

Action for Palestinian Children

c/o PSC PO Box BM PSA, London WC1N 3XX

Mr Alistair Burt MP
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth
Affairs
King Charles Street
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25 June 2013

Dear Mr Burt

Last year the Foreign & Commonwealth Office funded a delegation of respected UK lawyers from the fields of human rights, crime and child welfare to travel to Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory to assess the treatment of Palestinian children under Israeli military law.

On June 26th 2012 the delegation published its report and concluded that Israel was in breach of:

- UNCRC articles 2 (discrimination), 3 (child's best interests), 37(b) (premature resort to detention), (c) (non-separation from adults), (d) (prompt access to lawyers), and 40 (use of shackles);
- Fourth Geneva Convention, article 76 (transportation of child prisoners into Israel);
- Fourth Geneva Convention article 65 (failure to translate Military Order 1676).

The report also heard evidence that indicated Israel could also be in also in breach of the prohibition on cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment (UNCRC 37 (a) to such a degree as to amount to torture.

The report made 40 recommendations.

Despite this, one year later, very little has changed. Defence of the Child International (Palestine) have found that even the few amendments made to the Israeli military court system have made very little substantive difference to the way hundreds of Palestinian children are arrested, detained and treated.

We know that you have been in contact with the Israeli authorities to lobby for change but we are extremely concerned that there has been no substantive shift by Israel on these matters.

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We are also concerned at the involvement of the British/Danish company, G4S, in the Israeli prison system and urge the UK Government to produce advice for businesses not to participate in projects which are likely to involve serious breaches of international law. Serious breaches in this case would include G4S equipping detention centres where there is evidence of beatings, torture, threats and forced confessions, including of children. Additionally, it would include guidance against operating in Israeli prisons where Palestinians – including children – are transferred from Occupied Palestinian Territory in breach of the Fourth Geneva Convention.

We urge you to increase the pressure on Israel to implement all 40 of the recommendations in the report but we would ask that you focus on these specific measures as a matter of urgency:

1. An end to Israel's night time raids and shackling of Palestinian children
2. Audio-visual recordings of all interrogations
3. Parents given the right to be present during questioning and the child's right to access to a lawyer before their interrogation respected
4. An end to the transfer of children to prisons inside Israel in breach of the Article 76 of the Fourth Geneva Convention;
5. An end to the use of solitary confinement.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Lisa Nandy MP
Sir Geoffrey Bindman QC
Kiri Tunks (Action for Palestinian Children)