

HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH

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March 14, 2016

Chief Inspector Mickey Rosenfeld
Police Spokesperson

Judea and Samaria Police District Spokesperson

Sent via e-mail to:



Sirs and/or Madam,

I write regarding research that Human Rights Watch has conducted into the treatment of Palestinian children arrested by Israeli security forces in the West Bank.

Human Rights Watch is an independent, non-governmental organization that monitors and reports on human rights in 90 countries around the world. All of our reporting, including on Israel and the Palestinian Territories, is available at www.hrw.org.

I am writing to request information, as well as to give you an opportunity to respond to our findings. I am also writing to request a meeting to further discuss our concerns. We would appreciate it if you could provide us **with a reply by March 26, 2016** so that we can reflect your views in our forthcoming publication.

Last year, Human Rights Watch investigated six cases of Israeli forces arresting Palestinian children on suspicion of throwing rocks from March to December 2014: four children from East Jerusalem and a 14-year-old girl and 15-year-old boy from other parts of the West Bank. We sent our findings to the Justice Ministry which was kind enough to transmit to us your response in June 2015.

We have conducted follow up research, including research into the arrest, on November 27, 2015, at approximately 7 pm, of Ahmed Aza, aged 16, from the Tel Rumeida neighborhood in Hebron.

Ahmed and his family said that security forces approached him while he was sitting in the garden of a friend's house, picked up a knife they said they found on the ground nearby, and began questioning him. The security forces, he said, then blindfolded him, arrested him and took him to the Kiryat Arba police station, where he was made to sit on the ground outside the caravans in the cold. He said that security forces refused his request to have a parent present as they interrogated him regarding the knife in

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question.

Ahmed said he was then taken to the Shuhada Street military installation in Hebron. He said that once there, between six and seven members of the security forces beat him with their hands and feet on his back, legs and head, while he lay on the ground. He said they cursed his mother and sister as they did so. He was then made to spend the night outside in the cold on a chair. He said he was given a piece of hard cheese and a bottle of water. He was released on December 3 without charge.

The abuses that Ahmed alleged are consistent with the abuse reported in the other cases we examined in 2015 and with reports collected by other organizations, suggesting that these cases were not isolated incidents but part of a wider pattern of violations in the West Bank. We are particularly concerned, because the number of children arrested in the West Bank, including east Jerusalem, has more than doubled since the escalation of violence that began in October of last year.

Israeli military orders applicable to Palestinian residents of the West Bank require that the military notify a parent of their child's arrest – which the military appears not to have done in the case that Human Rights Watch documented. Israel's Youth Law, which reflects Israel's understanding of rights that are appropriate for children, does not permit interrogations at night, except in exceptional circumstances.

From our correspondence with the IDf spokesperson's office, public inquiries department, it was clarified that after soldiers arrested Ahmed he was transferred to the police for interrogation and held by police officers for the duration of the events described above.

We would welcome your response to the following questions:

1. Did Ahmed Aza's parents sign a form indicating that they had been notified of his arrest? If so, what was the date and time they signed that form?
2. Did security forces refuse Ahmed Aza's request to have a parent present during his interrogation on the night of November 27?
3. Why was Ahmed Aza questioned at night, in the courtyard of the police station, rather than the next morning, consistent with the principles of the Youth Law?
4. Was Ahmed Aza's interrogation conducted by a specially and specifically trained Youth Interrogator? If not, why not?
5. Was Ahmed Aza's interrogation recorded?
6. Why was Ahmed Aza made to spend the night outdoors, as he alleged, in a chair, in the cold?
7. Have you investigated the treatment of Ahmed Aza during his arrest and detention? Many Palestinian children and their parents are hesitant to submit formal complaints

in cases of abuse. Even in the absence of a formal complaint, will you investigate the allegations described in this letter?

Please contact my colleague Sari Bashi at: [REDACTED] to submit a response or if you have any further questions.

Thank you for your kind assistance in this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Sarah Leah Whitson', written in a cursive style.

Sarah Leah Whitson
Executive Director
Middle East and North Africa Division
Human Rights Watch