

# No Way to Treat a Child

## Overview

June of 2016 marks the beginning of the 50<sup>th</sup> year of Israel's military occupation of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip. This illegal and immoral occupation is marked by myriad violations of Palestinian human rights including the widespread and systematic ill-treatment of Palestinian children in the Israeli military detention system. Jewish Voice for Peace believes that a substantive first step towards achieving equality, dignity, and human rights for Palestinians is to challenge Israeli military detention of Palestinian children. ***Now 20 members of Congress have urged President Obama to press the Israeli government to end this detention and abuse.***

## Background

Since 1967, Israel has operated two separate legal systems in the same territory. In the occupied West Bank, Israeli settlers are subject to the civilian and criminal legal system whereas Palestinians live under military law. (Israel applies civilian criminal law to Palestinian children in East Jerusalem.) No Israeli child comes into contact with the military courts.

Estimates place the number of Palestinian men, women, and children convicted in Israeli military courts in excess of 700,000, according to UN sources. The US State Department's 2014 human rights report on Israel states that military courts have more than a 99 percent conviction rate for Palestinian defendants.

Israel has the dubious distinction of being ***the only country in the world that systematically prosecutes between 500 and 700 children in military courts each year.*** Since 2011, Israel has held an average of 201 Palestinian children in custody each month, according to data provided by the Israel Prison Service. At the end of February, there were 440 Palestinian children in Israeli military prisons. This is the highest number since data became available in 2008.

***Ill-treatment in the Israeli military detention system remains “widespread, systematic, and institutionalized throughout the process,”*** according to the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) report *Children in Israeli Military Detention*.

A report released in April by Defense for Children International-Palestine, based on the testimony of 429 Palestinian children detained by the Israeli military or police, found that three out of four endured some form of physical violence following arrest. Israeli interrogators used position abuse, threats, and even solitary confinement to coerce confessions from some of these children. In 97 percent of cases, children had no parent or legal counsel present during their interrogation.

International juvenile justice standards, which Israel has obliged itself to implement by ratifying the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1991, demand that children should only be deprived of their liberty as a measure of last resort. These standards also include universal prohibitions against physical violence and torture among other protections. ***Despite these obligations Israeli authorities regularly disregard and fail to comply with international law.***

## Call to Action:

Congresswoman Betty McCollum (MN 4<sup>th</sup> District) and 19 colleagues urged President Obama in a letter this month to appoint a “Special Envoy for Palestinian Children” to report on and advocate for the human rights of Palestinian children.

Unfortunately, none of our Connecticut representatives have joined this call. ***We at Jewish Voice for Peace New Haven are still waiting to hear from CT 3<sup>rd</sup> District Rep. Rosa DeLauro.*** You can contact her office; ask her to support Betty McCollum's letter and the human rights of Palestinian children. Call 203 562-3718

6/26/2016 Contact Jewish Voice for Peace New Haven at: [JVPNH.org](http://JVPNH.org)

***JOIN THIS VIGIL FOR PEACE AND JUSTICE—EVERY SUNDAY 12-1 P.M.,***

***BROADWAY, PARK & ELM STREETS:RESIST THIS ENDLESS WAR!***

<https://newhavensundayvigil.wordpress.com/>