



PRESS RELEASE FROM BRITAIN-PALESTINE APPG

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Britain-Palestine All Party Parliamentary Group (BPAPPG) and Caabu welcome action to improve treatment of Palestinian Children in Israeli custody

The Britain-Palestine All Party Parliamentary Group (BPAPPG) and the Council for Arab-British Understanding (Caabu) have welcomed the announcement that Israel will establish a pilot scheme to issue summonses to Palestinian children suspected of crimes, instead of using night time arrests. The cross party group of MPs and Peers call on the international community to support this pilot as part of a complete overhaul of the military detention system, that will ensure all child detainees are treated according to international law.

A recent report by Military Court Watch, supported by UNICEF, found that over half of children held in military custody had been arrested at night. Details of the pilot programme to reduce night time arrests— including who is supervising implementation, and the extent of the pilot’s reach, timeframe and monitoring and assessment – are not yet clear. The BPAPPG are therefore calling for Israel to provide further detail on the proposal, and implement the programme as swiftly as possible.

It is at the point of arrest and the subsequent 24 hours when Palestinian children suffer the most traumatic experiences. The evidence shows that when released from detention Palestinian minors when released suffer from many types of trauma related conditions, including bed-wetting, aggression, lack of motivation, loss of concentration, anxiety and obsessive compulsive behaviour.

According to the UNICEF report of 2013:

“Many children are arrested in the middle of the night, awakened at their homes by heavily armed soldiers. Some children are arrested in the streets near their homes, near bypass roads used by Israeli settlers or at army checkpoints inside the West Bank. Many of the children arrested at home wake up to the frightening sound of soldiers banging loudly on their front door and shouting instructions for the family to leave the house.

For some of the children, what follows is a chaotic and frightening scene, in which furniture and windows are sometimes broken, accusations and verbal threats are shouted, and family members are forced to stand outside in their night clothes as the accused child is forcibly removed from the home and taken away with vague explanations such as “he is coming with us and we will return him later”, or simply that the child is “wanted”. Few children or parents are informed as to where the child is being taken, why or for how long.”

The BPAPPG and Caabu have taken twelve Parliamentary delegations to the Israeli military court at Ofer. Both have pushed for an end to the use of night time arrests except in exceptional cases. In 2013, the issue of pilot programmes was raised with the Israeli authorities, who stated that the idea was under consideration. The BPAPPG and Caabu state that an end to night time arrests must be part of a broader overhaul of the whole detention process that includes full audio-visual recordings of interviews, consulting a lawyer before interrogation and the presence of a parent throughout.

Richard Burden MP, Chair of the BPAPPG said:

“The treatment of Palestinian children in Israeli custody remains an outrage. What we, as MPs, have seen in these courts and heard from Palestinian detainees and their lawyers, shows just how important it is that proper legal processes and protections are implemented.

We will now be seeking answers on how this pilot scheme will ensure that the human rights of all children in Israel and the Occupied Palestine Territories are finally upheld.”

Caabu’s director, Chris Doyle added:

“Whole generations of Palestinian children are being scarred for life by the trauma of Israeli military occupation. Ending the horror of night time arrests would be a welcome step in the right direction.

We hope that the Israeli authorities will make these serious changes and not just tweak the system to dampen external criticism.”

ENDS

Notes to editors:

- 1) For more information or interviews contact Lucy Hadley in the Office of Richard Burden MP on lucy.hadley@parliament.uk / 020 7219 2318 / 07552 381 206-, Chris Doyle, on + 44207 832 1321 or +447968 040281.
- 2) Details of the Israeli proposal were first reported in the Jerusalem Post on 18 February 2014. <http://www.jpost.com/Defense/EXCLUSIVE-Chief-West-Bank-Prosecutor-says-IDF-may-end-long-standing-night-arrests-of-Palestinians-341749>
- 3) For more on this issue please read Caabu’s report into treatment of Palestinian detainees: <http://www.caabu.org/what-we-do/palestinian-detainees/report-no-security-injustice> and the Military Court Watch UK Lawyers’ Report, 18 Months On: <http://www.militarycourtwatch.org/print.php?id=0GFEOlaPXua219681AtczV5TQnK9>
- 4) Further details of the Britain-Palestine All Party Parliamentary Group can be found here: <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm/cmhallparty/register/palestine.htm>