

August 15, 2018

**To the kind attention of:
Mr. António Guterres
Secretary General of the United Nations
New York**

Dear Sir,

My name is Uriah, I am 15 years old. I live in Eshkol at the south of Israel, which bordering Gaza.

I am writing this letter to you this week, as the world marked the 'International Youth Day' proclaimed by the organization that you lead. The theme that the United Nations has chosen this year is: "**Protected Spaces For Youth**" that emphasizes the importance of children and youth having safe places to travel, play, study, relax and visit their friends without any fear or threat.

My friends and I, thousands of children and teenagers, living in the communities surrounding the Gaza Strip, have lived in protected areas for years. Not the ones that the UN resolution refers to, but those that are meant to protect me and save my life from rocket attacks, mortar shells, terrorist tunnels, and recently balloons and firebombs launched from Gaza, which is controlled by the internationally recognized terrorist organization Hamas.

Mr. Secretary-General,

It is now summer holidays, when children like myself should be playing, enjoying games, being with friends. Instead, we have been in shelters and inside, afraid to go out in case a rocket is fired or an incendiary kite sent towards us.

Mr. Secretary-General,
Children deserve to be outside playing, not in bomb shelters !

In recent months, my family and I had no day and no night! Just "Red Alert".

Mr. Secretary-General,
Have you heard of "Red Alert"? This is the warning we receive when rockets & mortars are fired at us. Last week we had 200+ rockets fired in two days from Gaza.
Did you know that we have 15 seconds (!!) sometimes even less to find shelter. **Fifteen seconds separating life and death!**

Not once, the protected space which supposed to make you feel safe becomes the exact place where deep fears and anxiety are floating. While you are huddled with your family or friends in the protected space, listening to the horrifying sound of the rocket hits or the siren searing through the air, your mind can not stop wandering about members of your family or friends who may not found a hiding place and are in danger. You wonder about what the missile might destroy when it will hit the ground. You pray with all your heart for luck.

Mr. Secretary-General,
in the last months, in fact even years, this has become routine for thousands of children like myself living in the south of Israel, with the terrible fear that at any given moment the silence may be disturbed by the shelling of missiles. The sense of anxiety and deep insecurity permeates even the strongest of us. But we are just children, we should not be dealing with this; **No child should!** Severe symptoms of post-trauma and fear of abandonment are known in every home in our community. And what hurts no less is the fact that we, children of Israel, feel that the world including the UN have abandoned us, as if our rights, our future is somehow less worthy or not important.

In the meantime, we, the children of Israel, will continue to wish for peace with our neighbors in Gaza and to send balloons of hope and togetherness.

Mr. Secretary-General,

We ask please your organization the UN to unequivocally condemn the terrorism from Gaza and to make clear to our neighbors that the children of Israel have the basic & inalienable right to live in peace where we can grow as normal children. There is no excuse, no justification ever firing on Schools, kindergartens, children and civilians.

Mr. Secretary-General,

In these sad and difficult moments, I wanted you to know that my friends and I think of all the children of the world who are not lucky, including the children of Gaza, who are under the threat of Hamas and the other terrorist organizations.

My friends and I will continue to believe and dream that the day will come when the walls of hatred will become bridges of friendship and coexistence, in which the children of the entire region, Israeli and Palestinian, will experience a beautiful, good and safe childhood.

Yours Sincerely,

Uriah Hatzroni, 15 years old
Moshav Yated, Eshkol Regional Council
Israel