

A report on the arrest of Al-Za'tari children aged 7 and 12 in the city of Jerusalem

On Tuesday 28\04\2015, a group of disguised Israeli Special Forces¹ of 11 members wearing civilian clothes, masked and armed, **kidnapped the child Ahmad Za'tari, 7 years old, and Mohammad Za'tari, 12 years old,** in Wadi Al-Joz in Jerusalem; where they kidnapped them in front of the citizens of the neighborhood and took them to an unknown area at first; soon after their parents heard of their kidnapping news, they started to look for their children and to listen to the testimonies of the neighbors that were witnesses of the incident, as they confirmed that the children were kidnapped out of a sudden close to their houses at around 07:00 p.m.. After the family knew that the children were kidnapped by the disguised Israeli forces, they went to the police station in Salah Al-Deen Street and asked about their children, but the police denied that they knew anything of the incident, however, the family received a call from eye witnesses that were in the area telling them that the children were held and detained in a big white FIAT car that is used by disguised Israeli forces which was standing in the area of Sheikh Jarrah, when the family arrived to the place, the Israeli soldiers and police prevented the children's parent who arrived to that area² from approaching them and asking about the kidnapped children!!! The family kept waiting in the streets and observing their children and the vehicle which they were held in from a far distance for a period of more than 4 hours. During this time, Al-Maqdese's legal team started with the needed procedures of communicating with the police and demanding that the children are released, but all these demands failed and the police didn't listen to them or even take them into consideration.

At around 11 p.m., the car with the kidnapped children moved along with a military Jeep to the investigation center of Salah Al Deen Street, where the children were detained in the center, the family and MSD lawyers tried to inquire about the reason behind their kidnapping but there was no answer!!! At around 01:30 a.m., MSD lawyers received an answer on the reason behind the children's kidnapping by the disguised Israeli forces where they were told that the children were kidnapped on charges of (throwing stones), noting that no Israeli cars pass through the area of which they were kidnapped from; also eye witnesses stated that there were no demonstrations on that day!!! Despite the attempts of the lawyers and the family of pointing out that arresting and detaining a 7 years old child is illegal and inhumane; all these attempts were ignored by the police, moreover, the police prevented the lawyer and the children's families from seeing their children inside the center until 03:00 a.m.. After negotiations and attempts that lasted for hours, the in charge station officer agreed that the lawyer meets with the kidnapped children, and after the lawyer explained that this operation contradicts with all local and international rules and regulations³ and warned them of the consequences of such act, the 7 years old child (Ahmad) was released at 04:00 a.m. after they investigated with him from 01:00 a.m. to

¹ Disguised Israeli forces are forces of the Israeli police, in particular border guards, as its members are selected ones whose faces, clothes, traditions and even language are like Arab's, they mingle between Palestinians for minutes, hours, days or even months; and once they get the opportunity, they attack; as their mission usually revolves around information gathering, kidnapping certain people, killing Palestinian activists and/or breaking demonstrations.

² Later on, it was found out that this area is called the waiting area, in which children and/or kidnapped people are tortured and investigated with in an illegal and inhumane manner, as reported by victims who were in that place.

³ The Israeli law states that no child under the age of 18 can be questioned without the presence of an adult member of his family, in addition to having the right to meet a lawyer and get a consultation before he goes into the investigation and interrogation process.

03:00 a.m. in a way that contradicts with used procedures in the investigation process as per the lawyer's statement, where the rules and regulations state that arresting, not to mention kidnapping, children and/or minors is considered illegal, and in case this happened, the child should not be questioned and investigated with without the presence of a family member, also, they cannot detain him for more than three hours; all of which didn't happen in this case. After releasing the child, it turned out that he was kidnapped and hit by a gun on his back, he was also kicked by the kidnappers' feet and treated in an inhumane manner that reached high levels of humiliation, moreover, the kidnappers didn't allow the child to go to the bathroom and thus he peed on himself!!! The child has been kept away from his family for hours, as he was terrified and frightened, moreover, since the minute of his arrest at around 07:00 p.m. and until 04:00 a.m., the police kept him without anything to eat or drink, and in an atmosphere of terror and threats; where he was forced to confess to the crime that he was accused of. It should also be noted that when the child was delivered to his mother, the minutes of the interrogation were read to his father, and that is when the father was shocked when he learned that the investigator asked his son Ahmad (How do you want to die?), how could he ask such question to a 7 years old boy!!! And it didn't stop at that, he continued to ask (Do you wish to die as a martyr?) and the child replied with yes!

The process of kidnapping the child Ahmad in this brutal manner, tying him up and keeping him detained in a car, not to mention beating him up, humiliating him, terrifying and threatening him, and leaving him for hours without food or beverage, preventing him from using the bathroom and investigating with him in a manner that contradicts with all rules and regulations is a crime that those responsible for it should be punished and held accountable. Ahmad's father stated that since that day and up until the date of this report, Ahmad has been living in a state of complete terror, as he is unable to sleep at night and keeps screaming and wetting his bed, he also haven't gotten out of the house since the incident and refuses to go to school as he is afraid that they might kidnap him again. The child is living in a hysterical condition due to the terrible crime that the Israeli occupation forces have committed against him, as he reached the point where he is terrified to even look at the street!!!

As for the child Mohammad, 12 years old, the police refused to set him free and extended his detention to the next day so that his case is presented in front of the Court; this child was subject to severe beating and humiliation while he was waiting in the vehicle, moreover, they burnt some parts of his hands using a lighter and they hit him severely on his 2 amputated fingers, moreover, they investigated with him in a terrible and horrifying manner that contradicts with all rules and regulations, as the investigation lasted for more than 4 hours, since 01:00 a.m. and until 04:00 a.m., the next day, he was taken to Court, where the Prosecution demanded that his arrest is extended for 3 additional days under the pretext of **constituting a danger and threat to the safety of the country**. After several attempts and discussions in which the lawyer presented clarifications that this procedure was illegal, the child was set free under unfair conditions that force him to stay in Tel-Aviv, pay a bail of 10,000 shekels and another third party bail, 2 members of his family, of 10,000 shekels as well, as the child's father was forced to leave his house and rent an apartment in Tel Aviv for 5 days in order to implement the deportation order which ended on 03/05/2015 at 15:00 p.m.

After Mohammad was released and deported to Tel Aviv, a big Israeli force that constituted of 50 military soldiers attacked the house of Mohammad at around 12:00 p.m. and arrested his brother Baraket, 15 years old, and his cousin Ala', 15 years old, under the pretext of investigating with them, and after the Israeli press and child protection organizations interfered, they were released at around 11:00

p.m. with the condition of a guarantee by one of their relatives, the 2 children were detained for 9 hours in the investigation center in Salah Al Deen Street while no investigation took place; as the aim of this step was to scare them and threaten them by a number of police members while they were detained. On the next day, the children came to the police station based on the request of the investigators and they were detained from 10:00 a.m. to 08:00 p.m., as they investigated with them for 3 hours each and were released on guarantee of one of their relatives.

The process of kidnapping and arresting these 4 children while they were playing next to their houses, as reported by eye witnesses, neighbors and their parents comes in light of the intimidation policy practiced by the Israeli police, as they carry no responsibility towards these children and their rights, and they do not pay any attention to the risks and harms that these children are subject to as a result of such crime which they should be held accountable for.

In light of this brutal crime, the permanent observer and Ambassador of the State of Palestine to the United Nations in New York, Dr. Riyad Mansour, asked in his letter, dated 01/05/2015 and addressed to the UN Security Council, the international community to carry its responsibility and provide the needed assistance and protection to Palestinian children and hold those who violate the international laws accountable for their actions, in particular, those who violate the rules and regulations that aim at protecting children rights. Dr. Mansour also emphasized in similar letters to the UN General Secretary, the Head of the UN Security Council and the Head of the UN General Assembly, on the importance of stopping the violations of the Israeli occupation against the Palestinian children, pointing out that there are international standards for children treatment, and Palestinian children are not an exception. He also emphasized on the importance of the commitment of Israel to its obligations and responsibilities in accordance with the international law, including the child protection agreement and its protocols on children in armed conflicts. Dr. Mansour also mentioned in his letter the continuous arrests of Israeli occupation authorities of Palestinian children, including Ahmad Za'tari, 7 years old, and his cousin Mohammad Za'tari, 12 years old, on 29/04/2015 in occupied Jerusalem, as they were subject to hours of investigation and deprivation of food and water. He also emphasized again on the importance of accountability on such crimes that are committed against our people, including innocent children that are subject to daily shocks and violations by the Israeli occupation, as we will not remain silent and we will put all our efforts to hold them accountable for these crimes and to achieve justice for these victims. Moreover, he asked again the representative of the General Secretary of children and armed conflicts and the UN General Secretary to add the Israeli occupation forces to the list of the annual report that is prepared by the General Secretary on children and armed conflicts due to the dangerous and systematic violations practiced by the Israeli occupation against Palestinian children; as this step is very important and crucial towards holding those who commit crimes against children accountable for their actions, in addition to the continuous efforts related to escaping punishment and protection of children in all cases of armed conflicts without any exceptions.