



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

Middle East & North Africa Directorate
W2.80
King Charles Street
London SW1A 2AH
www.fco.gov.uk

Mr Tareq Shrourou
Chair
Lawyers for Palestinian Human Rights
c/o Took's Chambers
81 Farringdon Street
London, EC4A 4BL

Our reference: MOP/33101/2012

29 June 2012

Dear Mr Shrourou,

Thank you for your letter of 1 June to the Foreign Secretary about the detention of Palestinian children. I have been asked to reply.

The British Government shares your concerns about the treatment of Palestinian children detained in Israeli prisons and we have a continual dialogue with the Israeli authorities on this question. We welcomed Israel's decision of 4 October 2011 to raise the age of legal majority for Palestinian children in the Israeli military justice system, a step we had advocated. Alistair Burt, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office Minister responsible for our relations with the Middle East, has raised the implementation of this decision with the Israel Ambassador to London. We have also continued to lobby the Israeli authorities for further improvements, including a reduction in the number of arrests that occur at night, an end to shackling and the introduction of audio-visual recording of interrogations.

In addition we have supported research into this issue by leading British lawyers. The independent report entitled "Children in military custody" was issued on 26 June and considered many of the points in your letter. We will be discussing its findings and recommendations with the Israeli authorities.

The Government agrees that Israel has legal obligations as an Occupying Power with respect to the Occupied Palestinian Territories under applicable international law, including the Fourth Geneva Convention. In this context, we also raise our longstanding concerns about the situation and treatment of Palestinians held in Israeli detention, including children. We welcomed the agreement reached on 14 May to end the mass hunger strike by Palestinian prisoners including Israel's agreement to limit the use of administrative detention and solitary confinement and reinstate family visits for detainees. These are important issues which we have repeatedly raised with the Israeli Government, including in May with the Israeli Foreign Minister, Vice Prime Minister and National Security Adviser. We will follow

closely the implementation of the agreement and its impact on the situation of Palestinian detainees.

We agree with you that Israel's policy of detaining Palestinians within Israel is contrary to Article 76 of the Fourth Geneva Convention and that domestic law cannot be used as a justification for violations of international law.

The UK remains strongly committed to fostering conditions in which the next generation of Palestinians and Israelis can live in peace.

Yours sincerely,

B.J. Griffiths

Barry Griffiths
Near East Group