



In this edition:

- News from Across the DCI movement
- Mainstreaming the Rights of the Child - DCI Participation in the 7th Session of the Human Rights Council
- Three DCI National Sections Contribute to Universal Periodic Review

Welcome to the Defence for Children International (DCI) Newsletter

Welcome to the DCI Newsletter. I hope you will enjoy the features we have included in this edition. Firstly we applaud the efforts of DCI national sections who bring child rights concerns to the attention of their local, national and international media, recognising the importance of the media can play in raising awareness about child rights and mobilising public support for directed action. The second part of this edition reviews international advocacy efforts to put child rights on the agenda of the UN Human Rights Council and highlights the particular contributions of DCI national sections.

I would also like to take this opportunity to tell you that DCI's International Executive Council held their 5th ordinary meeting in Geneva on the 12th

and 13th of March. The meeting was an opportunity to review and reflect on the dynamism, diversity and future direction of the DCI movement. Several of the agenda items were closely linked to the upcoming International General Assembly, scheduled to take place later this year. IEC members hope to have another meeting ahead of the upcoming IGA in order to finalise the evaluation of their current mandate, and develop concrete recommendations for the next Council and members of the General Assembly.

On behalf of the IEC, I would like to extend my warmest greetings and admiration to our fellow child rights advocates within the DCI movement and congratulate you on your daily work to make child rights a priority ♦

Rifat Odeh Kassis, President

News from Across the DCI movement

A glimpse of DCI coverage in the media...

DCI-Canada has been involved in two high profile cases which have caught the attention of the national media. In the first case, DCI is representing a Uruguayan family who is scheduled to be deported from Canada. The family has a four year old son who is a Canadian citizen and has Down Syndrome. DCI-Canada is lobbying for the child's right to remain in the country with both his parents and for the family to continue receiving the same quality of care.

In the second case, DCI-Canada has been representing the seventeen child victims of the "Goudge Inquiry" - the case of a forensic pathologist who falsely blamed parents for the deaths of their infants, resulting in the remaining siblings being forcibly removed

from their homes and put into foster care. DCI-Canada's lawyers have been the only voices for the children in this case who have been tragically denied a family life with their parents as a result of this doctor's grave mistakes in judgement. A full version of this story will appear in the next DCI-Newsletter.

DCI-Ghana has continued to garner media coverage for their work to end child trafficking in the Kumasi Metropolis. As part of their efforts, they have run training workshops to raise awareness among participants about child trafficking to enable them to educate their peers and the community on the dangers of the practice.

DCI-Netherlands, along with DCI-Belgium and DCI-France have recently



March 2008

Vol. 6, No. 2

Interesting Links:

UN Democracy



Campaign: Legal Assistance for Children In Conflict with the Law



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News (continued from page 1)

launched their report titled “Violence against Children in Conflict with the Law: A Study on Indicators and Data Collection in Belgium, England and Wales, France and the Netherlands”, supported by the Daphne II Programme of the European Commission. The report, which has received wide media attention, reveals alarming and repressive policies towards children in conflict with the law, including rising numbers of children in detention, and the prevalence of violence in youth custodial institutions. The report will be officially launched to the European Parliament in early April.

DCI-Palestine has spoken out over the ris-

ing death toll for children in Gaza, producing a number of press releases and position statements on the increasing gravity of the situation and condemning the continued inaction of the international community.

DCI-Sierra Leone, in partnership with the YMCA, launched its “Youth Justice in Action Campaign Report for Sierra Leone” at a well attended ceremony held in Freetown. DCI-Sierra Leone has built strong ties with the media, and used the launch as an opportunity to push for government responsibility on juvenile justice, including the need to establish juvenile courts in all the twelve districts in the country ♦

Mainstreaming the Rights of the Child – DCI Participation in the 7th Session of the Human Rights Council

As part of the NGO Working Group on the Human Rights Council, the staff of the DCI International Secretariat participated in a number of initiatives in the lead-up to the 7th session of the Human Rights Council. Two over-arching goals of the NGO Working Group were to lobby for the mainstreaming of the rights of the child into the new Human Rights Council and to influence the adoption of the Council’s first Resolution on the Rights of the Child.

The Resolution

DCI drafted a written statement to the Human Rights Council on behalf of the NGO Working Group which called for the rights of the child to be integrated into the mandates of all Special Procedures and the new Universal Periodic Review. It also urged the Council to elect mandate holders with expertise in child rights. The statement further encouraged the Council to devote at least one full day a year to a debate on the rights of the child, to develop a strong collaboration with the Committee on the Rights of the Child, to encourage the Committee to report to the Council, to facilitate child participation, and to call upon the Secretary General to appoint its Special Representative on Violence Against Children

without further delay.

DCI and other Geneva-based NGOs were involved in lobbying for these points over the past few months and were invited to contribute text suggestions to the governments sponsoring the Resolution.

Although the final Resolution has not yet been adopted at the time of writing, it appears that the text will reflect many of these concerns, including the need for mainstreaming and the commitment to a yearly debate on child rights. While the NGO Working Group supported the idea of a thematic Resolution (ie: one which would focus on a particular issue of concern in order to facilitate direct action), the sponsors of the Resolution ultimately decided upon a more general (omnibus) Resolution.

Side-events

A number of side events were held during the Council related to the rights of the child including an event on the children of prisoners and an event on the development of a complaints mechanism to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Please visit the CRIN website for detailed reports on each of these events.

Renato de Oliveira from DCI-Brazil (ANCED) participated as a speaker in the



March 2008

Vol. 6, No. 2

Interesting Links:

Human Rights Tools - Courses



Human Rights Tools - Consulting Database

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Participation in the HRC *(continued from page 2)*

side event on “Mainstreaming the Rights of the Child into the Human Rights Council”, and shared his experiences in preparing a report to the Universal Periodic Review’s examination of Brazil.

During his presentation, Mr. Oliveira emphasised that “putting child rights first is not in opposition to the broader human rights agenda”. He went on to discuss the national

context, stating that poverty and inequality are among the biggest barriers to the rights of children in Brazil. He also lamented the increasing “criminalisation of youth” and continuing geographical inequalities between regions, citing them as serious threats to the rights of young people ♦

Three DCI National Sections Contribute to the New Universal Periodic Review

Three of DCI’s national sections - Brazil, France and the Netherlands - have contributed civil society reports to the first sessions of the new Universal Periodic Review. The contributions of these national sections towards the reviews of their countries will be one step closer to ensuring that the rights of the child are reflected throughout all mechanisms of the new Human Rights Council.

The Universal Periodic Review (UPR) mechanism is the process whereby the UN Human Rights Council undertakes a review of the fulfilment by each UN member State of its human rights obligations and commitments. The UPR aims to avoid bias and ensure universality by equally reviewing and examining the records of each of its 192 UN member States on a range of human rights issues.

Thirty two countries (selected through a draw) will be examined during the first and second sessions of the UPR beginning in April; however, all States will eventually be reviewed at some point during the next four years. The review of each country will be coordinated by three other countries (referred to as a troika), the members of whom are selected by a draw. The review will take place through an interactive dialogue between the country concerned, the troika members and other relevant stakeholders—including NGOs.

The following paragraphs highlight some of the key child rights concerns presented by DCI-Brazil, DCI-France and DCI-the Netherlands in their reports regarding their respective countries.

DCI-Brazil:

As one of the most unequal countries on earth (occupying a top-ten position on a UNDP inequality list), Brazil grapples with poverty and its derivatives: violence and crime. Wide disparities in income across regions are exacerbated further by racial inequalities.

These socio-economic conditions have resulted in an increase in the imprisonment of the young and poor living in urban peripheries, with the number of adolescents deprived of their liberty increasing 325% between 1996 and 2006. The majority of violations were against property, revealing the crucial link between crime, poverty and social inequality.

The rights of young prisoners are often violated, with many being subjected to torture, cruel treatment, negligence, and death. Overall, there has been an increase in the number of adolescent deaths, and a tightening of the criminal justice legislation, while only a very small proportion of Brazilian municipalities are capable of providing counsel and assistance to children deprived of their liberty.

DCI-France:

A recent UNICEF Report concerning the wellbeing of children in the richest countries highlights the relatively low standing of French children vis-à-vis other industrialised countries. The rights of the child are often framed solely in terms of the



March 2008

Vol. 6, No. 2

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Universal Periodic Review *(continued from page 3)*

right to education, while other social and political rights enshrined in the CRC (such as the right to liberty and to participation) are given less attention.

At the level of government, engagement with civil society in pursuit of child rights is lacking. For example, DCI France only learned of the possibility of contributing to the UPR process through the DCI International Secretariat, rather than being invited to collaborate by the government (as is required).

One of DCI-France's key recommendations includes establishing a Minister for Childhood. They also cite the urgency of reducing the number of children living below the poverty line, establishing public child care, beginning a remodelling of the public education system, developing a true politic of free time for children and young people, and reversing the negative public perception of children of foreign origin and children in conflict with the law.

DCI-Netherlands:

The Netherlands has demonstrated persistent delays in reporting to various UN treaty bodies, including the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, and the Committee on

the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

A number of policies and laws have been introduced which jeopardize the rights of migrants, asylum seekers, and in particular, their children. Many of them are lacking food, clothing and housing and are denied the adequate standard of living guaranteed to all citizens of the Netherlands.

The report also raises concerns of racial segregation in schools and the under-representation of children from ethnic minorities in higher education.

Contributing to the UPR

DCI national sections are well-placed to highlight the national reality of child rights during the reviews of their respective countries. The DCI-International Secretariat will endeavour to keep national sections informed when their country is to be reviewed and remains available for technical assistance in submitting reports.

For more information on the UPR process, please visit: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/UPR/Pages/UPRmain.aspx>

For a full version of the reports submitted by DCI-Brazil, DCI-France and DCI-Netherlands, please contact communications@dci-is.org ♦

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Please note that the articles contained in this newsletter are the individual contributions of DCI's national sections and the International Secretariat, and as such do not constitute the official position of the IEC members or the movement as a whole.