

PALESTINIAN CHILDREN IN ISRAELI DETENTION



Israel is the only country in the world that systematically prosecutes children in military courts – between 500 and 700 each year. Since 2012, Israel has held an average of 204 Palestinian children in custody each month, according to data provided by the Israel Prison Service. Ill-treatment in the Israeli military detention system remains “widespread, systematic, and institutionalised throughout the process,” according to the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF) report, *Children in Israeli Military Detention Observations and Recommendation*.

Why are so many arrested?

Many of the communities where Palestinian youth are targeted for arrest are located close to Jewish-only settlements, Israeli military bases or roads used by settlers and the army. Children are taken from their homes, often in the middle of the night; at demonstrations, or checkpoints; near the wall, or military institutions. They usually face the charge of throwing stones, which carries a maximum sentence of 10 or 20 years depending upon the circumstances.

What is their experience?

Palestinian child detainees are held at a military base or detention centre for interrogation, pre-trial detention, or prior to appearing in the military courts. They are frequently coerced into admitting to things they did not do, and forced to sign statements in Hebrew, a language they do not understand. They are often questioned without a lawyer or parent present. Following an initial appearance in court, they are transferred to prisons where they await sentencing or serve their prison sentence. **In military courts, the conviction rate is 99%** (Military Court Watch 2017).

Contact with family

Around 60% of child prisoners end up in prisons inside Israel. This is in violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention, which prohibits the deportation of any person from an occupied territory to the territory of the occupying power. As a practical consequence, children have limited family visits.



No way to treat a child

According to International Law, a child is defined as a human under the age of 18 years. Under Israeli military detention, Palestinian children as young as 12 are routinely:

- Taken from their homes at gunpoint in night-time raids by soldiers.
- Blindfolded, bound and shackled.
- Interrogated without a lawyer or relative being present and with no audio-visual recording.
- Put into solitary confinement.
- Forced to sign confessions (often in Hebrew – a language they do not understand).

Palestinian Children under occupation

Children comprise nearly half the population in Palestine. For the majority throughout the West Bank and in areas of East Jerusalem, life is far from normal. They are constantly under threat from soldiers and Israeli settlers, exposed to abuse, arrest, detention, delays at checkpoints and ad hoc barriers. According to a report from Defense for Children International – Palestine, (DCIP) more than 400 children were being held in Israeli jails in November 2016, subjected to systematic ill treatment and denied rights afforded them under international law. Children arrested in the West Bank are subject to trial in military courts, and although in East Jerusalem they might have the benefit of being tried under the civil system, the experience is much the same.



Families face difficult journeys, passing through multiple checkpoints. On arrival at the prison, they have to go through security checks and are sometimes strip-searched. They see their children for about 40 minutes, through a glass barrier. Children have no access to a phone for contact between visits.

Do Israeli military courts administer justice or enforce control?

Arresting children in their homes in the middle of the night; ill-treating them during arrest and interrogation; and prosecuting them in military courts that lack basic fair trial guarantees, work to stifle dissent and control an occupied population. In this sense, it could be seen as a practical tool of the occupation that acts to legitimise and extend control of the Palestinian population.

Take action now for Palestinian children

We are calling upon the British government to make a public statement that it will take immediate, effective and meaningful action-

including through international bodies-to ensure all the following requirements are implemented by the Israeli government without delay:

1. Children must not be prosecuted in military courts that lack basic and fundamental due process guarantees;
2. Detention must only be used as a measure of last resort;
3. Children must not be arrested at night;
4. Children must not be subjected to any form of physical violence;
5. Children must have access to legal representation and parents prior to and during interrogations;
6. All interrogations of children must be audio-visually recorded;
7. Any statement made as a result of torture or ill-treatment must be excluded as evidence in any proceeding; and
8. All credible allegations of torture and ill-treatment must be thoroughly and impartially investigated in accordance with international standards, and perpetrators brought promptly to justice.

What you can do

- Visit www.nowaytotreatachild.uk to sign the petition
- Contact your MP asking them to take action
- Join our campaign and share the word with your friends and family

More information

- The UK based No Way to Treat a Child campaign www.nowaytotreatachild.uk
- Defence for Children International – Palestine Section <http://nwttac.dci-palestine.org> & www.dci-palestine.org



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