4th October 2023

54th Regular Session Agenda Item 7

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

Mr. President/Madam Vice-President,

This month marks two years since Israeli Minister of Defence, Benny Gantz, signed an order designating Defence for Children International - Palestine and five other Palestinian human rights and civil society organisations as "terrorist organisations" on October 19, 2021. Two weeks later, on November 3, 2021, Israel's Chief Military Commander in the West Bank declared DCI-P and the five other organisations to be "unlawful associations" in the occupied West Bank under Israeli military law. These repressive measures effectively criminalised the activities of these organisations and authorised Israeli authorities to close their offices, seize their assets, and arrest and jail their staff members.

DCI-P carries out their work in a situation of armed conflict where perpetrators of war crimes and crimes against humanity enjoy systemic impunity. Rather than demand Israeli forces end serious breaches of international law or that Israeli authorities hold perpetrators accountable, rising conservative nationalist social forces in Israel, including government ministries and agencies, instead aim to silence and eliminate DCI-P's human rights work that exposes widespread human rights violations inherent in Israel's seemingly permanent military occupation of Palestinians.

Israeli forces and settlers have killed at least 2,287 Palestinian children since 2000. Already in 2023, at least 47 Palestinian children have been killed, according to documentation collected by DCI-P.

DCI-P rejects the Israeli government's designation of DCI-P as a "terrorist organisation" and resolves to continue defending Palestinian children and exposing grave violations inherent in Israel's military occupation of Palestinians living in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip.

In an effort to challenge systemic impunity, we strongly urge all member states to:

- Use all available means to hold Israeli authorities accountable for targeted attacks and repression of Palestinian civil society organisations and human rights defenders;
- Demand Israeli authorities end the practice of arresting and prosecuting Palestinian children from the occupied West Bank;
- End all complicity and financial and diplomatic support to the Israeli apartheid system; and
- 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, international crimes.