

Rabbinical Association Comes Out in Support of a US Congress Bill that Protects Palestinian Children

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The Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association (RRA) has come out in support of a bill that promotes the human rights of Palestinian children and they're calling on congress to pass it.

[H.R.2407](#), the Promoting Human Rights for Palestinian Children Living Under Israeli Military Occupation Act, was introduced by Rep. Betty McCollum (D-MN) in April. The bill would amend the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 to ensure that U.S. taxpayer money would not go towards the military detention of children in foreign countries, including Israel. A [different version](#) of the bill was introduced by McCollum in 2017, but it died at the end of that congressional session.

“While we fully support Israel’s right to defend itself against terrorists, we believe that the detention and interrogation of children is a very last resort only in the most urgent cases. It should never be a normal course of action,” reads a [statement](#) put out by RRA.

The Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association was founded in 1974. It has over 300 members and most of them are graduates of Reconstructionist Rabbinical College in Pennsylvania, the only seminary connected to Reconstructionist Judaism.

“The RRA represents the rabbinic voice within the Reconstructionist movement, bringing the teachings, stories, and traditions of Judaism to bear on contemporary issues and challenges, and helping to define Reconstructionist positions on Jewish issues for our time,” reads the groups website.

In recent months, the group has also released statements opposing a potential annexation of the West Bank and condemning the Netanyahu government’s decision to bar **Rep. Rashida Tlaib** (D-MI) and **Rep. Ilhan Omar** (D-MN) from entering Israel.

Rabbi Elyse Wechterman is the Executive Director of the RRA.

“As Jews and reconstructionist rabbis, we have a long standing commitment to human rights and an awareness that societies are measured by how they treat their most vulnerable – especially children,” she told Mondoweiss, “Our members have been working hard against child detention and family separation on the border here in the United States. When the issue of child incarceration, torture and detention by the Israeli military was brought to our attention, we felt we could not ignore it – this is part of what it means to fight

for justice locally and globally.”

Earlier this month, **Rep. Mark DeSaulnier** (D-CA) became the 22nd member of Congress to co-sponsor McCollum’s bill. The legislation continues to gain support amidst a wider national discussion on the subject of conditioning aid to Israel. Democratic presidential candidates [Pete Buttigieg](#), [Bernie Sanders](#), and [Elizabeth Warren](#) have all indicated that they might be open to the idea of leveraging aid to impact Israel’s policies. A recent report released by the progressive think tank Data for Progress indicates that a [net majority](#) of Democratic voters support cutting aid to Israel over their human rights violations.

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