

**Statement by the State of Palestine (please check against delivery)**

Thank you Mr. President, and I would also like to extend my delegation's thanks and appreciation to the Special Representatives for their reports and presentations.

As the Human Rights Council considers the situation of children in armed conflict around the world, we appeal to the Council not to forget Palestinian children.

Israel, the Occupying Power, systematically commits crimes against Palestinian children, its actions contravening its obligations under human rights law, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and international humanitarian law. Evidence verified by the United Nations and numerous human rights organizations affirms that Israel continues to kill and maim children, attack schools and hospitals, and prevent humanitarian access, with devastating impact on the rights, lives and well-being of Palestinian children. Israel's latest aggression on the besieged Gaza Strip caused the 3<sup>rd</sup> highest number of child fatalities in armed conflicts worldwide, with at least 550 children killed, an average of 10 per day, most of whom had not yet celebrated their 12<sup>th</sup> birthday. In the West Bank, Palestinian children and their families continue to be routinely assaulted, harassed and intimidated, killed by Israeli settler terrorists and the occupying Power's military forces.

The children that survive this constant aggression are left to cope with deep physical and psychological wounds, gravely impairing their lives, including as a result of loss of family members, as well as detention and arrest, with children as young as 12 seized, beaten and subjected to all kinds of ill-treatment and torture, and prosecuted in the only juvenile military court system in the world, and forced displacement including as a result of the destruction of their homes.

Mr. President,

Israel's policies – approved at the highest levels – are not only gross violations against children, but are systematic violations of international law tantamount to war crimes. Israel's deliberate oppression of Palestinian children has no limits – not a day goes by where children's rights are not violated.

How long will the Human Rights Council allow Israel to act as a State above the law, perpetrating such grave violations against children with impunity? This shameful situation renders the law, the obligations to protect civilians in armed conflict, and the accountability mechanisms established for this purpose meaningless. The failure to apply the same standards and demands for compliance to Israel undermines the credibility of the international system and proves that it is broken.

As highlighted by the Special Representative, "Justice and accountability are vitally important to provide protection to children during armed conflicts". Yet it is clear that the crimes committed by Israel, the occupying Power, against

children are a symptom a complete lack of accountability.

In this regard, we would like to ask the Special Representative Ms. Leila Zerrougui what recommendations could be made to help rectify this injustice and ensure full accountability in a situation where crimes are persistently committed against children as part of State policy and where Israel is clearly unwilling to bring perpetrators of such violations to justice.