

CONSIDERATION OF THE UPR REPORT OF ISRAEL

Madame/Mr President,

Thank you for giving us the floor.

Paragraph 1: Defence for Children International Palestine and Al Mezan Center for Human Rights (Gaza) welcome the report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of Israel, in particular the recommendations relating to children's rights.

Paragraph 2: We welcome recent developments that attempt to advance the protection of children in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT) in particular the establishment of a Juvenile Military Court, raising the age of majority under Israeli military law from 16 to 18 years to conform with both Israeli law and international standards and the 2011 Israeli High Court ruling for the Ministry of Education to take concrete measures to promote the right to education for Palestinian children in East Jerusalem in light of the lack of classrooms there.

Paragraph 3: However, because these changes have done little to improve child protection or end conflict-related violence against children living in the OPT we would like to highlight the following key issues:

1. Arrest and detention of children

Paragraph 4: UPR Recommendations 136.112, 136.126, 136.134 and 136.139 call on the Government of Israel to ensure that the detention of civilians, especially children, is carried out in accordance with international law and standards without any discrimination; to put an end to any criminal procedures against Palestinian children in military courts; to end night arrests of children; among other measures to bring practices to conform with international standards of juvenile arrest and detention.

Paragraph 5: Defence for Children International Palestine and Al Mezan Center for Human Rights are concerned that the government of Israel did not make its position clear with regard to the aforementioned recommendations. We consider this child rights issue a priority in the OPT as every year hundreds of Palestinian children are taken into custody by Israeli forces and detained and prosecuted in an Israel military detention system where ill-treatment of child detainees is widespread and systematic. We call on the Government to 1) end night arrests of children; 2) allow children access to a lawyer prior to and during interrogation; 3) prohibit the practice of administrative detention against children and enshrine that prohibition in law; 4) end the use of solitary confinement against children; 5) establish credible processes to investigate cases of torture and ill-treatment; and 6) allow for parents to be present during the interrogation process.

Sufficient resources must be allocated to implement these urgent changes before the next UPR process.

2. Gaza blockade/closure and impact on education

Paragraph 6: UPR Recommendations 136.62, 136.208, 136.221, call(s) on the Government of Israel to take immediate measures with a view to lifting the blockade/closure and guarantee freedom of movement of goods and persons between Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem.

Paragraph 7: Defence for Children International Palestine and Al Mezan Center for Human Rights are concerned that the government of Israel did not make its position clear with regard to the aforementioned recommendations. We consider this child rights issue a priority in the OPT as the Israeli blockade/closure has had a devastating impact on all aspects of children's rights, in particular the right to education, where there is a shortage of 250 schools and an additional projected shortage of 190 schools by 2020, bringing this to a total of 440 schools less than what it needed. As a result, 85% of the schools in Gaza run double shifts. The situation is compounded by the restrictions of Israel's unlawful blockade on Gaza which prevents the import of the necessary construction materials to deliver these needs of Gaza's civilian population. Education facilities have also suffered a toll during hostilities; during the November 2012 offensive when 285 schools in Gaza suffered damage, including 60 UN-run schools. The blockade also prevents students from studying in the West Bank and vice versa.

As a matter of urgent priority for the health and wellbeing; including unrestricted, swift access to healthcare, of Gaza's children, Israel must lift the blockade/closure in its entirety to enable the free movement of people and goods in and out of Gaza, including to the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

Paragraph 8: Defence for Children International Palestine and Al Mezan Center for Human Rights urges the Government of Israel to promptly and effectively implement recommendations in consultation with UNICEF and other UN agencies in order to improve the protection environment for children living in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

Thank you.