



The International Play Association (IPA World), on behalf of our members in nearly 50 countries, condemns in the strongest possible terms the ongoing and systematic violation of children's rights in conflict zones across the world.

Children are not combatants. Schools are not military targets. Play, safety, and the right to a childhood are not privileges, they are rights enshrined under international law.

Yet in too many places, and with alarming frequency, those rights are being obliterated. There are currently 59 active state-based conflicts, the most since the end of WWII <https://www.economicsandpeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/GPI-2025-web.pdf>

THE DESTRUCTION OF CHILDHOOD IN GAZA

Since October 2023, more than 20,000 Palestinian children have been killed- approximately one child every hour over 23 months (Save the Children, September 2025).

The children of Gaza have endured suffering that the world should not and must not normalise. These are children who should be running in playgrounds, laughing with friends, participating in their community, and imagining futures. Instead, they are being buried, maimed, starved, and robbed of everything a childhood should be.

IPA World recognises the particular cruelty of targeting and brutalising children. When children are targeted and brutalised like we are witnessing, more than buildings fall- the future falls with them. Gaza's children have already lost the equivalent of five years of their childhood. A generation's potential is being erased in real time.

THE BOMBING OF THE SHAJAREH TAYYEBEH GIRLS' SCHOOL, MINAB — IRAN

On 1 March 2026, as part of US and Israeli military strikes on Iran, a guided missile struck the Shajareh Tayyebah primary school for girls in Minab in the Hormozgan province of southeastern Iran killing at least 165 schoolgirls. The children inside were between seven and twelve years old.

Under international humanitarian law, educational institutions are protected civilian spaces. Whether through error, negligence or intent, the destruction of a school full of children represents a profound failure- moral, legal and human.

IPA World joins UNESCO, the United Nations, and advocates around the world in demanding full accountability, a transparent independent investigation, and justice for the children and families of Minab.

CHILDREN'S RIGHT TO PLAY CANNOT EXIST WITHOUT SAFETY

IPA World exists to uphold Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child — the right of every child to play, to rest, to leisure, and to participate freely in cultural and creative life.

But Article 31 cannot exist in isolation. A child whose life is at imminent risk cannot play. A child who is starving cannot play. A child who has lost their play spaces, school, home, their siblings, and their sense of safety is a child whose rights have been comprehensively violated.

We are clear: there is no military or political justification that supersedes the rights of children. The laws of war, including the Geneva Conventions and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, ratified by 196 countries are not optional. They are binding obligations.

OUR COMMITMENT AND CALL TO ACTION

IPA World and our global membership will continue to advocate, loudly and without apology, for the rights of every child in every conflict zone. We call upon:

- All states and parties engaged in armed conflict to immediately uphold their obligations under international humanitarian law — including the absolute prohibition on targeting schools, hospitals and civilian spaces.
- The United Nations Security Council to act decisively to protect children in Gaza, Iran and every conflict zone where children's rights are being violated.
- All signatories to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child to fulfil their obligations under the UNCRC — including Articles 28 and 29 (right to education), Article 31 (right to play), and Article 38 (protection in armed conflict).
- The international community to support urgent, unrestricted humanitarian access to children in Gaza — including the immediate restoration of food, medicine, education, and the conditions for play and psychological recovery.
- An independent and transparent investigation into the bombing of the Shajareh Tayyebeh school in Minab, and full accountability for those responsible.
- All governments to invest in the protection of children in conflict — not as an afterthought, but as a fundamental obligation.

We will not be silent. We will continue to amplify the voices of children who cannot speak for themselves, and to hold the international community to the standards it has committed to uphold.

Play is how children know they are safe. It is how they heal, how they hope, and how they reclaim their humanity after horror. In Palestine, in Iran, in Ukraine, in every corner of the world where children are suffering, IPA World stands with them.

Every child deserves the right to play.

Every child deserves the right to live safely.

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