



Defence for Children International Statement to 28th Special Session of the Human Rights Council: The deteriorating situation of human rights in the occupied Palestinian territory (OPT), including East Jerusalem

18 May 2018 - Defence for Children International welcomes the opportunity to speak at this special session and thanks the Council for convening.

The situation for Palestinian children living under prolonged Israeli military occupation has significantly deteriorated in recent weeks amid escalating violence. Israeli forces have unlawfully killed and maimed Palestinian children in Gaza near the perimeter fence during the “March of Return” protests.

DCI-Palestine (DCI-P) has documented a total of 14 Palestinian child fatalities at the hands of Israeli forces during “March of Return” protests since March 30, 2018. An additional child was killed after attempting to cross the perimeter fence in the same period.

On May 14, Israeli forces killed seven children with live ammunition during large scale protests near Israel’s perimeter fence. DCIP confirmed the following child fatalities: Ibrahim al-Zarqa, 17, Said Abu al-Kheir, 15, Saadi Abu Salah, 16, Ahmad al-Sha’ar, 15, Wassal Khalil, 14, and Izz al-Samak, 13, Talal Matar, 16. Five boys and one girl killed by Israeli forces on May 14 were shot in the head or neck and the other two boys were shot in the abdomen, according to initial reports.

Israeli military actions, as documented by DCI-P and others, including OHCHR and Human Rights Watch, contravene international law and constitute disproportionate and excessive use of force. While intentional lethal force may only be used when a direct threat to life or of serious injury exists and only when lesser means would be insufficient, Israeli forces have resorted to intentional lethal force in circumstances that do not justify the use of live ammunition. Israeli forces must abide by international law and not use intentional lethal force against Palestinian children who pose no direct, immediate threat. Israel should also end all forms of collective punishment caused by the ongoing blockade on Gaza since 2007.

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

- Condemn Israeli forces’ use of excessive force in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, against Palestinians.
- Ensure accountability for unlawful killings in Gaza, including by calling for an independent and transparent investigation into all incidents of excessive use of force, including lethal force, against Palestinians in the OPT, notably those resulting in the killing of children.
- 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.