

KEITH TAYLOR  
Green Party  
*for the South East of England*



Dear Commissioner Ashton,

I am writing to express my grave concern regarding the ongoing detention of Palestinian children by the Israeli authorities. I welcome the fact that there are currently no children in administrative detention. However, a recent report by Defence for Children International<sup>1</sup>, an independent non-governmental organization working to promote and protect the rights of the child, has revealed the unacceptable situation whereby currently 220 Palestinian children are being held in ordinary detention in Israel's military court system.

The report, based on 40 sworn affidavits taken from Palestinian children detained in the military court system between July and December 2010, was submitted to the UN in January and has recently been updated. It concludes that ill-treatment, as well as torture, of Palestinian children within the system is widespread, systematic and institutionalised.

Key findings of the report include:

- **27 percent** of child detainees are forced to sign confessions written in Hebrew.
- **58 percent** of child detainees are transferred to prisons inside Israel, in violation of Article 76 of the Fourth Geneva Convention.
- **43 percent** of child detainees are not adequately separated from adult detainees.
- **55 percent** of child detainees complain of inadequate food, water and /or shelter.

A new report from the Britain Palestine All Party Parliamentary Group (BPAPPG) has also highlighted the widespread detention of Palestinian children by the Israeli state<sup>2</sup>.

I urge you to demand immediate action by Israel to remedy this situation. As a minimum safeguard, all interrogations of children should be audio-visually recorded and parents should be permitted to accompany their children during questioning, as is the right afforded to Israeli children in most cases. Israel must also ensure that all children, once arrested, are provided with immediate access to a lawyer or a family member. I also urge you to support the setting up of an independent inquiry to investigate the treatment of children in the Israeli military court system. As you will agree, there are serious legal concerns regarding the prosecution of civilians (particularly children) in military courts, which Israel has now been engaged in for over 43 years.

I also urge you to remind Israel of its international obligations and in particular, full respect for the UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) (CRC), ratified by Israel in 1991, which specifically recognizes the particular vulnerability of children by providing that detention should be a measure of last resort (Article 37(c)). States should also implement measures whenever appropriate that steer children away from judicial proceedings (Article 40(3)). These arguments are all the more compelling in relation to prosecution before a military

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.dci-pal.org/english/doc/press/EU\\_Parliament\\_Prisoners\\_MAR\\_2011.pdf](http://www.dci-pal.org/english/doc/press/EU_Parliament_Prisoners_MAR_2011.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.richardburden.com/under-occupation>

tribunal where fewer fair trial protections exist, and where juvenile justice standards appear almost non-existent.

In conclusion, Israel must class all under 18s as children, and end the dual legal system that openly discriminates against Palestinian minors. This situation is simply unacceptable and unsustainable.

I look forward to hearing from you at your earliest convenience on this appalling situation.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Keith Taylor". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke underneath the name.

Keith Taylor - Green Party MEP, South East England