

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

Item 3 – Interactive Dialogue with the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention

Madam President,

Defence for Children International (DCI) welcomes the opportunity to speak on behalf of the [NGO Panel on Children Deprived of Liberty](#).

The NGO Panel thanks the Working Group for their report and for highlighting that human rights defenders are at an increased risk of being subject to arbitrary detention.

This is even more true for child human rights defenders who are also deprived of their liberty on national security grounds. Indeed, many States utilise vague or overbroad definitions used to charge and prosecute political opponents and religious minorities. As a result, children may be arrested and detained on national security grounds simply for participating in protests against the Government or engaging in peaceful activities, including exercising their right to freedom of expression and assembly.

The NGO Panel remains concerned about the serious negative effects that deprivation of liberty has on the physical and psychological health of children as well as the long-term developmental impacts this will have on them.

We therefore call on Member States:

- to comply with international human rights standards, including article 37 b) of the Convention on the Rights of the Child;
- to explicitly exclude children from national counterterrorism and security legislation, and ensure that children suspected of national security offenses are treated exclusively within child justice systems;
- and to support the implementation and follow-up of the recommendations of the UN Global Study on Children Deprived of Liberty.

Thank you.