

Midcoast Monthly Meeting of Friends - 2021
Minute of Support for the *No Way to Treat a Child* Campaign:
A Joint Project of the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) and Defense of
Children International (DCIP)—Palestine

In the minute submitted with this letter, members of Midcoast Monthly Meeting endorse *No Way to Treat a Child* (NWTC), a campaign aimed at promoting outreach and advocacy on behalf of victimized Palestinian children, who are living in the West Bank, East Jerusalem, Gaza, and other regions of Israel. NWTC is a joint endeavor of the Defense of Children International—Palestine (DCIP), the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), and 24 other human rights and religious organizations. Led by AFSC's efforts, Friends are joining this campaign to ensure that U.S. laws regarding the use of aid in regard to children are followed, and to help enact legislation to exclude use of U.S. funds to "...support the military detention, interrogation, abuse, or ill treatment of children."

Why We Support *No Way to Treat a Child*

Violence, torture and incarceration are perpetual features in global conflicts. In the parts of the world where these transgressions occur, a most egregious form of the persecution is the systematic mistreatment of children. As Friends, we oppose the maltreatment of all human beings and—as an extension of this belief—we are moved to speak out on behalf of Palestinian children, whose lives today are being adversely affected or destroyed by the circumstances in which they must live. We are opposed to bigotry, oppression, and discrimination, and we seek ways of living that are life-giving, fair, and compassionate. Our disquiet about discrimination and inequality leads us to oppose the Israeli government's treatment of Palestinian children, who are being incarcerated, mistreated, separated from their families, and not afforded proper care or legal support.

We recognize and stand against other instances of discrimination, the denial of human rights, and prejudice, as we take this opportunity to support the *No Way to Treat a Child* campaign. The history of discrimination against Jewish people and people of color in the U.S. has been malevolent, debilitating and cruel. In the past few years, African American, Native American, and Hispanic citizens have continued to be in life-threatening jeopardy from racism, evidenced by extreme police brutality and the astounding number of people of color in prisons across the country. The murder of worshipers in the Pittsburgh synagogue and the anti-Semitic and neo-Nazi activity of white separatist in Charlottesville, Virginia and other places have anguished and frightened members of the Jewish, Black, and Hispanic communities in the U.S. and globally. At the same time, the health, economic, and educational inequalities exposed by the COVID pandemic are dire reminders of the extent of racism in this country, and of the critical necessity for Americans to support diversity and ensure that our ethnic, religious and cultural communities can be secure and thrive.

Minute on the Mistreatment of Palestinian Children

*"Suffer the little children to come unto me," Jesus said "...for of such is the kingdom of heaven."
(Matthew 19:14)*

Forty-five percent (45%) of the 2.9 million Palestinians who now live in the occupied West Bank are children under the age of 18. Since 2000, more than 10,000 Palestinian children have been seized and held in harsh military detention by Israeli forces. They have been subjected to cruel and brutal treatment without recourse to lawyers or parents. Many are held for months or even years—often in solitary confinement—all in defiance of relevant international law and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The *No Way to Treat a Child* campaign is exposing the treatment of Palestinian youth and developing interventions to stop the abuse. The treatment of Palestinian children is known to include: "...blindfolding, sleep deprivation, verbal abuse, threats, and physical and psychological violence that in some cases amounts to torture." The DCIP found that of the estimated 10,000 children who have been detained by Israeli forces and held in Israeli military detention since 2000, among other abuses, 95% have been hand tied; 86% blindfolded; 64% verbally abused or intimidated; and 96% interrogated without the presence of a family member. Israel is the only country in the world that systematically prosecutes children in military courts without fair trial rights and protections. Each year, 500-to-700 Palestinian children are tried through the Israeli military detention system. The UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) has denounced the Israel's ill treatment of Palestinian children.

The *No Way to Treat a Child* campaign demands that the Israeli government ensure basic due process rights and prohibit torture and mistreatment of Palestinian children. The campaign also hopes to ensure that when children are arrested, procedures are carried out in accordance with international juvenile justice standards, as represented in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The campaign seeks to ensure that children are detained for the shortest time possible; not be subjected physical or psychological violence; have access to legal counsel and their parents; and not be blindfold. The practice of using solitary confinement on children in detention must be stopped immediately. We hope to inspire and motivate Israelis to improve Israel's justice system and to end the occupation of Palestinians in Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza.

Our efforts are consistent with our Quaker abolitionists' roots and the situation is as perilous as was slavery. Midcoast Monthly Meeting urges that Vassalboro Quarterly Meeting consider the urgency of the issues and endorse *No Way to Treat a Child* in timely fashion, so that the matter can be added to the agenda for Annual Sessions. It is our hope that, after due and prayerful reflection, New England Yearly Meeting will unite to endorse the campaign as well.

History of the *No Way to Treat a Child* Campaign

Since 1967, the Israeli government has operated two separate legal systems: Palestinians live under military law, but the treatment of Israeli citizens and settlers is handled through a "civilian" legal system. The *No Way to Treat a Child* (NWTC) campaign is focusing on the need for an end to the military occupation and on the ill treatment, torture, and widespread

harm of Palestinian children that is occurring under the occupation. DCIP, which is based in Ramallah in the West Bank, has been defending the rights of children living in the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip, and focusing on the Israeli treatment of Palestinian children for more than 25 years.

The campaign is also supported by groups that include: American Muslims for Palestine, Amnesty International—U.S., Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL), Jewish Voice for Peace, the Mennonite Central Committee—U.S., and the Unitarian Universalists for Justice in the Middle East.

H.R. 2407

AFSC and DCIP want to call Friends' attention to H.R. 2407, which was introduced in the House of Representatives by Representative Betty McCollum (D-MN) in April 2019. The bill, which is entitled "Promoting Human Rights for Palestinian Children Living Under Israeli Military Occupation Act," prohibits the U.S. from providing funds for the military detention of children in any country, including Israel. H.R. 2407 disallows "...U.S. military aid from being used by foreign armed forces to support the military detention or ill-treatment of children in violation of international humanitarian law." In the 2020 session of Congress, McCollum's bill was not enacted, but she will introduce a new version of the bill in spring 2021 for consideration. (In 2017, she introduced a similar bill with nine cosponsors.)

Other Violations of Children's Rights that Remain of Great Concern

The U.S.'s cruel and inhumane policy of abusing migrant children and their families on the U.S./Mexico border in recent years remains of great concern to Friends. Children as young as six months old were separated from their parents or family members, and incarcerated by themselves—often in cages. The destruction that was perpetrated by this U.S. policy has not been adequately addressed. Many children remain in U.S. custody, and no restitution has been made to the families that suffered these abuses. Their lives have been scarred by unimaginable trauma due to the intentional policies of our U.S. government.

Under the weight of the damage done to young Palestinians—and with concern about the lives of migrants on the U.S. southern border—members of Midcoast Friends Meeting unite in support of AFSC's *No Way to Treat a Child* campaign to end these violations of children's' human rights.