

# ***A Call for the United Church of Christ to Advocate for the Rights of Children Living Under Israeli Military Occupation***

## **A Resolution of Witness For Consideration at Thirty-First General Synod United Church of Christ**

### **Frequently Asked Questions**

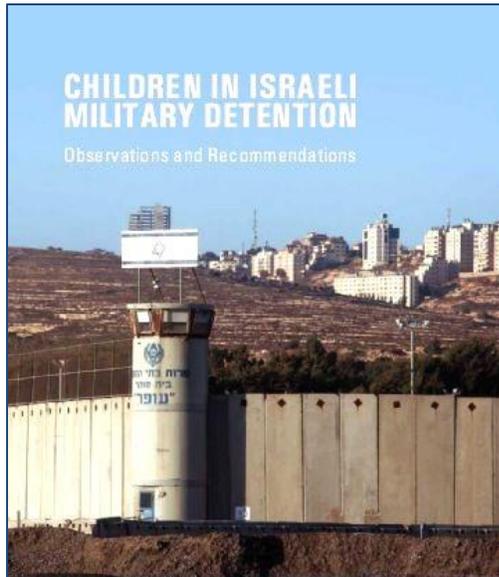
#### **What actions does the Resolution call for?**

- Calls for the State of Israel to adhere to the U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child in its treatment of Palestinian children who are arrested and detained.
- Calls for the U.S. Government to adhere to the U.S. Foreign Assistance Act by withholding military assistance to Israel due to Israel's practices of arrest and detention of Palestinian children in violation of internationally recognized human rights laws.
- Calls for the U.S. to join 194 other nations in ratifying the U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- Calls for all settings of the United Church of Christ to continue learning about the plight of children in Palestine and the State of Israel.

#### **Why are these actions important now?**

- Ill-treatment of Palestinian children at the hands of Israeli military and police forces remains widespread, systematic and institutionalized (see the many reports and studies cited below and in the UCC Resolution). Moreover, the conditions of arrest and detention, sometimes amounting to torture, have become even worse in recent years (see information provided below).
- A new U.S. administration needs to hear the voice of the U.S. faith community calling for the protection of children living under Israeli military occupation.
- The decades-long delay in U.S. ratification of the U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child must end.
- We have the opportunity to join other faith groups in calling for the protection of human rights in Israel and Palestine.

## How can I learn more about Israel's process of arrest and detention of Palestinian children?



This UNICEF report lays bare the ill-treatment of children (see link below)

The following videos provide more detailed information about the process of arrest and detention of Palestinian children by Israeli military forces (click on the blue links):

**Not to be missed** is the 21-minute documentary *Detaining Dreams*:  
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=7rw69pLILqw](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7rw69pLILqw)

The 2014 documentary *Stone Cold Justice*: <https://vimeo.com/86575949>

A 2014 presentation by Gerard Horton, lawyer with Military Court Watch:

Part 1: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cWe0NgZtcKg>

Part 2: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FIGU9kwHUz4>

Part 3: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7e3Dge8GF8s>

Timely, authoritative reports by UNICEF and Defense for Children International - Palestine (DCIP):

- [https://www.unicef.org/oPt/UNICEF\\_oPt\\_Children\\_in\\_Israeli\\_Military\\_Detention\\_Observations\\_and\\_Recommendations\\_-\\_6\\_March\\_2013.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/oPt/UNICEF_oPt_Children_in_Israeli_Military_Detention_Observations_and_Recommendations_-_6_March_2013.pdf)
- [https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/dcipalestine/pages/1527/attachments/original/1460665378/DCIP\\_NWTTAC\\_Report\\_Final\\_April\\_2016.pdf?1460665378](https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/dcipalestine/pages/1527/attachments/original/1460665378/DCIP_NWTTAC_Report_Final_April_2016.pdf?1460665378)

See also these websites for the *No Way to Treat a Child* campaign and Defense for Children International - Palestine (DCIP):

- <http://nwtac.dci-palestine.org>
- [http://www.dci-palestine.org/issues\\_military\\_detention](http://www.dci-palestine.org/issues_military_detention)

## How can I learn more about the U.S. Foreign Assistance Act?

See this report by Josh Ruebner: [https://www.scribd.com/document/329770010/US-Military-Aid-to-Israel-Policy-Implications-Options - fullscreen&from\\_embed](https://www.scribd.com/document/329770010/US-Military-Aid-to-Israel-Policy-Implications-Options - fullscreen&from_embed)

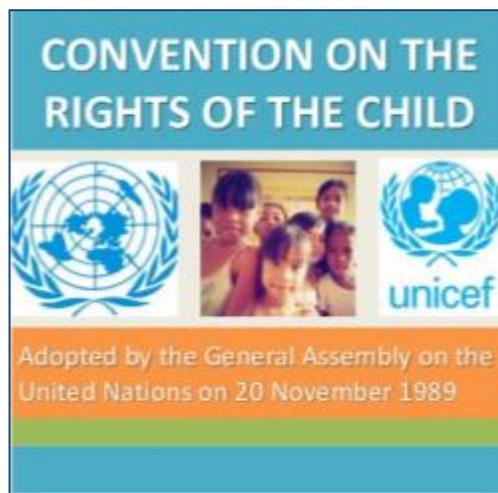
The Leahy Law or “Leahy Amendment” is often cited in discussions about U.S. military assistance to Israel. It is an amendment to the U.S. Foreign Assistance Act (and also the U.S. Arms Export Control Act) which states that no assistance will be furnished to “any unit of the security forces of a foreign country if the Secretary of State has credible information that such unit has committed a gross violation of human rights.” (Emphasis added.) The text of this amendment can be found here: <https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/22/2378d>

Here is the specific clause of the U.S. Foreign Assistance Act pertaining to withholding of assistance for human rights violations: <https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/22/2304>

## Does the documentation about Israel’s detention and ill-treatment of Palestinian children include reports from Israeli organizations?

Yes. Among the reputable Israeli institutions which provide documentation about Israel’s system of arresting and detaining children are these organizations:

- B’Tselem, The Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories <http://www.btselem.org>
- HaMoked, Center for the Defence of the Individual <http://www.hamoked.org>
- Association for Civil Rights in Israel (ACRI) <http://www.acri.org.il/en>
- Breaking the Silence <http://www.breakingthesilence.org.il>
- Yesh Din – Volunteers for Human Rights <http://www.yesh-din.org.il/en>
- Physicians for Human Rights – Israel <http://www.phr.org.il/en/about/>
- The Public Committee Against Torture in Israel (PCATI) <http://stoptorture.org.il/?lang=en>



**A United Nations Convention which Israel has signed and is obligated to uphold**

## What are the ages of the Palestinian children who are arrested and detained?

The statistics cited in the UCC Resolution (and in the source materials listed in the UCC Resolution) concern Palestinian children 12-17 years of age.

Additionally, human rights organizations have documented that Palestinian children younger than age 12 – even as young as 5 years of age – are also subject to arrest and detention by Israeli military forces. Just as for children aged 12-17, these children who are less than 12 years of age also report ill-treatment while in the custody of Israeli military forces. See for example: [http://www.btselem.org/press\\_releases/20130711\\_soldiers\\_detain\\_5\\_year\\_old\\_in\\_hebron](http://www.btselem.org/press_releases/20130711_soldiers_detain_5_year_old_in_hebron)

## In March 2013, UNICEF published a landmark report on the human rights violations of Israel's system of military detention. Have things gotten better since that report was published? Has Israel demonstrated that it is working to address the many problems highlighted in this report?

In response to the 2013 UNICEF report, Israel committed to “collaborate with UNICEF to implement [the] report’s recommendations.” (The Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs statement about this can be found here: <http://embassies.gov.il/MFA/PressRoom/2013/Pages/Israel-UNICEF-implement-recommendations-6-Mar-2013.aspx>) Yet a follow-up report by UNICEF in February 2015 concluded that reports of alleged ill-treatment of children by Israeli forces “have not significantly decreased in 2013 and 2014.” Likewise, a recent study by Defense For Children International - Palestine (DCIP) concluded, “2014 brought no respite for Palestinian children, whether entangled in the Israeli military detention system, living in residential areas in the Gaza Strip, or simply on their way to school.”



Image painted on the 23-foot-high apartheid wall. Photo credit: Tom Bell

Reports by Human Rights Watch in July 2015 and April 2016 provide additional documentation of the physical and psychological harm which Palestinian children continue to suffer during arrest and detention.

- <https://www.hrw.org/news/2015/07/19/israel-security-forces-abuse-palestinian-children>
- <https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/04/11/palestine-israeli-police-abusing-detained-children>

Indeed, the situation for Palestinian children has gotten worse, not better, since UNICEF published its report in 2013. The number of children held in military detention has more than doubled, thus exposing more children to the physical and psychological abuse of Israel’s military detention system. The number of girls held in detention has risen. There is now a

higher proportion of “younger children” (ages 12-15) in military detention. There has also been a substantial increase in the number of children held in administrative detention (i.e., held indefinitely without charge and without trial, in violation of international human rights law). Here are the data: [http://www.dci-palestine.org/military\\_detention\\_stats](http://www.dci-palestine.org/military_detention_stats)



Photo credit: Christian Peacemaking Teams

Further, in November 2015, the Israeli Knesset passed a law that authorizes longer prison sentences for children convicted of throwing stones – as much as 10-20 years depending on circumstances.

Palestinian children are now arrested and detained for such “offenses” as posting non-violent, non-threatening messages on Facebook. And various human rights organizations have documented that children younger than 12 years of age – even as young as 5 years old – are also subject to arrest, detention and ill-treatment by Israeli military forces.

Tellingly, in May 2016 the Israeli Military Prison service stopped issuing data on the numbers of arrested/detained children.

According to Sarah Leah Whitson, Middle East director for Human Rights Watch, “Israel has been on notice for years that its security forces are abusing Palestinian children’s rights in occupied territory, but the problems continue. These are not difficult abuses to end if the Israeli government were serious about doing so.”

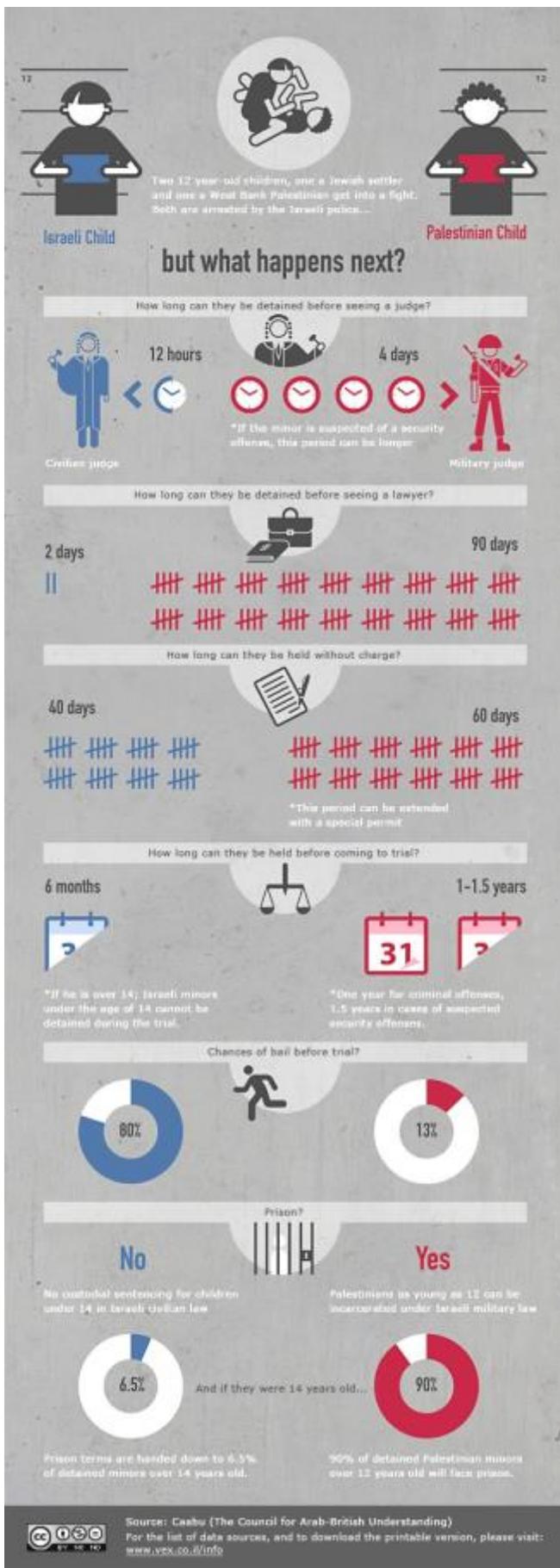
See <http://www.hrw.org/news/2015/07/19/israel-security-forces-abuse-palestinian-children>.

## **What happens to Israeli settler children when they are arrested? How does the treatment of Israeli settler children (whose families reside illegally in the West Bank) compare with treatment of Palestinian children living in the West Bank?**

CAABU, the Council for Arab British Understanding, addressed this question in their 2012 report *Palestinian Detainees: No Security in Injustice*.

<http://caabu.org/what-we-do/palestinian-detainees/report-no-security-injustice>

CAABU wrote, “[I]f two children, one Israeli, one Palestinian, both residing in the West Bank, were involved in a fight with each other, their experience of the Israeli legal system would differ dramatically. One would go through the Israeli civilian juvenile justice system, while the other would go through the military court system.” CAABU’s illustration comparing the two systems is reproduced on the following page.



## **Aren't you unfairly singling out Israel? After all, many other countries, including the United States, commit human rights violations from time to time.**

Each year, the United States gives Israel billions of dollars of military assistance. Under a new 10-year deal, called the Memorandum of Understanding, the U.S. is providing Israel with \$38 billion of military aid from 2019 to 2028

([https://www.nytimes.com/2016/09/14/world/middleeast/israel-benjamin-netanyahu-military-aid.html?\\_r=0](https://www.nytimes.com/2016/09/14/world/middleeast/israel-benjamin-netanyahu-military-aid.html?_r=0)). No country receives more U.S. military assistance than Israel. This means that we citizens of the United States are deeply complicit in Israel's occupation. We bear a great responsibility for the continuation of Israel's military occupation, now in its 50<sup>th</sup> year, with all its well-documented human rights abuses.

### **How can I help?**

- Educate yourself about the issue of child detentions using the learning resources (video links and reports) listed above.
- Educate your congregation about the resolution. Pastor(s), Church Council or Boards, including Mission & Outreach Board and Christian Education Board, and youth and adult members of your congregation will all benefit from learning about this resolution. The *No Way to Treat a Child* campaign, a project of American Friends Service Committee and Defense of Children International - Palestine (DCIP), provides an excellent 21-minute video featuring interviews of four children who were arrested and detained by the Israeli military ([www.youtube.com/watch?v=7rw69pLlQw](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7rw69pLlQw)).
- Consider having your local congregation or UCC conference, or both, endorse the resolution ahead of General Synod 31. Note that General Synod is June 30 to July 4, 2017. We encourage congregations and conferences to endorse the resolution exactly as it is written. Any additions or modifications to the text, however well intentioned, result in an alternate resolution that is technically different and distinct from the original resolution.
- Become an advocate for children living under military occupation. Join the United Church of Christ Palestine-Israel Network (UCC PIN) to receive regular updates about the resolution and timely information about advocating for these children. To join the UCC PIN, visit [www.uccpin.org](http://www.uccpin.org), click on the *Contact/Donate* tab, then scroll down to add your name to the UCC PIN "Google Groups" mailing list. Additionally, sign up for e-mail updates from the *No Way to Treat a Child* campaign or Friends of Sabeel-North America's *No Child Behind Bars* campaign. Become active in these campaigns or support any of the many organizations (for example, Middle East Children's Alliance) which provide aid and advocacy for these children.
- Sign and circulate petitions, join peaceful demonstrations, write letters to the editor and contact your elected officials.

### **Feedback for this Frequently Asked Questions document**

We welcome your feedback. Please send feedback and suggestions to [info@uccpin.org](mailto:info@uccpin.org). This document was created by a task force of the United Church of Christ Palestine-Israel Network. This is Revision 4 of the document.