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Tareq

Thank you for your letter of 15 January regarding Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPTs).

The UK continues to have strong concerns about continued reports of ill-treatment of Palestinian minors in Israeli military detention. As you note, this is a long-standing issue, and one which the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) sees as a priority. It is featured in the 2017 FCO Human Rights and Democracy Report, and I can confirm that it will again feature in the 2018 Report with updated statistics, to highlight that this continues to be a human rights priority for the Government.


As you note, in 2012 we funded and facilitated the independent report on 'Children in Military Custody' by leading British lawyers and have urged Israel to implement the recommendations it made. British Ministers and the British Ambassador to Tel Aviv have spoken and written to both the Israeli Justice Minister and the Israeli Attorney General to urge Israel to take action on the report. Unfortunately Israel has not yet taken us up on our offer. We have no current plans to send a delegation of British lawyers to Israel to review this.

As you state, we have not seen the response we had hoped for our repeated raising of this issue. You request an assurance from HMG that we continue to make strong representations to the Government of Israel about this human rights issue. I can assure you that we do, and we will continue to do so. This is something we continue to raise with Israeli Ministers and officials to make clear our concerns and the

importance we place of improving the situation for Palestinian minors in Israeli detention.

We remain committed to working with Israel to secure improvements to the practices surrounding children in detention in Israel. Specifically, we advocate for the mandatory use of audio-visual recording of interrogations, a reduction in the use of single hand ties, alternatives to night arrests and for the Israeli authorities to inform more consistently detainees of their legal rights. We continue to fund projects providing legal aid to minors and capacity building to local lawyers.

Thank you for your letter, and I can assure you we continue to take this matter very seriously, and regularly make our concerns known to Israel.

Yours ever


THE RT HON. ALISTAIR BURT MP
Minister of State for the Middle East and North Africa