

UN chief criticises Israel over deaths of children in Gaza

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The United Nations chief did not address the reasoning behind his decision last week not to include Israel on his annual list of parties that kill or injure children in armed conflict in a speech to a Security Council meeting. That decision sparked protests from human rights groups and many in the Arab world and elsewhere.

The secretary-general's latest report said that in the Gaza conflict, at least 561 children were killed - 557 of them Palestinians. It said that 4,271 youngsters were injured, all but 22 Palestinians.

The 557 Palestinian deaths were the third-highest death toll of any conflict in 2014, after Afghanistan's with 710 child killings and Iraq's with 679 - but ahead of Syria's with 368.

While Ban kept Israel off the list, he kept up pressure on the Israeli government at the council meeting to present his report on children in armed conflict.

He expressed deep alarm at the Gaza killings and urged Israel to review its policies and practices and "respect the special protections afforded to schools and hospitals".

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