

Statement on behalf of Defence for Children International (DCI)

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

Twenty first session

September 2012

Attacks on Palestinian fishermen by the Israeli authorities in Mediterranean Sea, Gaza

Thank you Mr. President,

Since January 2011, DCI-Palestine has documented **12 cases** in which fishing boats containing children have been intercepted by Israeli patrol boats off the coast of Gaza. For many years, Palestinian fishermen have reported being harassed and humiliated by Israeli patrol boats whilst attempting to fish. In sworn testimonies collected by DCI, fishermen report being fired upon, sprayed with water cannon, detained and interrogated without any apparent legitimate reason. These incidents have also been reported by the US State Department.

In the majority of cases documented by DCI, children were fishing when they were suddenly approached by Israeli patrol boats. In **11 cases (92 percent)**, the patrol boats open fired without prior warning and the crew of the fishing boats, including children, were ordered to strip down to their underwear and swim to the patrol boat, even in winter. Once on board, in **11 cases (92 percent)**, the children were tied and blindfolded without being told why they were being detained, and taken to the Israeli port of Ashdod for interrogation. In none of the cases documented by DCI, were the fishermen accused of an offence. The purpose of the interrogations appears to be to illicit information about Gaza and its residents. The fishermen are generally released within 24 hours, but in at least **seven cases (58 percent)**, their boats and fishing equipment were confiscated without reason, thereby depriving them of their only source of income. In **eight cases (67 percent)** documented by DCI, the boats were intercepted within the three nautical mile sea limit unilaterally imposed by the Israeli authorities in 2008.

In view of these violations, we urge the Human Rights Council to issue recommendations for Israel to:

1. Respect the legitimate right of Palestinian fishermen to work unhindered off the coast of Gaza;
2. Desist from detaining Palestinian fishermen, including children, whilst they are exercising their legitimate right to fish off the coast of Gaza;
3. Desist from attempting to recruit children as informants during interrogation in violation of Israel's international legal obligations; and
4. Desist from confiscating Palestinian boats and fishing equipment engaged in lawful activity off the coast of Gaza, and immediately return all boats and equipment to their rightful owners.

Thank you Mr. President,