

Palestine Policy Unit Briefing

The torture and ill-treatment of Palestinian children by the Israeli authorities

In March 2025, a 17-year-old Palestinian child [died](#) in Israeli detention. The boy's autopsy reportedly [showed](#) evidence of extreme muscle and fat wasting, suggestive of starvation, as well as untreated infections, dehydration, scabies, and blunt-force trauma.

The ill-treatment and torture of Palestinian children in Israeli detention is not new. In 2013, UNICEF published a [review](#) of practices related to children who come into contact with Israel's military detention system. It stated:

“the ill-treatment of children who come in contact with the military detention system appears to be widespread, systematic and institutionalized throughout the process”

Since then, the [torture](#) and ill-treatment of Palestinians detained by Israel, including [children](#), appears to have [escalated](#). A 2026 [report](#) of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights cites interviews with former prisoners indicating the widespread and routine use of torture and other ill-treatment against Palestinian detainees, including sexual and gender-based violence.

In January 2026, [analysis](#) by the Protection Cluster found that the “Israeli authorities have deliberately imposed detention conditions that amount to torture and other forms of ill-treatment, including growing cases of sexual violence against men and boys”.

In 2024, UN Special Rapporteurs raised concerns about [reports](#) that Palestinian girls in detention have been subjected to multiple forms of sexual assault by Israeli army officers.

In the same year, Save the Children reported a deterioration in the treatment of child detainees in Israeli-run prisons, with children in the West Bank and Gaza [reporting](#) increasing hunger and abuse, including sexual violence.

At the end of 2025, Defence for International Palestine [reported](#) a severe lack of adequate food and water among Palestinian child detainees.

Abuse often begins during the child's arrest. In 2023, Save the Children [reported](#) that the majority of children were arrested at night, 86% of them were beaten, 70% were threatened with harm, and 60% were hit with sticks or guns. Some children [reported](#) sexual violence, including being hit or touched on the genitals. 69% reported being strip searched. Girls as young as [twelve](#) have been subject to repeated unnecessary and humiliating strip searches.

The torture and abuse of child detainees appears to be carried out with near-total [impunity](#).

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Recommendations for the UK government:

1. Call on the government of Israel to immediately end the use of inhumane tactics against Palestinian child detainees, including beatings, sexual violence and starvation.
2. Urge the government of Israel to end the military trial and detention of Palestinian children.
3. Sanction Israeli government ministers responsible for the ongoing, systematic ill-treatment of Palestinian children throughout the arrest, detention and trial process.

For further information, please contact the Palestine Policy Unit:
info@palestinepolicyunit.org