

18 November 2019

Dear Members of Congress,

As faith leaders who deeply care about the well-being of children in our country and in communities abroad, we write to bring to light the ongoing trauma faced by Palestinian children detained by the Israeli military.

We welcome the “Promoting Human Rights for Palestinian Children Living Under Israeli Military Occupation Act” (H.R. 2407), legislation that prohibits any U.S. taxpayer funds from contributing to the military detention, interrogation, abuse, or ill-treatment of children by any country, including Israel.

As documented by numerous human rights organizations, since the year 2000 an estimated 10,000 Palestinian children between the ages of 12 and 17 have been detained, prosecuted and incarcerated by the Israeli military in the occupied West Bank. Often dragged from their homes in the middle of the night by armed soldiers, they suffer physical and emotional violence and frequently face verbal abuse, humiliation and intimidation. These children are interrogated, usually without family or lawyers present, and often sign confessions in Hebrew, a language many do not understand.

Our faith commitments call us to pay particular attention to the rights of those most vulnerable, including children. Wherever children are languishing in detention camps whether in our U.S. context or in Israeli military prisons, we pray that leaders do their utmost to protect the humanity and dignity of all and prevent the violation of children’s rights.

We applaud that H.R. 2407 also gives attention to healing Palestinian children who have suffered from the physical and mental trauma of detention. H.R. 2407 authorizes the appropriation of \$19 million to fund non-governmental organizations that monitor human rights in Israel/Palestine and provide physical and mental health services. We believe in the importance of healing communities and victims of abuse so that one day Palestinians and Israelis will be able to live in peace and security.

Congress has a responsibility to ensure that U.S. policy and foreign assistance reflects values that prioritize concern for the most vulnerable, preserve and protect everyone’s dignity, and conform with U.S. law. We thank you for your service and commitment as we work together for justice and peace. Please know we are lifting you up in our prayers.

Sincerely,

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