Defense for Children International PALESTINE

Exposing grave violations against children and holding their abusers accountable.

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DCIP Statement on Israeli Authorities' Designation of DCIP as a "Terrorist Organization"

Ramallah, October 22, 2021—In response to the Israeli Ministry of Defense issuing a military order on October 19 declaring Defense for Children International - Palestine and five other Palestinian human rights organizations in the Occupied Palestinian Territory to be "terrorist organizations," the General Director of DCIP, Khaled Quzmar, issued the following statement:

> Over the past several years, Israeli, Palestinian, and international human rights and humanitarian organizations have faced an increasingly difficult operating environment and shrinking civic space in Israel and the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip, which negatively impacts their ability to deliver assistance and advocate on behalf of Palestinian human rights.
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> Recently, we have experienced and borne the brunt of increasing disinformation campaigns by both Israeli government actors and private actors that target our institutional donors, our partners, our board, and our staff.
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> We are 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. For 30 years, DCIP has investigated, documented, and exposed grave human rights violations against Palestinian 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.
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> As DCIP defends Palestinian children in the Israeli military courts and exposes grave violations against Palestinian children at the hands of Israeli forces, delegitimization and disinformation campaigns against DCIP have been advanced by a network of rising nationalist Israeli civil society organizations and associated organizations outside of Israel, with the support of the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs. These efforts take the form of targeted and organized defamation campaigns based on a range of allegations related to the violation of counter-terrorism legislation and international law. These allegations are erroneous, misrepresent, and distort critical factual or legal elements.
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> Despite grave risks, DCIP's staff works tirelessly with limited resources to defend and promote the rights of children living in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip. We carry out our 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, these rising conservative nationalist social forces in Israel, including government ministries and agencies, aim to silence and eliminate DCIP's human rights work that exposes widespread human rights violations inherent in Israel's military occupation of Palestinians.

We reject the Israeli government's recent designation of DCIP as a "terrorist organization" as it is another unjust action by Israeli authorities to criminalize and eliminate our lawful human rights and child protection work.

After years of delegitimization and disinformation campaigns against us have failed to silence our work, Israeli authorities now choose to escalate repressive tactics by labeling civil society organizations as terrorists.

As the Israeli government becomes increasingly emboldened and pushes forward efforts to criminalize legitimate human rights and humanitarian work carried out by Palestinian human rights and civil society organizations, politically-motivated prosecutions in Israel's military court system will become the norm.

We resolve 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.

Israeli authorities must immediately end efforts aimed at delegitimizing and criminalizing Palestinian human rights defenders and civil society organizations. We demand that the international community use all available means to hold Israeli authorities accountable for targeted attacks and repression of Palestinian civil society organizations and act to end complicity and support to the Israeli apartheid regime.

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Defense for Children International - Palestine *is an independent, local Palestinian child rights organization based in Ramallah dedicated to defending and promoting the rights of children living in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip. For 30 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. We also provide direct legal aid to children in distress. Learn more at www.dci-palestine.org.*