

Session 3

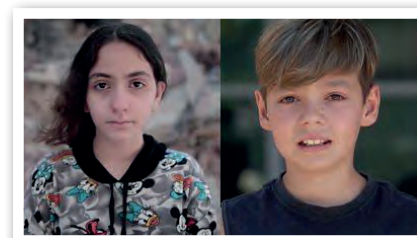
Everyday childhood in the region

'I try to do fun things, so I don't think about the bombs'

Edan, aged 11, 22 May 2021 (taken from www.bbc.in/3VbhNoV)



Like children everywhere, children all over IOPT enjoy playing with friends, going to school, spending time with their families and generally being happy. However, daily life for children is not straightforward and can be very frightening. Children in IOPT have always known a situation of conflict. Almost half of Palestinian children are refugees and can't return to their family's old homes. And, for some offences, Palestinians over the age of 12 can be arrested, tried, and sent to jail just as if they were an adult!



In May 2021, eleven days of fighting broke out in the Israel v Gaza conflict. This was part of a conflict that's been happening on and off for decades, with devastating effects on life for ordinary people living in both communities. Once a ceasefire had been agreed – a ceasefire is when both sides reach an agreement to stop fighting each other for a while, often to allow peace talks to take place – the BBC talked to two children about their experiences. You can watch the full interview at www.bbc.in/3rHamb1

Edan, aged 11 (pictured right), is an Israeli boy who lives with his parents in Moshav Dekel, a small village in Southern Israel. Edan explains that when the sirens sound they have to run to the bomb shelters, and it is very scary. The shelter contains clothes and other supplies they may need, and Edan prefers to sleep there as he feels afraid going upstairs to his bedroom. Even though the school classrooms also have bomb shelters, he is sometimes unable to go to school as it is too dangerous. Edan tries to keep himself busy doing fun things so as not to think about the bombs.

Nadeen (pictured left) is ten years old, a Palestinian and lives in the Gaza City with her parents and five siblings. Nadeen tells how, during the conflict, she would hear screaming and cries for help, and mothers crying for their children. She would witness buildings falling and the hospital having no water. She feels terrified, but has to hide it from her younger brother, not wanting him to feel scared. Nadeen has not been able to go to school and her parents have not let her out much because they all want to stay close together. Nadeen has been posting videos online to show what life is like in Gaza. She has lots of dreams for the future, including studying hard to be a doctor and spreading the message about what is happening in her country.

Living in fear – This is the story of a 9-year-old girl, called Sumayah. She is from Albustan, Silwan, Jerusalem. Her family received a demolition notice from the Israeli authorities (informing them their home was to be knocked down) and each day they waited for the bad news. Every night Sumayah says she dreamt about soldiers coming to take her stuff away. She lives with constant fear and feelings of isolation, she experiences anxiety, and she hasn't been able to communicate properly with her classmates or her family. Sumayah's mother said that the demolition notice transformed all their lives into a nightmare. Relationships between every family member were affected by the constant stress and fear as a direct result of lacking the basic human need to feel safe.

(By Rami Khader, Director of the East Jerusalem YMCA Rehabilitation Programme)



Bible Link Mark 10:13-14

Some people brought their small children to Jesus so he could touch them. But his followers told the people to stop bringing their children to him. When Jesus saw this, he was displeased. He said to them, "Let the little children come to me. Don't stop them. The kingdom of God belongs to people who are like these little children."

I wonder what Jesus meant when he said this?

Prayer

Dear God, thank you for your wonderful world and that children everywhere have so much in common. Thank you for fun and friendship, for families and learning, for games and sharing. We pray for all children in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory who are frightened for any reason. Help them to be brave, and send people to comfort, encourage and protect them, so they can live their lives without fear. Amen

Active Prayer

Think about some of the things that you believe every child should be able to enjoy, no matter where they live. Use some playdough to make a model or to spell out the things you have thought of. While you are making your model, bring your thoughts to God and pray for those children who don't have the things they need or should be able to access freely.

Game

Remember how many New Testament stories are about fishing? This is a game that some Palestinian children like to play. It is called Fishermen and is played with a ball. The rules are very simple. The ball has to stay on the ground and you can only hit it with your hands to roll it, you must not pick it up and throw it or kick it with your feet. You try to be the last person in by avoiding the ball hitting you and trying to hit the other players with the ball. If it touches anyone's feet, that person is out.



Greta Wonders...

- What does a 'normal' day look like for you? What sort of things do you do? How might it differ from children in IOPT?
- What do you think children in Israel and children in the Occupied Palestinian Territory have in common and what do you think is different? Do both get treated fairly? Do you think the children get to play together often and, if not, why not?

Activity

Make a circle of paper chain people holding hands, to illustrate acceptance and peace and everyone joining together as one. **Instructions:** Draw a circle on a piece of paper and cut it out. Fold the circle in half, then into half again forming a large cone shape, and fold once again, to get a smaller cone shape. With the point at the top, draw on one folded edge half a person. On the other folded edge, draw another half of a person, with the two holding hands in the centre of the cone. Carefully cut along your drawing outline, but not cutting the folded edge. Carefully unfold and you should have people holding hands in a circle. Colour the people.



Action Point It's not fair

You will need two dice, one normal and one with only fives and sixes on (see template online). In pairs, one has the ordinary die and the other person the special die. Both roll their die five times. The person with the highest score wins. Afterwards discuss who won, why, how the loser felt and how the game could be played more fairly. Can you think of any ways that this is like real life?



Watch

Most children in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory never get to meet each other. Hand in Hand is an organisation that encourages Jews, Arabs and Muslims to learn together and play together, to learn each other's languages and about each other's culture and religion. Find out more by watching <https://youtu.be/JK62G7z-xJ4> or <https://youtu.be/iYsvtMqxElo>

