



**Defence for Children International (DCI) statement before the 48<sup>th</sup> session of the UN Human Rights Council**

**Item 2 – Interactive Dialogue with the Group of Eminent International and Regional Experts on Yemen**

**THIS IS A JOINT STATEMENT BY Defence for Children International (DCI), Save the Children International and Reprieve.**

**Also supported by: Child Rights International Network (CRIN).**

Madam President,

We welcome the fourth report of the Group of Eminent International and Regional Experts (GEE) on Yemen and strongly support its recommendations.

The situation in Yemen – already the world's largest humanitarian crisis – continues to deteriorate amid a funding crisis that is impeding scale-up of life-saving aid to avert famine. Having endured more than six years of armed conflict and related violence alongside an economic blockade, the people of Yemen are again facing the spectre of heightened food insecurity and potentially the world's largest famine in over 40 years. Latest analysis shows that, in 2021, 20.7 million people, two out of every three Yemenis, need some form of humanitarian and protection assistance. Cases of acute malnutrition among children under five are the greatest ever recorded and this humanitarian crisis is strongly exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic, for which no official data are available, but is devastating civilian population, including children, while the authorities take no measures.

2021 marks a decade of drone strikes in Yemen conducted as part of counterterrorism operations. These attacks have resulted in hundreds of civilian casualties including children. Strikes and the continued presence of drones have long-term humanitarian impacts on child survivors, damaging mental health and access to education, and driving them deeper into vulnerability.

Furthermore, all parties to the armed conflict have arrested, detained, abducted children, and tortured or otherwise mistreated children in detention. In June 2021, hundreds of enforced disappearances occurred, including of children, as well as torture and killings of detainees in secret prisons by all parties to the conflict.

**We therefore:**

- Call upon the Council to ensure that the situation of child rights in Yemen remains on its agenda by renewing and reinforcing the GEE with a multi-year mandate as well as adequate resources;
- Call upon parties to the conflict to stop immediately international humanitarian law and human rights violations, some of which may constitute war crimes;
- Call for the immediate release of all persons who have been arbitrarily detained, in particular children and, ensure that in no circumstances children are detained together with adults; and

- Call upon all States to cease arms transfers and use of drones.

Furthermore, we urge all Yemeni authorities to:

- Ensure access to humanitarian assistance, especially for children;
- Cease and prevent the recruitment and use of children in the armed conflict; further ensure the demobilisation and effective disarmament of boys and girls recruited or used in hostilities, and the release of those captured; implement effective programmes for their rehabilitation, physical and psychological recovery, and reintegration into society.