

13th March 2024

55th session of the UN Human Rights Council

Item 3 – Interactive Dialogue with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against children

Defence for Children International (DCI) welcomes the opportunity to speak on behalf of the [NGO Panel on Children Deprived of Liberty](#). We thank the Special Representative for her report and for the recently published advocacy brief “[End Immigration Detention of Children](#)” in close cooperation with the UN Task Force on children deprived of liberty.

As this year marks the fifth anniversary of the presentation of the [Global Study on Children Deprived of Liberty to the UN General 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. Immigration detention is never in the best interests of the child and constitutes a child rights violation.

Recognising the detrimental impact of immigration detention on children, it becomes imperative to explore and implement alternative solutions that uphold children’s rights. Community-based alternatives, such as case management, supervised release, and community sponsorship, prioritise family unity and provide holistic support to children. These programmes allow access to legal aid, healthcare, education, and social services.

Furthermore, alternatives to detention not only mitigate the harm inflicted on children but also demonstrate cost-effectiveness and efficacy. Alternative solutions prioritise the best interests of the child, recognising their rights to safety, protection, and dignity. By employing child-friendly practices and trauma-informed care, these approaches mitigate the adverse effects of detention.

While children are on the move on an unprecedented scale, we call on Member States to:

- Implement clear legal measures to prohibit *de facto* and *de jure* deprivation of liberty of children due to their legal or migratory status, as well as that of their families.
- Establish a legal structure supporting diverse alternatives for both unaccompanied and accompanied children, along with their families.
- Develop robust asylum and migration management systems integrating child rights focused policies and laws, comprehensive screening, protection, and assistance mechanisms, efficient case management, child-sensitive reporting systems, diverse accommodation options, and community-based non-custodial arrangements.
- Ensure effective coordination with social and child protection systems.
- and; to implement the recommendations of the [UN Global Study on Children Deprived of Liberty](#)¹.

¹ United Nations Global Study on Children Deprived of Liberty, 2019
<https://childrendeprivedofliberty.info/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Full-Global-Study-Nov-2019.pdf>