



PRESS RELEASE

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For immediate release

Children in prison: one year and counting, counting, counting

Five minors face long years for a crime that unlikely ever happened

Friday 14 March 2014 marks the one year anniversary of the kidnapping and imprisonment of five Palestinian teenagers (at the time aged 15-17) for alleged stone-throwing, following a settler car accident that took place close to their village of Hares in Salfit district (West Bank), Palestine.

In what clearly appears to be a trumped-up case with no hard evidence of a crime or eyewitness accounts that would link these particular boys to the accident, they are being charged with 20 counts of attempted murder each and are facing long years in prison.

Ali Shamlawi, Mohammed Kleib, Mohammed Suleiman, Ammar Souf, and Tamer Souf 'confessed' to stone-throwing under torture, psychological pressure, and after spending up to 2 weeks in solitary confinement in G4S-equipped prisons and interrogation centres of Al-Jalame and Megiddo, all located in Israel, in violation of the 4th Geneva Convention.

In a media lynch mob immediately after the car accident (in which the driver's child was severely injured), the 5 teenagers – now known as the Hares Boys – were labeled 'Arab terrorists' before any police investigation even took place; furthermore, the case was politicised after the Israeli prime minister himself got involved, breaching the universal principle of presumption of innocence and putting pressure for the boys' conviction.

The five minors have spent the last year incarcerated together with ~200 other Palestinian children in Israeli adult prisons. Every few weeks they appear before a military court where their incarceration is prolonged again. Palestinian children are subjected to a military court system which lacks any guarantees of a due judicial process.

Key facts to focus on:

- On 15-17 March 2014 the Hares Boys will have spent exactly one year in an Israeli adult prison despite a total lack of evidence against them or indeed of a crime having been committed.

- If convicted, this case could set an extremely dangerous precedent in the Israeli military court system, whereby any Palestinian child accused of throwing stones could be sentenced to long years in prison (currently the average sentence is 3-6 months).
- In March 2014 the UK Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO) is sending a follow-up mission of lawyers to Palestine and Israel following their damning report about ill-treatment of Palestinian children in Israeli detention, published in 2012.

Quotes:

- “Kiss and hug your mother goodbye. You may never see her again,” said an Israeli secret service agent to one minor in Hares, handcuffing and blindfolding him.
- “I have not seen my son or heard his voice. I am suffering a great pain. Where is the UN? Who can stop such injustice? My son and the other kids have been tortured and are still under torture – both psychological and physical.” -- Mehdi Suleiman, father of child prisoner Mohammed Suleiman
- “When I saw Ali [on a prison visit], he was sad because the new school year has begun, and he cried when he asked me, ‘Has the new academic year begun at school?’ He was in the 11th grade. He longs to see his friends and his books and his seat at school.” – Um Fadi, mother of child prisoner Ali Shamlawi

##ENDS##

Notes to editors:

1. For more information, please see the Hares Boys campaign website <http://haresboys.wordpress.com/>. For comments or to arrange interviews with the families please email haresboys@gmail.com.
2. The human rights violations of Palestinian child prisoners in Israel are well documented by local and international human rights organisations. See, for example, [Concluding Observations](#) (UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2013) [No Minor Matter](#) (B’Tselem, 2011); [Bound, Blindfolded and Convicted: Children held in military detention](#) (Defence for Children International, 2012); [Children in Military Custody](#) (UK Foreign & Commonwealth Office, 2012); [Children in Israeli Military Detention](#) (UNICEF, 2013).
3. Recently several separate video documentaries regarding the treatment of children in Israeli military court system were released, among them: [Stone Cold Justice](#) (Australian ABC TV, 2014), [Children in Chains](#) (Jonathan Pullman, 2013), and a campaign video [Imagine This Was Your Child](#) (Palestina Solidariteit, 2013).
4. High-resolution images of the boys’ families are available upon request. Ali Shamlawi, Mohammed Kleib, and Ammar Souf also sent their families pictures of themselves in prison.