



ANNUAL REPORT SUMMARY

2023 - 2024

OVERVIEW

Defence for Children International (DCI) is committed to promoting and protecting children's rights through policy improvements, direct services, and advocacy efforts across its global network of national sections. Its work in child safeguarding, justice for children, and the operation of socio-legal defence centres demonstrates the organisation's dedication to creating a world where all children can enjoy their rights in a just and responsible society.



FOREWORD

2023 marked a fresh start for DCI after the International General Assembly in Mauritania and the end of the COVID-19 pandemic. The organisation adopted a Strategic Framework with four key priorities under the theme **"Justice for Children"**:

- ✓ Children deprived of liberty
- ✓ Violence against children
- ✓ Children on the move
- ✓ Children in armed conflict

- Gender equality and child participation are crosscutting themes mainstreamed in all DCI activities. DCI's National Sections and regions have adopted action plans to address these priorities. However, funding for children's rights is decreasing in many parts of the world, both at national and international levels. DCI calls for a change in narrative, new alliances, and better presentation of results and impact.

- DCI has implemented the She Leads programme across 10 countries of MENA and Africa, which aims to increase the role of girls and young women in decision-making and transform gender norms in both formal and informal institutions.

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“Ensuring the secure and fair inclusion of girls and young women in political spaces is not solely a matter of justice but also a strategic imperative.”

Girl from the She Leads programme



DCI-Ghana



Khaled Quzmar
President



Alex Kamarotos
Executive Director

Our Movement is guided by this vision:

“All children must be able to enjoy their human rights with dignity in a just and responsible society.”

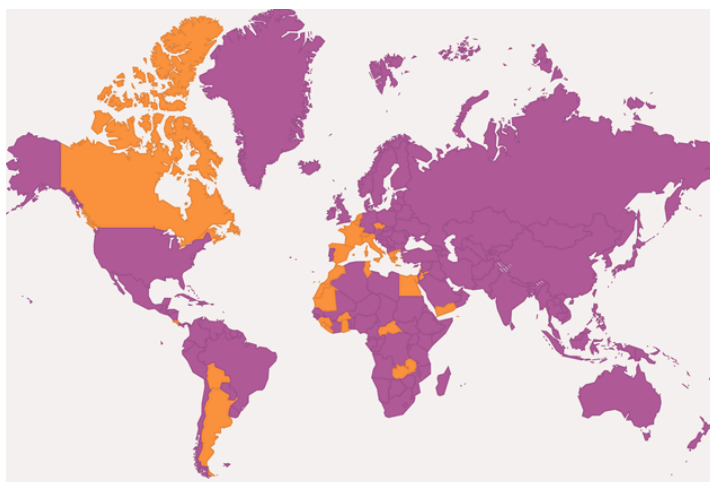


Beirut Regional Meeting

THE MOVEMENT

Defence for Children International is a child rights-focused and membership-based grassroots movement created in 1979. It consists of:

- ✓ Approximately 25 National Sections across four continents
- ✓ International Secretariat in Geneva
- ✓ World Service Foundation in Brussels
- ✓ Regional Desks per continent



CHILDREN ON THE MOVE

- DCI is deeply concerned about the rights and well-being of migrant and refugee children. The organisation has been particularly critical of the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum, along with many other NGOs. DCI argues that this new legislation will “normalise the arbitrary use of immigration detention, including for children and families, increase racial profiling, and return individuals to so called 'safe third countries' where they are at risk of violence, torture, and arbitrary imprisonment.”
- DCI's National Sections, especially those in Europe, are working to protect the rights of migrant and refugee children. This includes providing legal assistance, advocating for child-friendly asylum procedures, and supporting the integration of these children into their new communities.

CHILD SAFEGUARDING

In 2023, **DCI** updated its Child Safeguarding Policy, expanding its scope to include partnerships, online aspects, and children's participation rights. National Sections like **DCI-Ghana**, **DCI-Guinea**, and **DCI-Sierra Leone** implemented robust policies and training programmes, while **DCI-Costa Rica** focused on compliance and training through annual indicators. **DCI-Belgium** updated their policy with staff input, and **DCI-Italy** supported the development and implementation of child protection and wellbeing policies for two cooperatives.



JUSTICE FOR CHILDREN



DCI's National Sections globally worked to improve children's access to justice. In **Guinea**, DCI enhanced justice, rehabilitation, and reintegration for children in conflict with the law through legal assistance, advocacy, and capacity building, empowering 50 young activists and training justice officials. **DCI-Belgium** and **DCI-Tunisia** collaborated on the *Child Rights Approach to Violent Extremism (ADEVIO)* project, focusing on the rights and reintegration of youth involved in violent extremism. The Child-Friendly Justice European Network (CFJ-EN) launched the *Child Justice Caravan* project, educating children about their rights and empowering them to advocate for themselves through visits to EU and Council of Europe institutions.

SOCIO-LEGAL DEFENCE CENTRES

- ▶ DCI's Socio-Legal Defence Centres (SLDCs) provided vital legal and psychosocial assistance to children in contact with the law. In **Mauritania**, the *Together for Child-friendly Justice* project supported 140 children and established a center for child victims of sexual violence. **DCI-Palestine's** SLDCs defended Palestinian children's rights in Israeli and Palestinian courts, providing legal services to 628 children.
- ▶ In **Sierra Leone**, SLDCs ensured justice access by supporting children under arrest or investigation, offering free legal assistance, and facilitating family reintegration, benefiting 2,669 individuals and training 150 justice professionals.

UN GLOBAL STUDY ON CHILDREN DEPRIVED OF LIBERTY

DCI supports the implementation of the **UN Global Study on Children Deprived of Liberty** presented to the UN General Assembly in 2019. More than four years later, DCI continues to ensure that this issue remains high on the international agenda and that the Study's recommendations are implemented by member states. The *Justice for Children Deprived of Liberty in the MENA Region* project aims to reduce the number of children deprived of liberty and promote child-friendly justice. In 2023, DCI maintained Socio-Legal Defence Centres and organised national meetings to coordinate coalitions on children deprived of liberty in **Lebanon**, **Yemen**, **Mauritania**, **Tunisia**, **Morocco**, and **Egypt**.



CHILD PARTICIPATION

These initiatives demonstrate DCI's commitment to empowering **children as active participants in decision-making processes and advocates for their rights** across different regions and contexts.

CHILDREN AFFECTED BY ARMED CONFLICT



The situation of children in armed conflict remains a critical concern for DCI, especially highlighted by recent events in Gaza. In October 2023, shortly after **DCI-Palestine** received the **Rafto Prize** for Human Rights, Israel launched a war on Gaza following the attack by Hamas on 7 October 2023.



DCI emphasises the urgent need for justice for children in armed conflicts, noting the alarming number of children killed, maimed, injured, traumatised, displaced, tortured, and detained.



The organisation advocates for the enforcement of international criminal and humanitarian law, demanding accountability for war crimes against children. **DCI-Palestine** continues its crucial work documenting violations and providing legal support to children affected by the conflict.



Costa Rica ➤ Launched "Radio Integravoz 77.2" and Integravoz podcast to amplify youth voices.

Czechia ➤ Collaborated on the *You(th)Part(icipation)* project, creating a Digital Toolkit for Youth Participation.

Italy ➤ Established the **National Youth Council (CNRR)** for the Italian Ombudsperson for Childhood and Adolescence, involving 50 teenagers in policy discussions.

Yemen ➤ Implemented the **Transparency School project**, training children to fight corruption through awareness initiatives.

MENA Region ➤ Hosted a conference in Beirut, featuring 22 children from 8 DCI Sections presenting their aspirations to stakeholders.

LOOKING FORWARD

17th - 19th December 2024: Global Conference on Justice for Children Deprived of Liberty

The conference will provide an opportunity to assess the **progress made in implementing the Global Study's recommendations**, as well as to look ahead to the next five years of their implementation.

45th

Anniversary of
DCI

35th

Anniversary of the
UN Convention on
the Rights of the
Child

15th

Anniversary of the
UN Mandate on
Violence against
Children

10th

Anniversary of the
3rd Protocol of the
UNCRC on
individual
communications

5th

Anniversary of the
presentation of the
UN Global Study on
Children Deprived
of Liberty to the UN
General Assembly

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