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RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

**Written statement* submitted by the Organization for Defending Victims of Violence
(ODVV), a non-governmental organization in special consultative status**

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[9 February 2006]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

The biggest puzzle of ages in the lives of mankind is poverty and hunger. This problem was also the concern of the authors of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as seen in its preamble: “*Whereas* disregard and contempt for human rights have resulted in barbarous acts which have outraged the conscience of mankind, and the advent of a world in which human beings shall enjoy freedom of speech and belief and freedom from fear and want has been proclaimed as the highest aspiration of the common people”.

Poverty is the biggest obstacle in the way of individuals trying to provide the need and realisation of the rights of children. In the age of unprecedented social security in the world, and a 30-trillion-dollar economy, half of the world's population is suffering from chronic poverty. According to the World Bank approximately 1.2 billion people in the world live in absolute poverty, and live under unimaginable conditions, and without any human dignity. Sadly half of these people are children. Poverty is the tumour of human rights, and especially rights of the child. Children that live in poverty are deprived of their rights regarding, to life, health, food, education, participation, protection against harm, exploitation, slavery, trafficking and discrimination.

The world must accept that the family is the most important unit, and children are the most endeared investments that any human society possesses – an investment that mankind's future depends on for the preservation of advancement and correct function. And the biggest threat in the way of this investment is poverty and unsuitable living conditions.

The Organization for Defending Victims of Violence (ODVV) condemns the disregard of the rights of the child and indifference towards the terrible conditions of poverty stricken children all over the world, and calls upon international organizations and international economic institutions to take determined implementing action towards the improvement of the situation, particularly in underdeveloped countries.

The ODVV believes that the lack of proper laws for the welfare of children and eradication of poverty, and also the inattention of the politicians and authorities towards children, and terrible condition of poverty stricken children, has turned the existing world a “new medieval era” for children.

A look at the shameful and terrible situation of the present world's poor children brings us to the conclusion that the world must renew its commitment towards moral and legal responsibilities towards children – one billion of whom have lost their innocence and are living in poverty. It's unbecoming for today's world where over one billion poverty stricken boys and girls do not have access to clean water, proper nourishment, and medical care, and over 640 million children across the world do not have adequate housing or access to hygienic facilities. While due to expansionist policies of the west, and in competition with their neighbouring countries, poor countries turn to militarism and spend more on the military budget, the terrible effects of economic sanctions are increasing for the Third World countries, in ways such as waste of investment, driving away of investment, increase in unemployment and rise in inflation are all evident.

It is a disgrace to the world that annually six million children die from hunger. And despite the passage of over fifteen years since the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, each year 11 million children succumb to malnutrition and preventable diseases, and 500 million children live in absolute poverty. Meanwhile the 400 billion dollar US military budget has a large share in the death of children in US military operations in various parts of the world

The Islamic Republic of Iran too just like most countries of the world is plagued with the problem of child poverty. The eradication of poverty (article 12, paragraph 3) the right of social security (article 29), provision of housing (article 31), provision of fundamental needs for all (article 43, paragraph 1), the rights of widows and supportless children (Article 21), the right to free education (article 30), the right to have a lawyer, to expedite social, economic, development, public health, cultural, and educational programs (article 100), have all been foreseen in the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, but there still are no comprehensive and complete laws or plans in support of poor children.

In the ordinary laws of the country cases of protection and support are evident, such as article 55 paragraph 22 of the municipalities law (1945) regarding the care of deprived children, article 1 of provisions for widows and orphans (1992), and article 197c of the Third Economic, Social and Cultural Plan regarding the eradication of poverty. But unfortunately none of these cases have had serious attention given to.

Masoud Mohammadi Almoti, the secretary of the National Iranian Committee in the Millennium Development Goals said that according to a UN report the population of Iran living under the poverty line will reduce sharply by 2015 and according to the MDG the mortality rate of children under five between 2000 and 2007 will drop by 3.4 percent. He further added that the 0.6 percent of the population that live under absolute poverty (food) will drop from 13.75 to 8.99 percent.

The existing figures in Iran are not as optimistic. UNICEF representative in Iran has said that 500,000 and 1 million children live under the 1 and 2 dollar poverty lines respectively. And approximately 7.35 percent of the population lives under the 2dollar a day poverty line, and also malnutrition and lack children's access to quality care in Sistan and Baluchistan, West Azerbaijan, and Hormozgan Provinces is still a concern for the UN.

Dr. Robabeh Sheikh-ol-Eslam the director of the Improvement Office of the Health Ministry stated that 15 percent of the country's children are malnourished; and annually 56 million rials (615,000 USD approx.) is lost due to malnutrition. 13.7 percent of the rural population is underweight, and 9.6 percent of the urban population is underweight.

According to statistics approximately 80% of street children in Iran are child workers, whose families will have difficulties if they stop working.

We at the ODVV believe that these figures are alarm bells for tomorrow's world, and we also firmly believe that no duty would be as honourable a duty to create a better future for all the children.

The ODVV also believes as the Secretary-General believes that improvement of conditions for children is possible even in the poorest of societies. But this work requires the serious commitments of political leaders and politicians, planners and providers of required services to direct their actions towards the provisions of the best interests of children. The concentration of political will in the redirection of resources for the provision children's fundamental needs can bring about noticeable achievements for the lifespan of a generation of people.

Our commitment to our children makes it our duty to tend to those that need the most care and support, the most poor and those that are the most vulnerable, exploited and abused. We must face up to the terrible facts, and realise the discriminations and abuses that are

inflicted upon children in our country, region and the world, and work towards the removal of these wrongdoings.

The ODVV calls upon international organizations, governments, politicians. NGOs and human rights and rights of the child activists to pay attention to the rights of the child, and sincerely commit to the protection and support of poor children, children that are struggling to survive and live. We should all cooperate in taking proper action to achieve this goal.

We put all our efforts to fight poverty and realise the rights of these children, and call upon the United Nations, UNICEF, all governmental and non-governmental organizations to fully commit to support poor children, and call 2007 the Year for Combating Child Poverty.

The ODVV declares its readiness to cooperate in all national and international actions with governmental and non-governmental organizations for the purpose of support of these invisible children.

We hope that the change to the structure of the UN will bring about a bright future for human rights, rights of the child and deprived children, and establish the way for serious and universal action towards the realisation of human rights and rights of the child.

The ODVV extends its gratitude towards the functions of the current UN and its bodies and calls upon the new to-be-established UN bodies to always remember the children.
