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Statement delivered by Defence for Children International on behalf of DCI-Palestine

Israeli forces continue to kill and maim Palestinian children in 2019

In March, the Independent Commission of Inquiry on the 2018 Protests in the OPT detailed its findings to this Council highlighting Israeli forces used lethal force against children who did not pose an imminent threat of death or serious injury to its soldiers, and concluded Israeli forces committed violations of international human rights and humanitarian law and that some of those violations may constitute war crimes or crimes against humanity. Since mass civilian protests began on 30 March 2018, Israeli forces have killed 50 children in the Gaza Strip with live ammunition and crowd-control weapons. The UN Independent Commission of Inquiry on the 2018 Protests in the Occupied Palestinian Territory found that at least 1,285 Palestinian children in Gaza sustained injuries from Israeli-fired live ammunition.

In his annual report on Children and Armed Conflict, the Secretary-General recognized 2018 was the deadliest year for Palestinian children since 2014. While he urged Israel to end its excessive use of force, he failed to include Israeli forces in the annex to his report despite sustained killing and maiming of Palestinian children by Israeli forces in 2018. In 2019, Israeli forces have killed 19 Palestinian children in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, fourteen (14) in the Gaza Strip and five (5) in the West Bank including East Jerusalem according to evidence collected by Defense for Children International – Palestine (DCIP). DCIP collected affidavits documenting 110 serious injuries sustained by children near the Gaza perimeter fence, 71 from live ammunition, 10 from rubber-coated metal bullets, and 29 from tear gas canisters.

The recent Commission of Inquiry report found that the Israeli government has “consistently failed to meaningfully investigate and prosecute commanders and soldiers for crimes and violations committed against Palestinians”, which has allowed Israeli forces to continue to commit grave violations without accountability.

In an effort to challenge systemic and seemingly perpetual impunity and increase protections for children, Defence for Children International strongly urges all UN member states to:

- Demand Israeli forces refrain from using lethal force against civilians, including children, who pose no imminent threat to life;
- Take urgent action to ensure accountability for violations by supporting efforts by the International Criminal Court to hold perpetrators accountable and by carrying out obligations under the Geneva Conventions or Rome Statute to exercise criminal jurisdiction and arrest persons alleged to have committed, or who ordered to have committed, the international crimes described in the Commission’s report; and
- Employ every means to prevent further use of intentional lethal force against civilians at demonstrations, including by ensuring protective monitoring of the demonstrations through the deployment of U.N.-mandated armed forces or unarmed observers.