CHILDHOOD **BEHIND BARS**

EMBRACE the Middle East

Israel's policy of systematic detention of children in the West Bank

Israel has been detaining Palestinian children in the West Bank for decades, with the number of children detained rising sharply following 7 October 2023. Since then, over 1,300 children have been arrested, and at least 440 remain in detention as of June 2025.

Children as young as 12 are being charged with offences, most commonly stone throwing, which can carry prison sentences of up to 20 years. Some children are held under administrative detention, meaning they are imprisoned without charge or trial. Arrests often occur in distressing circumstances, including children being forcibly taken while playing in their local playground, running errands, or pulled from their beds at night.

Once detained, children are frequently transferred from the West Bank to detention centres inside Israel, in violation of Articles 49 and 76 of the Fourth Geneva Convention. During arrest and detention, children are subjected to inhumane treatment, including verbal abuse, denial of food and medical care, beatings, blindfolding, and being restrained with single plastic ties. These practices breach Article 7 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and Articles 3 and 37 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). Many children suffer long-term physical and psychological trauma. Embrace the Middle East's partners report cases of children with lasting injuries and disrupted education, as well as strained family relationships after release.

These policies and practices do not take place in a vacuum, but occur within the context of Israel's protracted occupation of the Palestinian territory, which was declared unlawful by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in its Advisory Opinion of 19 July 2024. To end what evidence indicates to be a systematic effort to detain Palestinian children, one needs to tackle its very roots: Israel's protracted illegal occupation.

Embrace the Middle East calls on the UK government to:

1. Urge Israel to end immediately the practice of night arrests and the use of inhumane tactics against Palestinian children, including beatings, blindfolding, and hand-tying during arrest and detention, violating Articles 3(1) and 37(a) and (c) of the CRC, and Article 7 of the ICCPR.
2. Call on Israel to stop without delay the unlawful transfer of Palestinian child detainees from the occupied West Bank to detention facilities inside Israel, in violation of Articles 49 and 76 of the Fourth Geneva Convention.
3. Urgently act upon the ICJ Advisory Opinion of 19 July 2024 by enacting legislation that bans trade with and investment in Israeli settlements. Despite the UK Government's position that Israeli settlements are illegal under international law, it maintains a policy of "recommending" appropriate labelling of products without enforcing a legal ban.

This summary draws on insights and evidence from Embrace the Middle East's report, "Childhood Behind Bars". For further details and references, please see the full report.

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