

HRC44: Statement on the Impact that Violence has on Children's Mental Health

ITEM 3: ID with SRSG on violence against children

44th session of the Human Rights Council

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Madam President,

We welcome the Annual report of the SRSG on Violence against Children, shedding light on the impact of violence on children's mental health.

The OMCT expresses concern for the mental and physical health of the 7 million children who we estimate are deprived of their liberty worldwide, as deprivation of liberty itself affects the mental health of children, as well as the violence, ill-treatment, or torture that they can be subjected to during detention.

These concerns have increased in the context of the current pandemic.

While children may be less at risk of being infected by COVID-19, in many parts of the world, their detention conditions are characterized by serious overcrowding, neglect, and they are more likely to suffer stronger psychological impacts from measures of isolation and the deprivation of contacts with their family and the outside world.

In many countries, civil society organizations are no longer able to monitor places of detention for children, who are therefore at higher risk of being subjected to violence, abuse, ill-treatment or torture, likely to remain undetected. We are especially concerned about governments that are using the current emergency to decrease rights of children, prioritizing deprivation of liberty.

In this regard the OMCT expresses particular concern about the Law of Urgent Consideration that is being voted today in Uruguay, imposing a minimum mandatory period of detention and increasing penalties for children.

We urge the Special Rapporteur to call on states to release children from detention in the current context and invest in alternatives to detention. Where it is not possible, it is crucial that children maintain contact with their families, including remotely by putting in place or strengthening already available technological tools.

Thank you.

