Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

June 19, 2015

The Honorable John Kerry
Secretary of State
2201 C Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Kerry:

In 2013 the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) issued a profoundly disturbing report entitled ***"Children in Israeli Military Detention: Observations and Recommendations."*** The report was in response to the estimated seven thousand Palestinian children, ages 12 to 17, from the Occupied West Bank who during the previous decade were subjected to arrest, detention, interrogation, and/or imprisonment by Israeli army, police, and security agents. UNICEF initiated their report in response to concerns regarding the cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment and punishment of Palestinian children while in the Israeli military detention system.

Israel's military detention system targeting children is an anomaly in the world. In fact, UNICEF states, "It is understood that in no other country are children systematically tried by juvenile military courts that, by definition, fall short of providing the necessary guarantees to ensure respect for their rights."

Based on international law and treaties, the UNICEF report makes 38 recommendations for action by Israeli officials while offering the following conclusion:

> "The ill treatment of children who come in contact with the military detention system appears to be widespread, systemic and institutionalized throughout the process, from the moment of arrest until a child's prosecution and eventual conviction and sentencing."

In 2014, a Palestinian-American became one such victim. The youth was a high school student from Tampa, Florida, and suffered physical violence and ill treatment while in an Israeli detention center.

The security interests of Israel are clearly a national security priority of the United States Congress and the American people. There could be no more clear demonstration of American commitment to Israel than the more than $3 billion of U.S. taxpayer funds which are invested annually to ensure the security of the Israeli people. However, respecting and defending the

PRINTED ON RECYCLED PAPER

human rights of children, regardless of their ethnicity, race, religion, or nationality, is a fundamental American value, as well as a priority for all Americans, that cannot be ignored.

Earlier this year UNICEF issued a follow-up report outlining areas where Israel has adapted, modified, or discussed changes to its system of military detention of Palestinian children. This is a positive step and a clear acknowledgement that legitimate human rights concerns exist. Progress to ensure Palestinian children's rights are not abused is in the interest of the U.S., Israel, and the Palestinian people.

Secretary Kerry, we urge the Department of State to elevate the human rights of Palestinian children to a priority status in our bilateral relationship with the Government of Israel. Furthermore, we fully expect the State Department to address the status of Israel's military detention system's treatment of Palestinian children in its annual human rights report.

Your leadership to advance the rights of children is deeply appreciated.

Sincerely,

BETTY MCCOLLUM
Member of Congress

JOHN CONYERS
Member of Congress

KEITH ELLISON
Member of Congress

BARBARA LEE
Member of Congress

DANNY K. DAVIS
Member of Congress

RAUL M. GRIJALVA
Member of Congress

ANDRÉ CARSON
Member of Congress

ANNA G. ESHOO
Member of Congress

PETER DEFAZIO
Member of Congress

EARL BLUMENAUER
Member of Congress

JIM MCDERMOTT
Member of Congress

CHELLIE PINGREE
Member of Congress

BOBBY L. RUSH
Member of Congress

MAXINE WATERS
Member of Congress

DONALD S. BEYER, JR.
Member of Congress

EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON
Member of Congress

JAMES P. MCGOVERN
Member of Congress

HENRY C. "HANK" JOHNSON
Member of Congress

ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON
Member of Congress