24th March 2022

Defence for Children International (DCI) statement before the 49th Session of the UN Human Rights Council, Item 7 General debate on the human rights situation in Palestine and other occupied Arab territories

The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs documented the demolition of 910 Palestinian structures last year, the most demolitions since 2016. In 2021, Defense for Children International – Palestine (DCI-P) documented 44 home demolitions, 37 in occupied East Jerusalem, and seven in the rest of the occupied West Bank, which resulted in the forcible transfer of 168 Palestinian children. DCI-P documented the demolition of 9 Palestinian homes in the first two months of 2022, eight in East Jerusalem, and one in the rest of the West Bank. Those demolitions resulted in the forcible transfer of 29 Palestinian children.

The destruction of property in an occupied territory is prohibited under international humanitarian law, unless absolutely necessary for military operations. Despite this prohibition, Palestinian properties are subject to demolition or confiscation as part of Israel's discriminatory planning and zoning regimes in Area C and East Jerusalem and other parts of the West Bank.

On October 19, 2021, the Israeli Minister of Defense, Benny Gantz, signed an order designating DCI-P and five other Palestinian human rights and civil society organisations as "terrorist organisations," which effectively criminalised and banned their activities within Israel. Two weeks later, on November 3, 2021, Israel's Chief Military Commander in the West Bank declared DCI-P and the other organisations to be "unlawful associations" in the occupied West Bank under Israeli military law.

Recent attempts to delegitimise humanitarian and human rights organisations operating in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, in particular, have been on the rise in recent years, negatively impacting their ability to deliver assistance and advocate on behalf of Palestinian human rights. These efforts take the form of targeted and organised defamation campaigns based on a range of allegations related to the violation of counter-terrorism legislation and international law. In most cases, if not all, these allegations are erroneous, misrepresent, and distort critical factual or legal elements.

We strongly urge all member states:

- Demand Israel immediately end its discriminatory planning and zoning regimes and stop demolishing Palestinian homes and forcibly transferring Palestinians in the Occupied Palestinian Territory;
- Condemn Israel's designation of Palestinian human rights and civil society organisations as "terror organisations" and other Israeli efforts to criminalise and delegitimise civil society;
- Demand Israeli authorities rescind the "terror" designation, repeal its 2016 Anti-Terrorism Law, and cease its systematic and ongoing policies and practices aimed at intimidating and silencing Palestinian civil society and human rights defenders; and
- Support and strengthen Palestinian human civil society organisations that seek to hold perpetrators of international law accountable and provide critical humanitarian assistance to Palestinian communities living under Israeli occupation.

Defence for Children International – International Secretariat
1, Rue de Varembé, Case postale 88 ♦ CH-1211 Genève 20 ♦ Suisse
T: [+41 22] 734 05 58 ♦ E: info@defenceforchildren.org
www.defenceforchildren.org