



15 June 2020

### Item 7 General Debate

#### On behalf of Defence for Children International (DCI) - Palestine

Madam President,

Between January and March, the number of Palestinian child detainees in Israeli custody increased despite dangers highlighted by UN officials and public health experts of vulnerabilities presented by the novel coronavirus pandemic in places of detention. At the end of March, 194 Palestinian children were detained in Israeli prisons and detention centers, an increase of six percent from January, according to data released by the Israel Prison Service (IPS).

Data from a headcount on April 30 released by the Israel Prison Service (IPS) shows that fewer than twenty-nine (29) percent of the 168 Palestinian children in Palestinian children in Israeli custody were serving sentences, and over 61 percent were held in pre-trial custodial detention. At least 104 Palestinian children were detained in prisons located inside Israel, amounting to a grave breach of international law.

Palestinian children imprisoned by Israeli authorities live in close proximity to each other, often in compromised sanitary conditions, with limited access to resources to maintain minimum hygiene routines, according to documentation collected by DCIP.

Children detained at Israel's Megiddo prison told DCIP in May they were held in small, shared rooms with four to six other child detainees. Children reported they were not provided with information on how to prevent the spread of the novel coronavirus and noted the IPS implemented restrictions to limit recreation time and access to proper hygiene and sanitization products. At least 54 children were detained at Megiddo prison at the end of March.

On 11 May, the Humanitarian Coordinator in the Occupied Palestinian Territory; the UNICEF Special Representative in the State of Palestine; and the Head of the United Nations Human Rights Office in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, called on Israeli and Palestinian authorities to release all children in detention and put a moratorium on arrests.



While international law demands that children only be detained as a measure of last resort, custodial pre-trial detention is the norm for Palestinian children detained by Israeli forces from the occupied West Bank even while facing an unprecedented global health pandemic.

We strongly urge all member states to:

- Demand that Israeli authorities immediately end detention and prosecution of Palestinian children in the Israeli military court system; and
- Call for the release of all Palestinian children currently detained in Israeli prisons and detention centers.