New bill would protect Palestinian children from abuse

U.S. Rep. Betty McCollum of Minnesota recently introduced new legislation, HR 2407, designed to hold Israel accountable for continued abuse of Palestinian children held in Israeli military detention in violation of international humanitarian law. The act would ensure that U.S. financial assistance provided to Israel is not used to detain, interrogate, abuse, torture, and prosecute Palestinian children in military courts.

“This new bill will be a great help in our increasingly successful efforts to mobilize people to speak up for Palestinian rights,” said Jennifer Bing. This is the second introduction of a version of this bill in Congress. The initial bill followed years of advocacy by AFSC, Defense for Children International – Palestine (DCI-P), and others through the No Way to Treat a Child campaign. Click for resources and to take action in support of this bill.
Student leaders create a Pan African Youth Alliance in Ohio
AFSC has been engaging a core group of 15 visionary youth leaders who are excited about their collective power to challenge economic and social inequality that is most prevalent among people of African descent in Ohio.

Migwe Kimemia writes, “These youth leaders have taken the first courageous action by creating the AFSC-sponsored Pan-African Youth Alliance (PAYA) that is largely composed of African Student Association leaders from college campuses in Northwest and Southwest Ohio. PAYA’s mission is to empower and inspire young people to become transformational leaders who lift up their collective voices for equal opportunities for economic and social mobility.” Learn more.

Iowans meet to “reclaim sanctuary”
Erica Johnson emceed a recent workshop entitled “Reclaiming Sanctuary: A Faithful Response for Welcoming Migrants in Iowa.” (See photos.) Erica coordinates the Iowa Sanctuary Movement, which is actively supporting several asylum seekers in the state.

Erica recently organized an ICE stakeholder tour to investigate substandard conditions at a county jail that contracts with ICE. “We’re now working on a report and will issue a set of recommendations to the Sheriff and ICE,” she said, “and possibly work on a longer-term campaign to push for adoption of policies to address the issues we saw.” Erica was interviewed about AFSC’s work and quoted in this podcast, and the program was also mentioned in this article about young Latina leaders.
Youth in St. Louis address justice issues
Joshua Saleem writes that members of Youth Undoing Institutional Racism (YUIR) St. Louis participated in a recent Youth Political Empowerment workshop featuring elected officials and community leaders. They were there to brief the young people on regional issues including the cash bail system, municipal fragmentation, and educational funding inequity. Young people had the chance to ask questions and build relationships as they move their policy agenda forward and strive to hold decision makers accountable. Jonathan Pulphus shares this story about watching the most recent Avengers movie with YUIR and discussing questions of injustice, corruption and heroism.

AFSC applauds resignation of head of controversial CVE program
The Arab American Action Network (AAAN) and AFSC, lead organizations of the Stop CVE-Chicago Coalition, applaud recent news from the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority (ICJIA) that Junaid Afeef, embattled director of the controversial Illinois Targeted Violence Prevention Program (TVPP), has resigned. TVPP is funded partially by a Department of Homeland Security CVE (Countering Violent Extremism) grant program; for over two years, community institutions have been calling upon ICJIA to shut Afeef’s program down.

Mary Zerkel, who directs AFSC’s Communities Against Islamophobia (CAI) work, writes, “We are glad to hear of this development; however, the program will continue to surveil and racially profile the Arab and Muslim community, so we continue our call for TVPP to be shut down completely.” Check out her Truthout article for more information. Mary adds that CAI recently held two teacher trainings with its Countering Anti-Muslim Racism in Classrooms and Schools 6-12th grade curriculum.
Advocating for people in Gaza
Jehad Abusalim appeared on Democracy Now! recently to condemn Israel’s attacks on Gaza, and Ahmed Abu Artema wrote this piece in The Nation about the ongoing devastation of the siege. Read Jennifer Bing’s moving Mother’s Day article, and give today to help AFSC’s efforts in providing material aid to elders in Gaza.

In Indianapolis, AFSC and partners are hosting a “Shabbat for All: Gaza Solidarity Fast and Iftar” this evening which will include a later shabbat service, a discussion of the on-going crisis in Gaza, and then a meal breaking a day of fasting. Please consider supporting the Muslim Youth Collective, a project supported by AFSC’s Communities Against Islamophobia. Learn about four ways to support Muslim family and friends and oppose Islamophobia during Ramadan.

Organizing to dismantle oppression
AFSC in the Twin Cities is offering a free Organizing Training 101 on May 25-26. Participants will learn how to organize through an anti-capitalist and anti-racist lens. The training is open to all young people (ages 13-24) who are passionate about dismantling oppression.

With escalating threats against Rep. Ilhan Omar and all Muslims (especially Muslims of color and East African immigrants), Minnesotans Against Islamophobia, a community-based solidarity group, is back! To find out about upcoming meetings, protests, or other events join the announcement list by sending an email and following on Facebook.

Bits and Peaces
Brant Rosen shares his annual letter to Friends in the Midwest and this blog on why the Bible isn’t a deed to land….Take action today to tell Congress to pass a clean Dream and Promise Act and oppose additional funding for ICE and CBP….Visit AFSC’s new resources page to see how you can help end the detention of immigrant children….Learn more about AFSC’s We Are Not At Risk campaign and check out this blog post about the need to end drone warfare.

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