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**COMMITTEE ON THE EXERCISE  
OF THE INALIENABLE RIGHTS  
OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE**

**23 November 2015  
Trusteeship Council Chamber  
10.00 a.m.**

**OBSERVANCE OF THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF SOLIDARITY WITH THE  
PALESTINIAN PEOPLE 2015**

Statement on behalf of Defense for Children International - Palestine

Excellencies,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

On this International Day of Solidarity, Defense for Children International - Palestine, an independent, local Palestinian child rights organization dedicated to defending and promoting the rights of children living in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip, reaffirms its commitment to securing a just and viable future for Palestinian children living in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

For nearly 25 years, we have investigated, documented and pursued accountability for grave human rights violations against children; held Israeli and Palestinian authorities accountable to universal human rights principles; and advocated at the international and national levels to advance access to justice and protection for children.

Excellencies,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

Today, children represent nearly 50 percent of Palestinians living in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip. Instability and violence define much of their lives.

Amid escalating violence and an increasingly militarized environment where Israeli forces and settlers operate with complete impunity, Israeli forces increasingly employ excessive force and target children with live ammunition to quash protests.

Recent legislation passed by the Government of Israel, combined with systemic impunity, is amplifying an already dire situation for Palestinian children. In the past months, Israeli officials have relaxed the standard for the use of lethal force against the Palestinian population and have approved harsher punitive measures against Palestinians, particularly children, accused of stone-throwing or criminal conduct against Israeli Jewish citizens. In another troubling development we have seen the renewed use of administrative detention for Palestinian children.

Excellencies,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

Since 2000, Israeli forces and extremists have killed more than 2,000 Palestinian children. Repeated military offensives and an eight-year long blockade continue to devastate lives in Gaza.

In 2014, Defense for Children International - Palestine verified that 535 children died – nearly 68 percent of them age 12 and below – as a direct result of Israeli attacks during Israel’s summer military assault on Gaza. For many children older than eight years, this was the sixth time they endured an Israeli military operation in Gaza.

Displacement, access to education and healthcare, and psychological trauma remain significant areas of concern particularly in the wake of Israel’s military assault. Most families with destroyed or partially damaged homes have been unable to rebuild because they lack funds and Israel’s siege of Gaza restricts the necessary construction materials.

With massive destruction to civilian infrastructure, including schools and hospitals, many children in Gaza continue to face limits on access to education and healthcare.

Palestinian children in the occupied West Bank face arrest, prosecution, and detention under an Israeli military court system that denies basic human rights and is notorious for the widespread, systematic, and institutionalized ill treatment and torture of Palestinian children.

Since 1967, Israeli authorities have operated two separate legal systems in the same territory. The sole factor in determining which laws apply to a person is his or her nationality and ethnicity. Israeli military law, which fails to ensure and denies basic and fundamental rights, is applied to the whole Palestinian population. Israeli settlers living in the West Bank are subject to the Israeli civilian and criminal legal system. No Israeli child comes into contact with the military court system.

Each year, around 700 Palestinian children living in the occupied West Bank are arrested by Israeli forces and prosecuted in the Israeli military detention system. The majority of Palestinian child detainees are charged with throwing stones, and three out of four experience physical violence during arrest, transfer or interrogation.

Children report that Israeli interrogators use position abuse, threats, and solitary confinement to coerce confessions, and in the overwhelming majority of cases, Israeli authorities deprive children of legal counsel and improperly informed them of their rights during interrogation.

Israeli military detention exposes Palestinian children to physical and psychological violence and prevents them from enjoying their rights as enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child by interrupting education, contributing to mental health issues, and placing large numbers of families under stress.

For Palestinian children in East Jerusalem, in theory, the Israeli Youth Law provides special safeguards and protections to children in conflict with the law during arrest, transfer, interrogation and court appearances. However, discriminatory implementation of the law deprives Palestinian children in East Jerusalem of their rights during the arrest and interrogation processes. For Palestinian children in East Jerusalem, exceptions have become the rule.

International juvenile justice standards, which Israel has obliged itself to implement by signing the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1991, demand that children should only be deprived of their liberty as a measure of last resort and include universal prohibitions against physical violence and torture, among other protections. Despite these obligations, Israeli authorities persistently disregard and fail to comply with international law.

A growing number of Palestinian children and their families live in villages and towns hemmed in by expanding and often violent Israeli settler communities. Stationed throughout the West Bank, Israeli soldiers, police, and private security firms protect settler populations at the expense of Palestinian civilians. In this hypermilitarized environment, Palestinian children face disproportionate physical violence, restricted access to education, and psychological trauma.

Excellencies,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

The international community often fails to take concrete action that would challenge the impunity enjoyed by Israeli military and police for violence against Palestinian children. This provides tacit approval for Israeli forces to continue carrying out grave violations against Palestinian children with impunity.

Instead of growing up with a law-based, negotiated settlement founded on universal human rights principles, justice and respect for human dignity; Palestinian youth have had their futures stifled and suppressed by systemic discrimination, constant settlement expansion, and prolonged military occupation.

The continued failure by the international community to address impunity or demand a vision for the future that incorporates a rights-based framework recognizing universal human rights principles, principles of non-discrimination and equality, and respect for human dignity will ensure that an incredibly youthful population becomes increasingly vulnerable.

As tensions increase amid escalating violence, it is clear that the status quo is not sustainable. The need for justice and accountability is urgent. On this International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, I implore you to strengthen efforts to advance solidarity and challenge you to take concrete actions in response to Palestinian civil society's demands to challenge systemic impunity and end Israel's prolonged military occupation of the Palestinian people.

Thank you.

Delivered by:

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Defense for Children International Palestine