

Dear Members of Congress,

As faith leaders with a deep concern for the Holy Land, we believe Congress must play a proactive role in helping to ensure justice and peace in Israel and Palestine. We welcome the "Defending the Human Rights of Palestinian Children and Families Living Under Israeli Military Occupation Act" (H.R. 2590), that seeks to promote justice, equality and human rights for Palestinian children and families by prohibiting Israeli authorities from using U.S. taxpayer funds to detain and torture Palestinian children, demolish and seize Palestinian homes, and further annex Palestinian land in the occupied West Bank.

The violations of rights raised in HR 2590 are of grave concern. As documented by numerous human rights organizations, since the year 2000 an estimated 13,000 Palestinian children between the ages of 12 and 17 have been detained, prosecuted, and incarcerated by the Israeli military in the occupied West Bank. Often dragged from their homes in the middle of the night by armed soldiers, they suffer physical and emotional violence and frequently face verbal abuse, humiliation, and intimidation.

Throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, we have witnessed the ways in which already vulnerable communities have experienced greater challenges with remote working opportunities not present and access to vaccinations and other healthcare options significantly limited. As Covid-19 began and the West Bank underwent various restrictions to keep the virus contained, Israel continued to demolish Palestinian structures, displacing Palestinian families during a global pandemic. Since the election of U.S. President Joe Biden and Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett, [the rate of displacement of Palestinians due to the destruction of Palestinian structures is accelerating](#). [According to data collected by United Nations's Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs](#), at the end of February 2022, over 1,300 Palestinians, a majority of whom are children, have been displaced by the demolitions tallied by the U.N. Displacement of Palestinians has persisted throughout the entirety of the pandemic alongside efforts by the Israeli government to illegally annex Palestinian land.

Our faith commitments call us to advocate for the safety and the wellbeing of the most vulnerable. In our churches and communities across the country, our members are increasingly concerned about the deteriorating conditions for Palestinians who continue to live under a brutal military occupation. We are committed to speaking out until the conditions on the ground contribute to the flourishing of all Palestinian and Israeli lives.

For the United States to play a positive role in fostering justice and peace in Israel/Palestine, Congress cannot ignore the ongoing violations of Palestinian human rights. Therefore, we call on members of the House of Representatives to support HR 2590. We also ask for a Senator to introduce companion legislation in the Senate.

Congress has a responsibility to ensure that U.S. policy and foreign assistance reflects values that prioritize concern for the rights of the most marginalized, and conform with U.S. law. It is incumbent upon Congress to ensure no U.S. taxpayer funds are used by any foreign government, including Israel, in a manner that violates the dignity and wellbeing of any group. We thank you

for your service and commitment as we work together for justice and peace. Please know we are lifting you up in our prayers.

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