



Rt Hon Alistair Burt MP
Minister of State for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office
Foreign and Commonwealth Office
King Charles Street
London
SW1A 2AH

12 January 2018

Dear Minister Burt,

Re: Requesting the UK government responds to the shooting of 14 year old Mohammed Tamimi and the use of rubber-coated bullets against children by Israeli forces

As lawyers committed to the protection of human rights and the compliance with international law, we write to urge that the UK government makes urgent representations to the Israeli government in regard to 14 year old Mohammed Tamimi who was shot in the face by an Israeli soldier with a rubber-covered metal bullet, at close range, in the occupied West Bank village of Nabi Saleh on 15 December 2017. The Israeli army has long been condemned for its use of violence against children, and the injuries sustained by Tamimi reflect the serious risk children are exposed to at the hands of Israeli military and police forces.

It is reported that Tamimi had been watching Israeli soldiers activity in Nabi Saleh when a bullet entered his face below his nose and lodged in his skull. Tamimi fell from the wall he had been standing on and landed on the ground three metres below. The trajectory of the rubber bullet meant his jaw was broken and half of his face collapsed.

Tamimi was driven by ambulance to a hospital after a local clinic deemed his injuries too severe to adequately treat, and was then held at military checkpoints where weapons were aimed at him. Tamimi was denied entry to Israel for medical treatment despite pleas made by the ambulance driver and paramedics. He was instead permitted to travel to a hospital in Ramallah. Tamimi's parents were denied the use of a direct road to the hospital in a separate vehicle behind the ambulance, and had to take a longer, indirect route.

Tamimi was operated on for six hours at Istishari hospital and then placed in a medically-induced coma for 72 hours. Tamimi's jaw has been reconstructed and he appears not to have suffered any cognitive damage. However, parts of his skull have been removed and he will need to remain indoors for the next six months before further surgery to rebuild his skull.

The use of force by a State against an individual can only be deployed in exceptional situations where an individual is posing an imminent threat of death or serious injury. When the use of force is deployed, it must be done so in a manner which is proportionate. The use of force against a child is military action worthy of the highest level of scrutiny given the vulnerable state of the child as clearly recognised under international human rights law. The use of force against Tamimi, who has sustained grave and life-changing injuries, both physical and psychological, raises serious concerns surrounding the use of force against



children; something which is not new within the context of the Israeli forces. The legal obligations of the Israeli military appear to have been breached in full and a clear disregard for basic human rights of children is evident.

The targeting and close range shooting of a 14 year old is an abhorrent act against one of the most vulnerable subjects of international human rights law: a child. An independent and genuine criminal investigation is needed to ascertain how: a child was targeted; why a child with life threatening injuries was obstructed from travelling to a hospital; why the parents of the child were hindered from following the ambulance; and the justification for using rubber-coated metal bullets against civilians, particularly children.

Furthermore, the use of rubber bullets is controversial and has been justified by Israeli forces as a less deadly means of targeting groups of people in claimed attempts to control crowds, often of protestors. However, they are grossly disproportionate for the objective of crowd dispersal and have been criticised as dangerous and ‘lethal’ by Ronit Sela, Director of human rights for the occupied territories unit at the Association for Civil Rights in Israel.

Notably, Tamimi’s cousin, Ahed Tamimi, who has received significant media coverage for being detained after apparently slapping an Israeli soldier, is alleged to have committed this act soon after finding out her younger cousin had been shot. Tamimi’s shooting and the confrontation of Israeli soldiers by Ahed Tamimi were reportedly an hour apart.

Urgent intervention required by the British government

We urge that you consider intervening in this grave matter through taking the following suggested actions:

1. Call for the Israeli Military Advocate General to open a genuine criminal investigation into the shooting of Mohammed Tamimi and to pursue a criminal prosecution on the basis of unlawful use of force against a child;
2. Call on Israel’s authorities to urgently inform its police officers and soldiers that the excessive and improper use of rubber-coated bullets against Palestinian children is prohibited under Israeli military regulations, and incurs criminal responsibility;
3. Call on Israel to immediately review the documented incidents by NGOs, such as Defence for Children International Palestine, of Palestinian children being injured or killed due to the firing of rubber-coated bullets by Israeli forces.

We would be grateful for your careful consideration of the above and for your written reply.

Yours sincerely,

Tareq Shrourou
Director, Lawyers for Palestinian Human Rights