



DEPUTY SECRETARY OF DEFENSE  
1010 DEFENSE PENTAGON  
WASHINGTON, DC 20301-1010

Mr. Jamil Dakwar  
Director, Human Rights Program  
American Civil Liberties Union  
125 Broad Street  
New York, NY 10004

FEB 05 2010

Dear Mr. Dakwar:

Thank you for your November 19, 2009, letter to the Secretary of Defense regarding the detention of juveniles by U.S. Armed Forces in Iraq, in Afghanistan, and at Guantanamo. I have been asked to respond on his behalf.

The coercive use of children in armed conflict around the globe is unfortunate and deeply concerning to the United States and, as you note, poses special challenges for detention operations. Of the more than 100,000 individuals detained by the Department of Defense (DoD) since 2002, approximately 2,500 have been under the age of 18 at the time of their capture. The number of juveniles currently in DoD detention facilities in Iraq and Afghanistan is less than five. The Department recognizes the special needs of young detainees and the often difficult or unfortunate circumstances surrounding their situation. We have procedures in place to evaluate and determine the age of each detainee as best we are able, and provide suitable and appropriate detention facilities and treatment. Every effort is made to provide them a secure environment, separate them from the older detainee population, as well as to attend to the special physical, psychological, and related care they may need. In all cases, juvenile detainees are provided: regular exercise; access to mental health services; medical services, including dental care; and contact with their families, to the maximum extent possible.

As stated in our written answers to the questions from the Committee on the Rights of the Child (CROC), the United States has gone to great lengths in its detention operations in Iraq to provide the opportunity for all juvenile detainees to attend basic education programs, including instruction in language, math, history, social studies, science, and civics. The Department has opened a new theater internment facility in Afghanistan that will better facilitate segregation of juvenile detainees from the adult population and will enable education and reintegration programs similar to those used so successfully in Iraq.



The United States takes the proper treatment of detainees very seriously and does not tolerate abuse or mistreatment of any kind. In all instances, the International Committee of the Red Cross has access to all juveniles interned by the DoD. Moreover, they are attended to by medical professionals and guard force leadership who are committed to ensuring their proper treatment. Any credible allegation of mistreatment will be immediately and thoroughly investigated and appropriate action taken, when warranted.

The U. S. Government response to the CROC's "Concluding Observations" will be forwarded to the CROC upon completion. As has been the case in the past, the response will be made publicly available. I invite you to provide you comments once you have had the opportunity to review it.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "W. A. Rumsfeld". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large, prominent loop at the end.