif Secondary School for Boys took place on May 2, when 15 Israeli settlers reportedly from Yitzhar settlement accompanied with the ISF entered the eastern neighborhood of Urif village, northern to Urif School for Boys. The ISF fired tear gas canisters towards the villagers and settlers threw stones at the school windows and houses in which six windows glasses of school were broken.

- **Delays on checkpoints:**

There were 33 cases of delays at checkpoints documented in 2019. 13 of the cases were reported in H2 – Hebron specifically on Checkpoint 160/ Abu Al Reesh affecting around 135 students and 28 teachers and/or school staff. In one instance, on November 14, 3 teachers were denied access to Al Ibrahimiya School for Boys as the ISF closed Abu Reesh checkpoint for 40 minutes. This caused a loss of one class for the students as well as delaying the arrival of 40 students. In another incident, on March 20, at 7:00 am, a student from Al Fahya' School was stopped by Israeli soldiers on Mafia checkpoint and had her bag searched. The soldiers asked her to remove her jacket, but she refused. Then she was asked for her ID. She told them that she is only 14 years old and she does not have an ID. They started screaming at her but eventually they let her go.

There are 35 schools in H2 area of Hebron serving 5,561 males and 7,167 females. Approximately “4,200 of these students, boys and girls, have their journey to school obstructed by checkpoints every day, frequently facing harassment, intimidation and delays that result in lost school time and children psychological wellbeing issues”<sup>5</sup> according to OCHA’s H2 household survey from 2018.

Cases of students and teachers delays at checkpoints were also increasingly reported in Jenin at wall gate 300 (10 cases) affecting around 64 students and 14 school staff. Most of the cases involved closing the gate while students and teachers were crossing to their schools causing delays in their arrival to schools.

- **Schools demolition and stop work orders:**

According to the Education Cluster matrix for schools under threat of demolition, there are currently **51 schools (43 schools located in Area C and 8 located in East Jerusalem)** under partial /full demolition order or stop work order. These schools are under constant threat of demolition.

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<sup>5</sup> UNOCHA (2018). Rise in incidents disrupting schooling across the West Bank, UNOCHA – oPt, 14 December 2018. Online from: <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/rise-incidents-disrupting-schooling-across-west-bank>

**In 2019:**

- Ghuwain Mixed Elementary School received a stop work order.
- Israeli soldiers entered Khallet Al Dabe' School while students were inside the premises. The soldiers took photos of the school building and left a demolition order on the school's main gate.
- As-Simiya School had partial demolition for the concrete floor of the school. This was a continuation for the demolition that took place in December 2018 for the school's 7 caravans and the latrines. In December, the school received another demolition order for 3 classrooms.
- Al Razi School in Shu'fat Refugee Camp was demolished by Israeli bulldozers after evacuating the students and school staff.
- Ibbiq School received a stop working order for the solar panels installed at the school roof. The school also received a demolition order to remove the fence surrounding the school in August 2019.
- In October Israeli forces broke the lock of the back door of Dhahr Al-Maleh Elementary Co-ed School, entered the schoolyard and confiscated a mobile room; a canteen containing a kitchen and school supplies.

