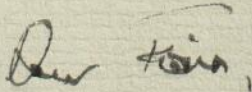


12 January 2016

Our reference: MIN/91960/2015

The Rt Hon Fiona Mactaggart MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

King Charles Street
London SW1A 2AH

Thank you for your email of 5 January to the Foreign Secretary on behalf of one of your constituents, about Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPTs). I am replying as Minister responsible for our relations with the Middle East.

I share your constituent's concerns about the treatment of Palestinian children detained in Israeli prisons, concerns which we have repeatedly expressed to the Israeli authorities. The UK is firmly committed to the promotion and protection of human rights and compliance with international law in the OPTs. As your constituent is aware we funded and facilitated the independent report on Children in Military Custody by leading British lawyers. As I announced in the Westminster Hall debate on this issue on 6 January, we intend to fund a further visit of the delegation in February to report on further progress. Ministers and the British Ambassador in 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. On 23 November, an official from our embassy in Tel Aviv raised our key concerns about the overall treatment of Palestinian minors in Israeli military detention with the Israeli Chief Military Prosecutor.

Baroness Anelay met with the Israeli Military Advocate General and the Israeli Ambassador to London on 2 June where the issue of child detention was discussed. Baroness Anelay was given an update on the efforts made by Israel on the issue of Palestinian child detainees and made clear that whilst we welcome improvements, such as changes to standard operating procedures on methods of restraint and the pilot to use summons instead of night-time arrests, we continue to push for the full implementation of measures such as the mandatory use of audio-visual recording of interrogations.

We also welcomed progress made in recent Israeli policy amendments. This includes a reduction in the detention of children aged 12 to 14 years old, the increase of the age of majority from 16 to 18 years old, and the enactment of a special statute of limitations for minors. Initial detention periods have also been shortened. However, despite this progress we will continue to push for further progress on this important issue.

Yours sincerely,



TOBIAS ELLWOOD MP
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State