

## **An open letter to Daniel Taub Israeli Ambassador**

Dear Mr/Ambassador? Taub

I am writing on behalf of Enfield Palestine Solidarity Campaign about the issue of the treatment of Palestinian child prisoners in the West Bank under Israeli military law.

You have written to David Burrowes MP on two occasions about this following representations we have made to him.

As you will know, treatment of Palestinian children has been a matter of concern to the UK government for many years now, and is also a matter of international concern.

I review two major reports on this issue, one from the British Government and one from the United Nations, and one informal report from a group of senior UK lawyers.

### **Children in Military Custody (UK government)**

In June 2012 the UK government produced a report 'Children in Military Custody'. It found (para 110) that Israel was comprehensively in breach of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. It was also found to be in breach of the Fourth Geneva Convention.

The report noted that it was given two differing accounts of the treatment of children under military rule in the West Bank, one by NGOs (Israeli and Palestinian), UN agencies, lawyers, former Israeli soldiers and Palestinian children, the other by the Israeli government. These differing accounts were "irreconcilable".

The report noted that if the account from the former group was the true one, then Israel was also in breach of the prohibition on cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment of the UN Convention on the rights of the Child.

The UK government made 40 recommendations to Israel. In October 2012 UK Middle East Minister Alistair Burt, addressing the UK parliament, noted that none of them had been implemented.

### **Children in Israeli Military Detention (United Nations, February 2013)**

This detailed report concluded that abuse of children appeared to be "widespread, systematic and institutionalised" in the Israeli military detention system.

It issued 38 recommendations to Israel.

In June 2013 The United Nations called on Israel to "dismantle the institutionalised system of detention and use of torture and ill-treatment of Palestinian children at all stages of the judicial procedure". It said that those involved should be "brought to justice and punished with penalties commensurate with the gravity of their crimes".

A detailed follow up in 2015 (UN Bulletin No. 2: February 2015) found that there had been little or no substantive implementation of the 38 recommendations.

### **UK Lawyers report (Jewish Chronicle 16 Jan 2014)**

A delegation of senior UK lawyers and people with a particular interest in the rule of law visited the West Bank in January 2014 and sat in on a session of the Israeli military court.

They said that “those who consider that stories of systemic breaches of human rights under the occupation are an anti-Israel myth are deluding themselves”. They felt that the courts are part of a system that “keeps Palestinian society in a state of constant fear and uncertainty”.

They noted that all the children in the court were in leg shackles. They noted a conviction rate of 99.7%, based on forced confessions and the threat of longer periods of incarceration on remand than would be faced if pleading guilty. They concluded that the entire legal proceedings was a charade and that Israel risked becoming a pariah state.

### **At present under Israeli military rule Palestinian children as young as 12 are**

- Taken from their homes at dead of night by soldiers carrying machine guns
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- Blindfolded, bound and shackled. It has been reported that their hands have been tied so tightly they swell and turn blue
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- Interrogated with no lawyer or parent present and no recording
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- Put into solitary confinement
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- Found guilty (of a crime which may carry a 20 year prison sentence) in the majority of cases on no evidence other than their own confessions and the testimony of other children and of Israeli soldiers
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- Given prison sentences based on confessions signed in a language they do not understand
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These children's lives are blighted. Their education is disrupted, their long term job prospects damaged and they may suffer mental health problems.

We call on the Israeli government to put an end to this state of affairs.

With best wishes

Brendan O'Brien

Secretary Enfield Palestine Solidarity Campaign

