



DEFENSA DE NIÑAS Y NIÑOS INTERNACIONAL DNI  
DEFENSE DES ENFANTS INTERNATIONAL DEI  
DEFENCE FOR CHILDREN INTERNATIONAL DCI

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL  
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Oral Statement submitted by:  
Defence for Children International, NGO with special ECOSOC status

### **31 Children Killed in Five Days in the Gaza Strip: The Council Must Act**

Thank you Mr. President

This statement is presented on behalf of Defence for Children International's Palestine Section.

As an organisation dedicated to the promotion and protection of children's rights, we would like to draw your attention to the recent killing and injuring of children in Gaza by Israeli forces.

Between February 28<sup>th</sup> and March 3<sup>rd</sup>, Israeli military forces carried out a series of attacks and incursions involving the use of heavy weaponry in residential areas. According to DCI-Palestine's documentation (as of March 5<sup>th</sup>), at least 31 children were killed, representing over a quarter of the total number of Gazans killed during those five days. An additional 60 children were injured, and hundreds of thousands were traumatized. Approximately 700 children were displaced due to the damage or destruction of their homes. During the same period, rocket attacks by armed Palestinian groups killed an Israeli man, injured 14 and traumatized many children.

Israel continues to maintain a blockade on the Gaza Strip that impedes local authorities and humanitarian agencies in delivering food, medicine and electricity. The impact of the blockade is most intense and most enduring on children, who constitute 56 per cent of the population of Gaza.

These actions are indisputable violations of International Humanitarian Law, which requires parties to a conflict to distinguish between civilian and military targets, and to refrain from employing excessive force unjustified by military necessity. As a State Party to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Israel has a duty to ensure the protection of *all* children under its jurisdiction, in armed conflict.

DCI is particularly concerned by the Israeli government's declared intention to continue its military offensive on Gaza until rocket fire on southern Israel halts - whatever the cost to the civilian population may be. Palestinian rocket attacks, although also unlawful, cannot justify the willful or reckless killing of civilians including children.

We call on members of the Human Rights Council to issue a strong condemnation of Israel's attacks on Gaza, highlighting their particular impact on the rights of children.

We also urge the competent bodies of the United Nations to immediately begin investigations into what may amount to grave breaches of International Humanitarian Law in Gaza.

Thank you.