

5 tips



American Friends
Service Committee

for speaking with your congressperson about Palestinian children in detention

Every August, most members of Congress return home to their districts for summer recess. This is a great opportunity to meet with your elected officials and communicate your concerns. This recess, talk to your congresspeople about working to end the military detention of Palestinian children. Urge them to support the “Promoting Human Rights for Palestinian Children Living Under Israeli Military Occupation Act” (H.R. 2407), which would prohibit U.S. taxpayer dollars from being used to support Palestinian child detention.

1

Get to know your representative before you engage.

Research their positions on Palestinian child detention. Did they sign H.R. 4391 (a groundbreaking bill in support of ending Palestinian child detention that preceded H.R. 2407) or any “Dear Colleague” letters on Palestinian rights? Here’s one place to find out: bit.ly/bill-cosponsors

Find out which of their staffers—in both their D.C. and in-district offices—handle issues relevant to this work. Find out if your representative has been to Israel or the occupied Palestinian territory and whether they plan to go on tours sponsored by AIPAC, J Street, or other groups this summer. If they are, ask to debrief with them about their trip or offer alternative perspectives that they may have missed during their visit.

Look at your representative’s general voting record and what committees they sit on. That can give you a sense of what kinds of messages might move them, such as arguments in support of human rights and equality.

2

Find out if there is a town hall planned for your community in August.

To get that information, visit your member’s website or call the local office. If a town hall is planned, coordinate with a few other activists to join you at the meeting. Before the event, review our fact sheet on H.R. 2407 (bit.ly/bill-factsheet) and the text of the bill (bit.ly/bill-text).

When you’re at the town hall, you will thank your representative for signing the bill or encourage them to co-sponsor it. Remember that most attendees will not be familiar with the issue or the bill, so you are educating others when you ask your question. Don’t forget to document and record your interaction.

3

Inquire with your local congressional office and search online to see if your representative will attend any local public events.

Festivals, school openings, fundraisers, and other events could be a good opportunity to approach your member of Congress. Be ready to give them your “elevator speech” (30 seconds or less) on the issue and a handout about H.R. 2407! Wear a No Way to Treat a Child button so others can see what issue you are passionate about. Get more resources: bit.ly/bill-resources.

4

Follow your member of Congress on social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram).

Twitter is a good way of sending messages to your representative—and to find out what issues they care about. Post on social media about your experience at town hall meetings or anywhere else you’ve engaged them. Include photos or videos when possible.

5

Schedule a meeting with your representative.

Contact your representative’s office for a meeting. Put together a small group of people who can meet should an opening become available (sometimes you are given less than 24 hours notice!). Small groups of five or fewer that include people from different backgrounds—or are associated in different ways to your representative—can be the most effective.

Before your meeting, prepare an agenda. Make sure all participants are clear about what they’re asking of the representative. If you have collected postcards, petitions, or other supporting documentation, bring them to the meeting. Take a photo of your meeting and follow up with a thank-you note. Tag your photos online with our hashtag [#nowaytotreatachild](https://twitter.com/nowaytotreatachild).

Check out our guide “How to talk to your representative about Palestinian children in detention” for tips on messaging:

bit.ly/AFSC-talking-points



Questions?

Contact Jennifer Bing, AFSC co-leader of No Way to Treat a Child campaign: jbmg@afsc.org.