

## **2017 CalNevada Annual Conference**

### **Item # 5 Advocating for the Rights of Children Living Under Israeli Military Occupation**

#### **Background**

Now in its 50<sup>th</sup> year, Israel's military occupation of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip remains entrenched while instability and violence define much of life for Palestinian children. This resolution focuses on the widespread, systematic, and institutionalized ill-treatment of Palestinian children arrested and detained by Israeli forces from the occupied West Bank and prosecuted in an Israeli military court system that denies basic fair trial rights. It also highlights our responsibility as United Methodists and as U.S. citizens to take action on behalf of these children.

Israel is the only country in the world that systematically prosecutes children in military courts. Each year approximately 700 children enter the Israeli military detention system. In a 2013 landmark study of this detention system, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) reported that ill-treatment in the Israeli military detention system is "widespread, systematic, and institutionalized throughout the process." Despite sustained engagement by UNICEF and repeated calls to end night arrests and ill-treatment and torture of Palestinian children in Israeli military detention, Israeli authorities have persistently failed to implement practical changes to stop violence against child detainees. Reforms undertaken by Israeli military authorities tend to be cosmetic in nature rather than substantively addressing abuse by Israeli military and police.

Further, in its annual country reports on human rights practices, the U.S. Department of State has, since 2007, included data and information on ill-treatment and torture of Palestinian children in Israeli military detention, denial of fair trial rights in Israeli military courts, and other grave violations against children committed by Israeli forces.

The U.S. Foreign Assistance Act specifies that no military assistance be given to any country that "engages in a consistent pattern of gross violation of internationally recognized human rights" and on at least eleven previous occasions the U.S. has withheld assistance from countries based on their human rights violations. Violations against Palestinian children in the Israeli military detention system have been well documented for many years, not only by the U.S. Department of State but by numerous highly respected Israeli, Palestinian and international human rights organizations. This vast assemblage of data confirming ongoing and widespread ill-treatment of children in Israeli military detention gives ample justification to withhold military assistance, as specified in the U.S. Foreign Assistance Act.

**Further, the** U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child has been ratified by every single member of the United Nations except the United States. Israel ratified this convention in 1991, and is thus required to adhere to its provisions regarding children. From the moment of arrest, operations and procedures must be carried out in accordance with the Convention.

Ratification of the Convention by the United States would bring stronger international pressure on Israel to comply with the Convention's provisions, including those that address the treatment of children held in detention. Ratification of this Convention by the United States would also underscore our nation's responsibility for humane treatment of all children, including the disproportionately black and brown

children held in U.S. prisons.

Discipleship requires solidarity with the vulnerable and the oppressed. Children are deserving of special protections from injustice and violence.

**THEREFORE, this resolution: (AS RECORDED)**

***CALLS ON the government of the United States to adhere to its own established law – in this case, the U.S. Foreign Assistance Act – even if this may require withholding military assistance from the State of Israel due to its practices of arrest and detention of Palestinian children, and***

***REQUESTS the Conference Secretary to communicate this call to the Members of Congress within the Conference boundaries, as well as the President, the Vice President, and the Secretary of State of the United States;***

***CALLS ON the United States Senate to join with 194 other nations in ratifying the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child so as to bring stronger international pressure to bear on Israel to comply with the Convention's provisions, particularly those governing the treatment of children held in detention and***

***REQUESTS that the Conference Secretary communicate this call to Members of Congress within the Conference boundaries, as well as the President, Vice President, and Secretary of State of the United States;***

***REQUESTS that members to the 2017 Annual Conference take action by 1) relaying these two calls to the congregations; and 2) writing their Senators and Members of Congress, urging them to respond to our call and 3) encouraging and facilitating their congregations to do the same.***

***ENCOURAGES continued partnership with U.S. and global ecumenical and interfaith partners, as well as with Palestinian and Israeli organizations that are advocating for the rights of children and providing educational, social, and psychological support for children and their families adversely affected by the occupation; and***

***CALLS ON Conference congregations and individuals to learn about the plight of children in Palestine and asks that the Israel/Palestine Tasks Force be a resource as well as a promotor of study and advocacy for the rights of children living under Israeli Military Occupation***