Abstract

The Palestinian Authority is under obligation to observe international human rights standards relating to children in conflict with the law. However, the authority has done little to improve the juvenile justice system. Children are treated in accordance with rules that have been drafted to suit past generations. The system lacks resources, trained police, prosecutors, judges, and probation officers. Yet the environment to reform the system is enabling. There are foundations to set up modern alternatives to imprisonment, including community service, alternative families, and restorative justice. The main problem in Palestine is not the law, though important, but rather the allocation of resources and adoption of reform policies. Nothing in the law precludes the Ministry of Social Affairs opening new juvenile rehabilitation centres or to give more powers to probation officers. Nothing prevents the High Judicial Council setting up a specialised juvenile judiciary. The Attorney General can establish juvenile prosecution. The police could open specialised juvenile unites. Civil society organisations are able to provide legal aid and conduct training courses on restorative justice and on socio-psychological issues. Most reform steps can be taken on a functional basis through executive instructions from relevant official bodies.