

Israeli Military Detention: No Way to Treat a Child

Submitted by the California Nevada UMC Israel-Palestine Task Force

Date Adopted: June 8, 2015

Members Voting: 14 Voted Yes: 14 Voted No: 0 Abstaining: 0

Contact Person: Yvonne Turner, Chair Israel-Palestine Task Force

Financial Impact: None

BACKGROUND: In 2013 UNICEF conducted a detailed analysis on cruel, inhumane and degrading treatment and punishment of Palestinian children in the Israeli military detention system operating in the Occupied Palestinian territories. The results were highlighted in the report “*Children in Israeli Military Detention: Observations and Recommendations.*” Over the past decade, an estimated seven thousand Palestinian children, ages 12 to 17 were subjected to arrest, detention, interrogation, and/or imprisonment by Israeli army, police, and security agents. The report documents systematic violations of the rights of Palestinian children subjected to this military detention system.

In the Palestinian village of Wadi Foquin, which is in a partnership relationship with several churches in the California Nevada Annual Conference, represented by the Friends of Wadi Foquin, children are routinely subjected to this inhumane treatment documented in the UNICEF report. Janet Lahr Lewis, former Methodist Liaison in Palestine and Israel, and current Peace with Justice Program Associate with the General Board of Church and Society, has documented experiences of this mistreatment of children in a report to the Friends of Wadi Foquin.

International law is clear on the treatment of a child. All children who come into contact with a justice system are to be treated with dignity and respect, with detention used only as a last resort. The international law prohibition against torture and other cruel, inhumane, and degrading treatment or punishment is absolute and without exceptions. Israel’s military detention system targeting children is an anomaly in the world. UNICEF commented in its report, “It is understood that in no other country are children systematically tried by juvenile military courts that, by definition, fall short of providing the necessary guarantees to ensure respect for their rights.” For Palestinian children, there is no existing system of civil law governing their rights as they fall victim to the military detention system.

Based on international law and treaties, the UNICEF report makes 38 recommendations for action by Israeli officials while offering the following conclusions:

“The ill-treatment of Palestinian children who come into contact with the military detention system appears to be widespread, systematic and institutionalized throughout the process, from the moment of arrest until the child’s prosecution and eventual conviction and sentencing.”

46 A briefing was held in Washington D.C. on June 2, 2015 to educate congressional members of
47 this treatment of Palestinian children. Congresswoman Betty McCollum issued a letter to
48 Secretary of State John Kerry urging the State Department to elevate the human rights of
49 Palestinian children to a priority status in our bilateral relationship with the Government of Israel
50 and to address the treatment of Palestinian children by the Israeli military detention system in its
51 annual human rights report.

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53 **BE IT RESOLVED:**

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- 55 1. That the California Nevada Annual Conference write a letter to Secretary of State John
56 Kerry calling for:
 - 57 • The elevation of the human rights of Palestinian children to a priority status in our
58 bilateral relationship with the Government of Israel
 - 59 • The inclusion of the treatment of Palestinian children by the Israeli military
60 detention system in the State Department annual human rights report.
- 61 2. That congregations of the California Nevada Annual Conference contact Congressional
62 representatives urging their support of Congresswoman McCollum's letter to Secretary of
63 State John Kerry.

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