

Human Rights Council - 40th Session

Interactive Dialogue with Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict

Delivered by: Defence for Children International (DCI)

Defence for Children International (DCI) welcomes the opportunity to speak in this dialogue on behalf of the NGO Panel for the United Nations Global Study on Children Deprived of Liberty.

We welcome the report of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) on Children and Armed Conflict and its focus on the abduction of children in armed conflict and children of or recruited as foreign fighters. We commend the call for child protection measures in the context of illegal and arbitrary detention of children in armed conflict. We also welcome the report's timely focus on the detention of children on national security grounds and the call for such children to be processed by the juvenile justice system instead of military courts.

There has been an increased focus on the deprivation of liberty of children in all settings from States, civil society, academia, the United Nations agencies, Special Procedures mandate holders, and human rights treaty bodies. We thank both Special Representatives of the Secretary-General for their engagement on this topic. This increased awareness resulted in the UN Global Study on Children Deprived of Liberty, which entered the implementation phase in 2018 with the distribution of the official questionnaire, the adoption of the research methodology, and the formation of research groups. Throughout 2018, the Study also held regional consultations in Southeast Asia, Africa, Europe, North America, Latin America, and the Middle East and North Africa region. We are pleased that more 100 questionnaires were received and that qualitative and quantitative data on the situation of children deprived of liberty in all its forms has been collected and non-custodial measures have been identified.

Notwithstanding the achievements reached to date, we remain concerned that children around the world continue to be deprived of their liberty, including on national security grounds. This violates their rights and exposes them to cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment which can have a long-lasting negative effect on children's physical and mental health and emotional well-being, including depression, anxiety, and suicidal behaviour.

This year, the Global Study entered its final phase and it will be delivered to the United Nations General Assembly in October. Thus, we call on States to continue to contribute to and support the development of the Study and its follow-up; and to implement its recommendations. This engagement is crucial for the effective success of the Study and its follow-up and its impact on the lives of the many children deprived of their liberty all over the world, including those detained on national security grounds.

Thank you.