

Adalah / Al-Haq / Al-Mezan / BADIL / Defense for Children International / Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies¹ Joint Oral Statement - Human Rights Council 28th Session, Interactive Dialogue on the Report of the Special Rapporteur to the OPT

Thank you Mr. President,

As human rights organizations working to protect the rights of Palestinians, we regularly contribute to the important work of this Council, particularly Agenda Item 7. We address you during Israel's recurring military offensives, as well as within the dangerous status quo of entrenched inequality, prolonged military occupation, and impunity, which is the root cause of perpetual violence and injustice.

Given the disturbing escalations of the last year, we welcome that the Special Rapporteur highlighted the impact of the deteriorating situation on Palestinian children. During last summer's Operation Protective Edge, the Israeli military killed over 500 children in Gaza, the majority of whom were killed in their homes. In 2014, Israeli forces killed over three times as many children in the West Bank as in the previous year, and detained hundreds of Palestinian youth throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory and within Israel when they dared to protest Israeli policies.

Civil society has found that to date, there has been no accountability in Israel for these serious violations of international humanitarian and human rights law. We emphasize that Israel's new Fact Finding Assessment Mechanism remains within the hierarchy of the military, and thus fails to comply with international law standards of independence and impartiality.

Just as Israel denies domestic accountability for Palestinian victims, the state has consistently undermined the international protection of human rights by refusing to fully cooperate with UN mechanisms. The international community has a responsibility to challenge this impunity that all but ensures the repetition of Israel's devastating military assaults and the continuation of its prolonged military occupation.

To this end we urge all states and the EU, to actively participate in Item 7, and we call on the Human Rights Council to:

1. Demand that Israel fully cooperate with all UN Mechanisms; and
2. Reiterate that entrenched inequality, occupation, and impunity is the root cause of the recurring violence and the ongoing violations of the human rights of Palestinians.

The Special Rapporteur noted that the Palestinian community and human rights defenders call in unison for accountability, an end to the blockade of Gaza, and an end to the occupation. Members of this Council must join that call.

¹ Civic Coalition for Palestinian Rights in Jerusalem, NGO without consultative status, also shares the views expressed in this statement.

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Israel's armed forces and grave violations of children's rights

Statement on behalf of Defence for Children International (DCI) joined by Al-Haq, Al-Mezan Centre for Human Rights and Adalah: The Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel

Mr. President,

A generation of Palestinian children living under prolonged Israeli military occupation have been arrested, shot, shelled and bombed since 2000, and, during this time, Israeli forces have killed over 1,900 children.

Israel is the only state to automatically and systematically prosecute children in military courts that lack basic standards of due process. Recent amendments to Israeli military laws concerning children have had little to no impact on ending widespread and systematic ill treatment and torture.

Despite well-documented evidence of grave violations of international law, justice and accountability is persistently denied to Palestinian children.

Instead, Palestinian children continually bear the brunt of Israel's repeated military offensives and suffer from a completely man-made humanitarian crisis created by Israel's eight-year long blockade of Gaza.

Between July 8 and August 26, 2014, Israeli attacks on Gaza killed over 500 Palestinian children.

In Gaza, where 43 percent of the population is under 14 years of age, Operation Protective Edge was the sixth Israeli military offensive in the past eight years, and Palestinian children have come of age witnessing death and have been suffocated by a life under siege.

Repeated Israeli military offensives and prolonged military occupation combined with Israel's complete disregard for international law has hindered any meaningful efforts toward implementing comprehensive protections for Palestinian children.

In a context where systemic impunity is the status quo, the need for justice and accountability is urgent.

We welcome the report of the Special Rapporteur on the OPT, and reiterate that Israel's persistent refusal to fully cooperate with UN human rights mechanisms has profound implications for the protection of human rights worldwide.

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In order to challenge systemic impunity and increase protections for children, Defence for Children International urges all members of the Human Rights Council

- To demand that Israel end its prolonged military occupation of Palestinians living in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, and its eight-year siege on the Gaza Strip, a form of collective punishment prohibited under international law; and
- To call on the Secretary-General to list Israel's armed forces in his 14th Annual Report on Children and Armed Conflict for committing grave violations against children during armed conflict.