



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
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Defence for
Children International
the worldwide movement for children's rights



HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL (29TH SESSION)

Side-event on “Girls in Detention”

Date & Venue	Thursday, 18 June 2015 – from 15:00 to 17:00 Palais des Nations, Geneva – Room XXVI
Organizers	Defence for Children International (DCI) Penal Reform International (PRI) Office of the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General on Violence against Children
Sponsors	Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the UN

Background

Girls are one of the most vulnerable groups involved in criminal justice systems because of their age, gender and small numbers. The lack of legal protection and access to justice, prevailing social norms, gender-based violence and discrimination contribute to girls' vulnerable situation. Once detained, in many countries girls may find themselves in harsh conditions, in overcrowded cells or in solitary confinement. In some countries, girls may face inhuman sentencing, including flogging, stoning and capital punishment. There are still wide gaps in our knowledge and understanding of offending by girls, of their specific needs whilst in detention, and of what is effective in terms of gender-sensitive rehabilitation and social reintegration measures. Girls are far from being a homogenous group and their characteristics and needs vary considerably between and within countries. Despite this, we know that many of the issues they face are common across many countries and contexts and that they are often exposed to particular challenges that are different from those experienced by boys or adult detainees. As noted by numerous reports, including the SRSG-VAC annual report to the Human Rights Council (A/HRC/28/55) and by Penal Reform International and Interagency Panel on Juvenile Justice report “Neglected needs: Girls in the criminal justice system” (2014), girls have often experienced past physical, emotional or sexual abuse; and that they are at risk of continued violence, including sexual violence, harassment, invasive body searches and humiliating treatment by staff whilst in detention. But in addition, they may be primary carers for children, whether their own or siblings; they have specific health, hygiene and sanitary needs; and they are at a high risk of substance abuse, self-harm, mental health issues, HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases.

Objective

The objective of this side-event is to identify the obstacles and challenges compromising the realisation of girls' rights in justice systems. The speakers and participants will be invited to share their thoughts on how to better prevent girls' involvement in the criminal justice system and how to



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protect girls from violations of their human rights in justice systems including while in detention; how to foster the adoption of gender-responsive policies, establish child-friendly justice systems that are sensitive to girls' particular needs, set effective complaints mechanisms and remedy accessible to girls and ultimately ensure that justice systems are accessible and do not discriminate and re-victimize girls.

Speakers

- Girls involved in the criminal justice system - Preventing violence, stigmatization and deprivation of liberty
Ann-Kristin Vervik, Office of the Special Representative to the UN Secretary General on Violence against Children
- Gender sensitive approaches
Adwoa Kufuor, OHCHR, Women Human Rights and Gender Section
- The UN Bangkok Rules: a tool for protecting girls in criminal justice systems
Andrea Huber, Penal Reform International
- A case from the field
Vilma Amparo Gomez Pava, Defence for Children International – Colombia
- Moderation
Federica Donati, OHCHR, Equality, Non-Discrimination and Participation Unit