



MODERATOR OF THE 2019 GENERAL ASSEMBLY
The Rev. Amanda Currie, B.A.Sc., M.Div.

Monday, July 6, 2020

The Hon. François-Philippe Champagne, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Foreign Affairs
House of Commons,
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

Dear Minister,

I write to you on behalf of The Presbyterian Church in Canada, whose 2019 General Assembly met in Waterloo, Ontario.

Each year the commissioners to the General Assembly consider international issues of importance to the church. The Presbyterian Church has been concerned for many years with the situation between Israel and Palestine, praying for a just resolution to the conflict there. The treatment of children and other vulnerable persons is a benchmark of a nation's ability to act justly. Additionally, it is important that the international community speak out when nations do not fulfil the responsibilities to uphold human rights standards to which they have agreed. The situation in the Palestinian territories especially with regards to the treatment of children, is untenable. The state of Israel is in contravention of its responsibilities under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

In response to allegations of violations of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, UNICEF found that "the ill-treatment of children who come into contact with the military detention system appears to be widespread, systematic and institutionalized through the process, from the moment of arrest until the child's prosecution and eventual conviction and sentencing." Defense for Children International – Palestine reports that every year between 5—and 700 children are detained, some as young as 12, and that the most common charge is stone throwing. UNICEF reports:

The pattern of ill-treatment includes the arrests of children at their homes between midnight and 5:00 am by heavily armed soldiers; the practice of blindfolding children and tying their hands with plastic ties; physical and verbal abuse during transfer to an interrogation site, including the use of painful restraints; lack of access to water, food, toilet facilities and medical care; interrogation using physical violence and threats; coerced confessions; and lack of access to lawyers or family members during interrogation. Treatment inconsistent with child rights continues during court appearances, including shackling of children; denial of bail and imposition of custodial sentences; and transfer of children outside occupied Palestinian territory to serve their

sentences inside Israel. The incarceration isolates them from their families and interrupts their studies.¹

The treatment of children in the occupied Palestinian territories must change, and the international community must speak out to make such change happen.

To that end, we request that the Government of Canada appoint a special envoy to promote, monitor and report on the human rights situation of Palestinian children living in the occupied Palestinian territory: specifically undertaking an evaluative analysis of Israeli military law and practice as they affect Palestinian children in the West Bank by reference to the standards of the Fourth Geneva Convention, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other applicable international law, and requesting that Global Affairs Canada officials in Ramallah and Tel Aviv develop links with Defense for Children International–Palestine and attend military court sessions involving children.

I look forward to your response. In the meantime, please rest assured that you and your colleagues in Parliament remain in our prayers as you pursue your work even and especially amidst the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Sincerely,



Rev. Amanda Currie
Moderator
The 2019 General Assembly
The Presbyterian Church in Canada

¹ UNICEF, “Children in Israeli Military Detention: observations and recommendations” Feb 2013, pg 14.
Note: DCI – Palestine reports that current numbers of detentions are similar as to when the UNICEF report was written.