

Urgent Appeal

UA 6/11



Defence for Children International/Palestine Section
الحركة العالمية للدفاع عن الأطفال/فرع فلسطين

Incident: Child detention
Location: Beit Ummar, occupied West Bank
Date of incidents: Continuing
Number of incidents: 26
Ages: 9 to 16 years
Date of issue: 14 December 2011
Updated: 4 April 2012



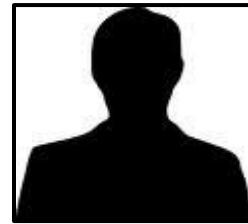
Mohammad H. (15) (New) – On 21 February 2012, a 15-year-old boy from Beit Ummar is arrested by soldiers at 2:30 am and used as a human shield before being taken to Gush Etzion settlement.



Khader A. (16) (New) – On 18 January 2012, a 16-year-old boy from Beit Ummar is detained by soldiers at 3:00 am and searched and threatened before being released.



Rasheed A. (16) – On [28 November](#) and [6 February 2011](#), a 16-year-old boy from Beit Ummar is arrested by soldiers from the family home and later accused of throwing stones.



Mohammad A. (16) – On 22 July 2011, a 16-year-old boy from Beit Ummar is arrested by soldiers and taken to Kirya Arba' and Etzion centre for interrogation. He is denied medical treatment.



Jameel Z. (12) – On 28 March 2011, a 12-year-old boy from Beit Ummar is arrested by Israeli soldiers from the family home at 2:00 am and later accused of throwing stones.



Malek S. (16) – On 28 March 2011, a 16-year-old boy from Beit Ummar is arrested by soldiers from the family home at 2:30 am and taken to Etzion detention centre for interrogation.



Sami H. (15) – On 8 March 2011, a 15-year-old boy from Beit Ummar is arrested by soldiers from his family home at 1:00 am and taken to Etzion detention centre for interrogation.



Mohammad M. (14) – On 22 February 2011, a 14-year-old boy from Beit Ummar is arrested by soldiers from the family home at 2:00 am and taken to Etzion interrogation centre.



Tareq M. (16) – On 22 February 2011, a 16-year-old boy from Beit Ummar is arrested by soldiers on his way home from work. Tareq was taken to an unknown location and accused of throwing stones.



Mahmoud A. (9) – On 18 February 2011, a nine-year-old boy from Beit Ummar is arrested by soldiers and taken to Gush Etzion settlement and released seven hours later.

Nature of incidents

The town of Beit Ummar is situated halfway between Bethlehem and Hebron, in the occupied West Bank, and has a population of around 13,500. The town is located approximately three kilometers south of the Israeli settlement block of Gush Etzion and adjacent to the settlement of Karmi Zur. Every Friday, residents of Beit Ummar hold a demonstration near Karmi Zur in protest against being denied access to their agricultural land. Each year, numerous children from the village are arrested during demonstrations, or in the middle of the night, and accused of throwing stones at Israeli soldiers and settlers. Since January 2009, DCI-Palestine alone has documented **26 cases** of children from Beit Ummar being arrested mostly on suspicion of throwing stones. According to the [United Nations](#), a total of **43 children** were arrested from Beit Ummar in 2010, rising to **27 children** arrested in the first two months of 2011.

Following their arrest, most children are taken to the police station in the settlement block of Gush Etzion for interrogation. In all of the cases documented by DCI-Palestine, the children report some form of physical violence during their arrest, transfer and subsequent interrogation at Etzion. DCI-Palestine is also increasingly concerned by the activities of one particular interrogator at Etzion who goes by the name of ‘David’ or ‘Dawoud’. Complaints made by children against this interrogator include severe acts of violence and threats of rape and electrocution. It should be noted that the cases included in this Urgent Appeal only represent a small sample of the total number of cases involving the arrest of children from Beit Ummar.

Background information

Each year approximately 500-700 Palestinian children (12-17 years) from the West Bank are prosecuted in Israeli military courts after being arrested, interrogated and detained by the Israeli army, police or security agents. It is estimated that since the year 2000, around 7,500 Palestinian children have been detained and prosecuted in the system. Credible reports of torture and/or ill-treatment during the arrest, transfer and interrogation stages in the system have persisted for years. The majority of these children are charged with throwing stones.

The ill-treatment starts at the moment of arrest, when many children report experiencing terrifying night-time raids on the family home, before being tied, often painfully so, and blindfolded. The destabilising effect of these night-time arrests is compounded by the fact that few parents are informed where their child is being taken to, often in the middle of the night. The common experience of many children is that the journey to the interrogation centre is routinely accompanied by further suffering, either because of the way the child is restrained, or because of further physical or verbal abuse. The transfer process can

take many hours and often includes intermediate stops at settlements or military bases where further ill-treatment occurs, including in some cases, prolonged exposure to the elements, and a lack of water and toilet facilities.

On arrival at the interrogation centre, children are questioned alone and rarely appear to be informed of their rights, particularly the rights against self-incrimination. The interrogation techniques frequently include a mix of intimidation, threats and physical violence with a clear purpose of obtaining a confession, which in some cases, are written in Hebrew, a language few Palestinian children understand. Once the interrogation stage of the system is concluded, the majority of children remain in pre-trial detention awaiting their prosecution before a military court. The primary evidence against most children in the military courts will either be their confession, or the confession of another child who has been subjected to similar treatment. In the overwhelming majority of cases, children will plead guilty because this is the quickest way for them to get out of the system.

Related links

- [DCI-Palestine report](#) – Bound, Blindfolded and Convicted: Children held in military detention (2012)
- [B'Tselem report](#) - No Minor Matter: Violation of the Rights of Palestinian Minors Arrested by Israel on Suspicion of Stone-Throwing (2011)
- [The Australian](#) – Stone Cold Justice (2011)

Recommended action

DCI-Palestine is of the view that no child should be prosecuted in military courts which lack comprehensive fair trial and juvenile justice standards. However, as a minimum safeguard in the light of consistent reports of torture and ill-treatment, please send Urgent Appeals recommending the following:

1. All arrests of children should occur during daylight hours;
2. The use of single plastic hand ties must be prohibited in all circumstances and the prohibition effectively enforced;
3. All children must have prompt access to legal representation prior to interrogation, and they must be clearly informed of their right to remain silent;
4. All interrogations of children must be audio-visually recorded and attended by a relative of the child; and
5. All credible reports of torture and ill-treatment must be appropriately investigated in accordance with international standards.

Appeals to:

- **Your elected representatives;** and
- **The Israeli embassy in your country** [[list of Israeli diplomatic missions worldwide](#)].

Please [inform](#) DCI-Palestine if you receive any response to your appeals and quote the UA number at the top of this document