

# BAY AREA WOMEN IN BLACK

July 30, 2011

## The Children Speak: Palestinian Minors in Israel's Prisons

*"On Thursday, 11 February 2010, about 01:15 in the morning, I was sleeping in my room with two of my brothers [. . .] I woke up and saw a soldier standing over me. He nudged me with the barrel of his rifle. I was scared. He said: 'Get up and get dressed, because we need you a bit.' I was afraid because this was the first time I had ever seen an Israeli soldier so close up. I thought they wanted to search the house. I got up. The soldier ordered me to get dressed and I got dressed.*

*"There were a few other soldiers with him who were masked. They spread out around the house. They had rifles with lights on. Two soldiers grabbed me by my armpits and took me outside. My father was with the soldiers when I was taken from my room. He gave them my birth certificate because I don't have an ID card. I'm still under 15. . . . On my way out, I saw that the door on the first floor had been broken. The soldiers took me outside and one of them tied my hands behind my back with plastic cuffs. They covered my eyes with a strip of cloth and then took me by foot to a place in the village where there were other children who had been arrested." Malek 'Omar, age 14, of Jalazun refugee camp<sup>i</sup>*



Approximately 700 Palestinian children as young as 12 are arrested each year, interrogated and prosecuted in the Israeli military court system. The most common arrest is for stone throwing. Defence for Children International—Palestine Section published reports in January and February 2011 based on the sworn affidavits of 53 children detained in the military court system between 7/1/10 and 12/31/10. They found the following complaints and concerns with the way the children were treated: <sup>ii</sup>

- hand ties
- detention inside Israel (violation of Article 76)
- blindfolds
- beaten or kicked
- position abuse
- threats or inducements
- confession during interrogation
- arrested between midnight and 4 am
- verbal abuse and humiliation
- signed/shown documents in Hebrew only
- detained with adults
- solitary confinement
- strip searched
- electric shocks
- threat of sexual assault
- interrogated in the absence of a parent

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*“During my whole interrogation, the interrogator did not let me go to the bathroom, even though I really had to go. They didn’t bring me food, or even water. I was really tired from the interrogation and from being beaten. So I preferred to tell the interrogator that I did throw stones in 2007. Then he ordered me to sign my confession. I signed a paper that was written in Hebrew. I didn’t know what it said. At the time, I just wanted to put an end to the interrogation and the beatings, especially since it was the first time I’d been arrested.”*  
‘Omar Hamamreh, Palestinian minor<sup>iii</sup>

Most of the children are also held until trial, not released pending trial, so the quickest way back to family is to confess. Prison sentences range from 2 to more than 4 months. The coerced false confessions also often implicate other children or adults, as many children are told that if they give a certain number of names, they will be released sooner. Then more are arrested and the circle continues.

*“One of the soldiers hit me in the stomach with his rifle. He grabbed my hair and slammed my head against the metal surface of the jeep. He kept doing this for like 10 minutes for no reason and I didn’t say anything. ‘Participating in a demo, you dog,’ he said. ‘And throwing stones at us,’ he said. ‘I wasn’t throwing anything,’ I said to him and he slapped me hard across the face and said: ‘Shut up, I don’t want to hear your voice ever.’”*  
A.Z., 15 years old, Occupied West Bank<sup>iv</sup>

Whether individual children have or have not been throwing stones, their treatment is against international and human rights law and against human decency. Our tax dollars in the form of military aid to Israel support this brutality and the US government’s unwavering support for Israel, no matter what the Israeli government or military does, protect Israel from appropriate international censure. It’s time to make our government accountable. Here are some people to contact:

- President Barack Obama: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/CONTACT/> (202) 456-1111
- US Senator Barbara Boxer: <http://boxer.senate.gov/en/contact/> (202) 224-3553, (510) 286-8537
- US Senator Dianne Feinstein:  
<http://feinstein.senate.gov/public/index.cfm?FuseAction=ContactUs.EmailMe> (202) 224-3841, (415) 393-0707
- CA Congresswoman Barbara Lee (9<sup>th</sup> District):  
<http://lee.house.gov/index.cfm?sectionid=128&sectiontree=18,128> (202) 225-2661, (510) 763-0370

<sup>i</sup> B’tselem Report: No Minor Matter, July 2011, <http://www.btselem.org/publications/summaries/2011-no-minor-matter>

<sup>ii</sup> Defence for Children International—Palestine Section, In their own Words: a report on the situation facing Palestinian children detained in the Israeli military court system, January 29, 2011, and In their own Words: a report on the situation facing Palestinian children detained in occupied East Jerusalem, February 3, 2011

<sup>iii</sup> Yossi Gurvitz, In the West Bank, there is no justice, even for children, 7/19/11, +972, <http://972mag.com/in-the-west-bank-there-is-no-justice-even-for-children/>

<sup>iv</sup> Defence for Children International—Palestine Section, In their own Words: a report on the situation facing Palestinian children detained in the Israeli military court system, January 29, 2011

See also <http://occupiedpalestine.wordpress.com/2011/07/18/btselem-93-of-palestinian-youths-arrested-for-stone-throwing-get-jail-time/>, <http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1906664,00.html>, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/mar/14/palestinian-children-rights-violated-israel>