

Statement on behalf of Defence for Children International (DCI)

### **ISRAEL'S ARMED FORCES AND GRAVE VIOLATIONS OF CHILDREN'S RIGHTS**

Amid escalating violence over the past several months, the number of Palestinian children in Israeli military detention has spiked. At the end of February there were 440 Palestinian children in Israeli prisons. This is the highest number of Palestinian children in Israeli prisons at any given point since the Israel Prison Service began releasing data in 2008.

For the first time in four years, Israel has renewed its use of administrative detention against Palestinian children. Administrative detention is a process whereby a child is detained without charge or trial, often renewable indefinitely. At the end of April, there were 13 Palestinian children being held by Israeli authorities pursuant to administrative detention orders.

Israel has the dubious distinction of being the only country in the world that systematically prosecutes between 500 and 700 children in military courts each year. A [report](#) released in April by Defense for Children International – Palestine (DCIP), based on the testimony of 429 Palestinian children detained by Israeli forces, found that three out of four experienced some form of physical violence following arrest. Israeli interrogators used position abuse, threats, and solitary confinement to coerce confessions from some of these children.

Additionally, Israeli forces or settlers have killed 50 Palestinian children from the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip since October 1, 2015. Of this number, 37 allegedly carried out stabbing, gun, or car ramming attacks against Israeli civilians or soldiers. In several cases, DCIP found that children did not pose a direct, mortal threat at the time they were killed. While attacks against civilians are prohibited by international law and states have the right to protect their citizens from violence, international law also requires that intentional lethal force only be used when absolutely unavoidable to protect life, and only when lesser means would be insufficient to apprehend a suspect.

Children under 18 years old now represent 46 percent of the 4.68 million Palestinians living in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip. This generation of Palestinians is growing up with a future stifled by systemic discrimination, settlement expansion, and a prolonged military occupation with no end in sight. Israeli leadership seems more intent than ever to rely on the use of excessive force to manage an unjust, oppressive, and entirely unsustainable military occupation.

Defence for Children International urges all members of the Human Rights Council:

- To demand that Israeli authorities immediately stop the use of administrative detention orders against Palestinian children and enshrine this prohibition in law;
- To condemn Israeli forces' use of excessive force in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, against Palestinians; and
- To demand that Israeli forces at all times act in accordance with the UN Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials.