



10<sup>th</sup> September 2019

**42<sup>nd</sup> session Human Rights Council – Item 2, Interactive Dialogue on HC report on Yemen**

**Oral statement delivered by Defence for Children International (DCI)**

Mr. President,

We are highly appreciative of the work of the Group of Eminent International and Regional Experts (GEE) for highlighting the extent of the armed conflict in Yemen, as a result of which an estimated 7.4 million children are in need of urgent help. The limited access to protection is fostering child recruitment into armed groups, increased child labour, early and forced marriage, and arbitrary detention where detainees are experiencing sexual abuse. Conflict and displacement contribute to higher risks of gender-based violence and more than two thirds of girls are married before the age of 18. 3,034<sup>1</sup> children have been recruited into armed forces, resulting in the killing and maiming of children and causing chronic and traumatic stress.

Some two million children are estimated to be out of school in Yemen, almost three times the number at the beginning of the war<sup>2</sup>, in part because schools are being used militarily, and children are being targeted on their way to school. Children report suffering from anxiety and depression while only a few receive psychological help provided by NGOs.

The malnutrition level in Yemen is among the highest in the world due to restrictions in access to nutritious food, safe water and lack of sanitation and hygiene systems, children in particular are suffering from stunted growth and acute malnutrition.

DCI encourages all perpetrators of grave violations to be held to the same standard regardless of whether they are government security forces, government coalitions, regional forces, non-state armed groups, or even UN peacekeepers, and referenced in the Secretary-General's Annual Report on Children and Armed Conflict.

Due to repeated lack of funds that have been promised, UN humanitarian programmes are being forced to shut down, meaning that out of the 34, only 3 remain operational, which will result in dire consequences for children in Yemen.

We therefore:

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<sup>1</sup> Report of the Group of Eminent International and Regional Experts as submitted to the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

<sup>2</sup> <https://reliefweb.int/report/yemen/road-yemen-part-5-retracing-steps-displaced>



- Support calls to extend and broaden the mandate of the GEE including investigations into specific violations against children and human rights defenders to ensure accountability of all perpetrators.
- Call upon all parties to the conflict to stop violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law, some of which may constitute war crimes, and to fully cooperate with the GEE.
- Call upon all States to cease all arms transfers to parties to the conflict
- Call on parties to the conflict to immediately cease and prevent the recruitment and use of children in the armed conflict; and to ensure compliance with international human rights law and international humanitarian law including the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict, to which Yemen is party.
- Urge the Yemeni authorities, in cooperation with international agencies, to ensure and maintain the access of humanitarian assistance, especially for children - including internally displaced and refugee children.