

Human Rights Council - 38th Session

Item 3 – Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health

Delivered by: Defence for Children International (DCI)

Defence for Children International welcomes the opportunity to speak in this session.

On behalf of the NGO Panel for the United Nations Global Study on Children Deprived of Liberty, which comprises more than 145 NGOs from all over the world, we welcome the report of the Special Rapporteur on the right to health and his focus on children deprived of liberty. We share his concerns about the impact of deprivation of liberty on children's mental and physical health and development.

According to international law, children should only be imprisoned as a measure of last resort and for the minimum duration possible. Still, children around the world continue to be detained in different contexts such as prisons, institutions, and immigration detention centres, and for national security and conflict reasons. This is clearly linked to the social determinants of health. As the Special Rapporteur highlighted in his report, deprivation of liberty significantly affects children's mental well-being and psychosocial and cognitive growth, impacting their long-term development. It is a clear impediment to their enjoyment of the right to health.

We call upon all Member States and observers to fully support the realization of the Global Study on Children Deprived of Liberty, which is now in the implementation phase. The Global Study is being implemented in a collaborative and participatory approach, including all actors: UN agencies, Member States, civil society organizations, academia, and children.

A questionnaire was formally distributed to Permanent Missions in Geneva in February 2018 and a reminder was sent earlier this month. The questionnaire aims to collect and provide comprehensive qualitative and quantitative data as well as sound evidence from across regions on the number and situation of children deprived of liberty. Governments are encouraged to provide examples of alternative approaches to detention in order to reduce the number of children deprived of liberty in line with child rights principles. Furthermore, the Study aims to provide a snapshot of the number of children detained at a specific point in time - June 26, 2018.

Therefore, we call on all Member States and observers to ensure they collect the necessary data on that date, as well as to send their responses to the questionnaire to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights by September 1, 2018.

We also urge all Member States and observers to continue to support the Global Study financially and politically. This information and funding is crucial for the effective success of the Study and its impact on the lives of the many children deprived of their liberty all over the world.

Thank you.