

Mandates of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls, its causes and consequences and the Special Rapporteur on the sale, sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children

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(Please use this reference in your reply)

8 July 2026

Excellency,

We have the honour to address you in our capacities as Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls, its causes and consequences and Special Rapporteur on the sale, sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children, pursuant to Human Rights Council resolutions 59/20 and 61/8.

In this connection, we would like to bring to the attention of your Excellency's Government information we have received concerning alleged **human rights violations against several women and their children in Israel in the context of child custody, visitation and child protection proceedings**.

According to the information received:

Reported pattern in custody, contact and child protection proceedings

The information received indicates a pattern in which mothers reporting domestic violence or physical or sexual abuse of children in family proceedings are allegedly mischaracterized as "alienating", uncooperative, dangerous or mentally unstable. It is further reported that allegations of intimate partner violence, child physical abuse, sexual abuse, substance abuse, or serious medical vulnerability are not consistently treated as determining factors in decisions on custody, visitation or emergency interventions. In several cases, the information received alleges that mothers were threatened with custody transfer, placement of children in emergency centers or welfare institutions, or severe restrictions on contact if they continued to report abuse or opposed unsupervised contact with fathers.

The information received appears to illustrate a broader and concerning pattern in family and child-protection proceedings, whereby "parental alienation" allegations appear to be systematically used, primarily to discredit credible reports of domestic violence against the mother and child, including the sexual abuse of the child, leading to several harmful consequences for mother and child, including: the suspension of contact between them or its severe limitation, the threat or actual removal of the child from the mother's care, and the continuation of contact with allegedly abusive fathers.

Case 1: [REDACTED] and her four children

In the case of [REDACTED] and her four children residing in Yavne, South of Tel Aviv, it is reported that, on 1 January 2026, a court ordered that her contact with her children be supervised after a hearing in which she was not represented

by counsel, despite her request for a postponement to obtain legal representation. The court reportedly conveyed that instruction to the welfare authorities in Yavne, including the court-appointed social worker, and her supervisor.

It is further reported that the welfare authorities restricted her to one weekly visit of approximately 50 minutes in a contact center, although neither the father, nor the court, nor any professional authority had requested this arrangement nor expressed concerns that she posed a danger to the children. The information received indicates that one of the children said he felt unsafe in the father's home, could not seek help, had his communication devices taken away, and was locked inside the house. It is also alleged that the authorities dismissed [REDACTED] concerns, refused to review the real-time evidence of her child's distress, and ignored her requests for an explanation regarding their decisions. The information received further indicates that welfare authorities had previously referred her to a domestic violence unit and repeatedly advised her to seek shelter with her children because of concerns about their safety.

Case 2

According to information received, in the case of a mother and her two children, then aged approximately six and a half and three and a half, it is alleged that, following a divorce in 2025, a District Court ordered equal shared parenting despite documented allegations of the father's alcohol and drug abuse and a history of domestic violence. Her older child, a girl aged six and a half, was reportedly subjected to ongoing sexual abuse by the father's son from a previous marriage, yet overnight stays at the father's residence continued, in the same household where the alleged abusive child lived.

According to the information received, a forensic investigation was conducted at Beit Lin, a network of child protection centers that provide immediate multidisciplinary services to children and adolescents who are victims of sexual abuse, physical abuse, severe neglect, and other forms of maltreatment. Following an investigation at 'Beit Lin', the 'Kerem' Association developed a specialized protection plan for the child, which was shared with the welfare authorities. Despite the mother's repeated requests over a period of two years, the authorities refused to release the plan to her, ignoring both her inquiries and those made by her psychologist. It is also alleged that the authorities took no action in response to repeated mother's warnings about the father's active drug and alcohol use, that home visits remained superficial, and that they did not require any drug testing. The allegations further suggest that the court gave priority to shared parenting over the child's safety and that the appointment of a guardian ad litem did not lead to any protective measures. To the best of our knowledge, the minor currently remains unprotected.

Case 3: [REDACTED] and her son

In the case of [REDACTED] and her son, now aged nine, it is alleged that the father, who reportedly struggled with severe drug and alcohol addiction, exposed the child from infancy to extreme violence, including physical abuse, dangerous

shaking, life-threatening negligence, and an incident in which he allegedly held a knife to the baby's neck during a fit of rage. It is further alleged that, although a protection order was granted, [REDACTED] was advised by Legal Aid that the prevailing legal approach could still lead to forced joint custody or even the transfer of the child to the father, should they divorce. According to the information received, she therefore remained legally married while living separately to avoid that outcome.

Over the following years, [REDACTED] allegedly faced continuous proceedings in which the authorities accused her of "parental alienation" and portrayed her as abusive because she insisted that the child's contact with the father took place in a supervised contact center. She further alleges that, as a result, the authorities invalidated her economic rights under the *Ketubah*, the Jewish marriage contract, and revoked child support payments. The allegations also indicate that, despite the father's documented violence and his alleged lack of parental capacity, the authorities later sought to end supervision of his visits and allow unsupervised contact. It is further reported that the most recent judicial decision was that, if the child did not undergo a psychodiagnostics evaluation, a youth-law social worker would begin proceedings to remove him entirely from his mother's custody and transfer him to the father. [REDACTED] also alleges that the prolonged litigation pushed her and her son into severe poverty. Furthermore, the court imposed severe punitive measures against the mother and child, including the revocation of child support and a restrictive stay-of-exit order conditioned on the impossible demand that the mother transfer non-existent property to the father in order to travel. Despite the child's prolonged and evident distress during visitations with the father, welfare authorities are currently petitioning the Youth Law court to declare the child a 'minor in need' (*Nizkak*) and initiate removal proceedings, retaliating against the child's opposition to the father under the unfounded guise of 'parental alienation'.

Case 4

In another case, a mother reportedly sought refuge with her two children in a protected women's shelter in Israel after experiencing severe domestic violence, including a life-threatening incident.

Reportedly, social services officials were appointed by the family court once proceedings began. However, she experienced extreme hostility and disbelief from the court-appointed social worker and the child protection official. In January 2025, the kindergarten allegedly reported that the mother's four-year-old daughter had disclosed experiencing severe sexual abuse by her father. Rather than responding to that report, welfare officials allegedly increased the pressure on the mother and began what she describes as a campaign of intimidation.

It is further alleged that officials threatened the mother with the immediate removal of her children to an emergency center, or with the transfer of full custody to the father, unless she remained silent. The allegations also indicate that, although the Court had ordered parental guidance, social services unilaterally replaced it with "dyadic therapy" involving the children and the

alleged abuser, without legal authority, and threatened to remove the children if she refused to consent. It is further said that a court-appointed expert later concluded that the father exhibited psychopathic, narcissistic, sadistic, and paranoid traits, found that both children had been sexually abused by him, and recommended that he have no contact with them. Even so, supervised contact allegedly continued. The mother further claimed that the formal reports submitted to the judge by social services—specifically the court-appointed social worker and Child Protection Services (CPS)—systematically omitted the abuse allegations, while these authorities recast the children’s fear and disclosures as evidence that she was “planting thoughts” and “alienating” the father.

Case 5

In the case of a mother and her daughter, aged approximately 12 and a half, residing in Haifa, proceedings have allegedly been ongoing before the Haifa Family Court since 5 January 2014. According to the allegations, when the child was only five days old, the father threatened to throw her out of a window, after which a restraining order removed him from the home. Despite that incident, he is said to have initiated long-running custody proceedings aimed at removing the child from her mother’s care and cancelling child support, while relying on the theory of “parental alienation.”

The allegations further indicate that visits took place in the Haifa Contact Center from infancy until the child was about two and a half years old. Once unsupervised contact began, however, the child was allegedly subjected to severe physical abuse by the father and paternal grandmother. It is also alleged that, after the child gave credible testimony to the police, which led to a recommendation for indictment, a Haifa welfare officer closed the complaint without examining it. According to the information received, after approximately 10.5 years of proceedings, Haifa Welfare Services recommended closing the case in a supplemental report dated 21 May 2024, and the guardian *ad litem* later supported that recommendation in a position dated 25 October 2024.

It is further alleged that the judge heard the child on 17 November 2024 and wrote that, considering past experiences, contact between the father and the daughter could not be renewed. Even so, the case was later reopened and, at a hearing on 22 February 2026, officials allegedly threatened the mother with the removal of her daughter from home and placement in a special closed welfare institution because the child refused any further contact with her father. The allegations also indicate that, under threat of removal, the child was forced to attend a contact center to “build a bond” with the father, notwithstanding earlier professional recommendations that the proceedings should come to an end.

Case 6

In another case, a mother of a girl aged three years and seven months alleged that the child’s father had a documented history of violence, including an

incident in which he allegedly strangled the mother during the eighth month of pregnancy, which led to a police complaint and a 30-day protection order.

It is further alleged that, once unsupervised visits began, the child developed four separate vaginal infections within two months, and that these medical findings coincided with her verbal disclosures of physical and sexual violence by her father. When the mother presented the child's diagnoses and disclosures to the police, the investigator allegedly dismissed the matter on the ground that there was "no evidence." Rather than investigating the alleged perpetrator, welfare services are said to have characterized both parents as dangerous to the child's well-being.

The allegations further indicate that the court disregarded reports from a private emotional therapist who had filed a police complaint on the child's behalf regarding father-child abuse. Instead, the court reportedly referred the family to a parental-capability expert said to focus on "alienation," while advancing the view that the mother was "planting ideas" in the child's mind. It is also alleged that the father manipulated the child by filming and coercing her to repeat degrading statements about her mother, including "I don't love mom" and "Mom hits me," and that the authorities treated those recordings as credible evidence while failing to act on the child's own disclosures of abuse. According to the mother, the result has been a shared-custody arrangement in which the child remains exposed to the alleged perpetrator, while the abuse allegations are reframed as a "complex conflict" rather than addressed as safeguarding concerns.

Case 7

In another case, it is reported that, for several years, including since approximately 2018-2019, a child raised repeated concerns regarding her father. The information received indicates that those concerns were not adequately examined and that, instead, a narrative of "parental alienation" was constructed and used as the basis for decisions that ultimately led to the child's removal from her mother's care. It is further reported that the daughter was placed in an emergency center by the authorities for several months despite the absence of clear evidence that she was at risk in her mother's care. The information received also indicates that the child's contact with her mother was severely restricted and that, despite the child's repeated requests to return home, including statements reportedly made before a judge, the process continued with significant delays, to the detriment of her emotional well-being and development. It is alleged that, rather than properly assessing the concerns raised regarding the father, the authorities continued to portray the mother as the source of risk without sufficient factual basis.

Case 8

In another case of a mother and her son, it is alleged that they have been separated for four and a half consecutive years in the context of "Child in Need" proceedings before the Youth Court in Bat Yam.

The mother reports that, in 2020, she was subjected to multiple instances of physical assault by her husband, sometimes in their son's presence, resulting in her being injured, including an incident involving a knife. Despite these events, the child is required to maintain contact with the father pursuant to a welfare decision under the auspices of the Bat Yam Youth Court. Following these mandated interactions, the child has experienced anxiety attacks and significant emotional distress. .

The mother states that she attempted reporting the violence; however, the authorities did not believe her claims. While she was not formally stripped of custody or guardianship, custody of the child was temporarily taken from her by the State. She further reports that in 2023 she was forcibly removed from court hearings..

Additionally, the child was unlawfully placed in a school intended for children with disabilities, which she considers inappropriate for him. The mother maintains that this placement occurred without an evaluation by a legally mandated eligibility committee, without her consent, and based on case documents that she claims were improperly used to justify the decision.

According to the allegations, the case has remained pending for years without a final resolution, while the mother. has been denied all contact with her child throughout that period.

She is also said to have filed numerous motions seeking relief, including motions against the social worker that was handling the case of her son and another to disqualify the presiding judge. She also filed requests to transfer the case to another jurisdiction, repeated complaints concerning violations of due process, and a formal complaint to the Ombudsman for the Israeli Judiciary, which reportedly partially upheld allegations of significant procedural defects in the handling of the case. Even so, the proceedings allegedly continued before the same judge, without corrective action or any change in circumstances.

The allegations further indicate that the mother, who states that she has worked for 30 years as an educational counsellor and continues to work in that role, lives with a 100 per cent permanent disability resulting from past domestic violence by the father. She further states that, after the traumatic separation from her son, she spent a year in a wheelchair while continuing to work and undergo inpatient rehabilitation. It is also alleged that the child was placed in an environment that the mother describes as deeply harmful and unjustified, where he reportedly experienced severe cognitive decline and was subjected to intense incitement against her.

Case 9

In another case involving a mother and her daughter, it is alleged that her divorce in 2019 occurred after a relationship characterized by repeated anger outbursts, verbal aggression, and instances of physical violence by the father. The allegations further indicate that the father regularly used cannabis and displayed unstable and explosive behavior.

About one year after the divorce, when the child was around two years old, she was diagnosed with cancer, placing her in a situation of particular medical and emotional vulnerability. It is further alleged that, after contact with her father, the child showed clear regression, including emotional distress and behavioral deterioration, which led the mother to seek full custody based on a significant change in circumstances and the child's need for stability. According to the allegations, however, welfare services did not treat the child's condition and regression as safeguarding concerns. Instead, they reportedly reframed the matter as one of "parental alienation," shifting scrutiny onto the mother and disregarding the child's medical vulnerability and behavioral indicators.

It is also alleged that, approximately two years later, the mother obtained recordings, reportedly from the phone of an older sibling of the abusive father, documenting verbal abuse and degrading language directed at the child by the father. When she submitted this material to the court, the authorities allegedly accused her of coaching and manipulating the child, and the proceedings reportedly took a punitive turn, including threats to remove the children from her custody and to declare them "minors in need."

The allegations further state that, about one year later, the daughter independently disclosed incidents of violence, after which a police complaint was filed, and the child underwent a formal forensic interview. Although the authorities reportedly found her testimony credible and reliable, they nevertheless closed the case for lack of evidence. As a result, the child allegedly remained exposed to an environment that had already generated fear, regression, and reported violence, while the mother's protective actions continued to be recast as alienating conduct rather than legitimate efforts to protect a medically vulnerable child.

Case 10

In the case of a mother and her three children, it is reported that in 2024, the father became the subject of divorce proceedings, after which he aggressively pursued joint custody. The information received indicates that the father was regarded by the mother as violent, psychologically unstable and manipulative, but that a professional risk assessment concluded that he presented a "low-to-medium" risk, allegedly relying largely on his self-reporting and omitting substantial evidence of danger.

The information received further indicates that, for more than 18 months, the father has reportedly been the subject of an active criminal investigation involving allegations of pedophilia, illicit filming of minors, and possession of child sexual abuse material. It is alleged that the Israel Police directly informed welfare services that he was an identified pedophile and that senior municipal officials were aware of his status. Notwithstanding these allegations, the information received indicates that authorities continued to mandate his access to the children.

It is further reported that the assigned social worker labelled the mother as “alienating,” “dangerous,” and “unregulated,” and even accused her of sexually harming her own children as a means of discrediting her. According to the information received, she was threatened that her legal position would worsen if she did not force her children into contact with their father. The information received also indicates that one daughter, then aged approximately four, disclosed inappropriate genital touching by the father to a State child forensic investigator; that another daughter, aged approximately six, displayed symptoms of sexual post-traumatic stress and refused contact; and that a 12-year-old son reported ongoing co-sleeping with the father in violation of a court order.

Case 11

In another case concerning a mother and her minor son, it is alleged that the father abandoned the mother during pregnancy and that, despite early concerns about the child’s safety, the authorities adopted an approach that prioritized paternal contact. The allegations indicate that, in 2017, when the child was approximately two and a half years old, the mother reported concerns of sexual harm against the child in accordance with Israel’s mandatory reporting law, and that since that same year, the father has used litigation as a means of coercion and control.

According to the information, in August 2020, the Family Court transferred custody of the child to the father while maintaining equal and joint parental responsibility. It is further alleged that, in May 2024, police officers and social workers forcibly removed the child from the mother’s care and handed him over to the father, even though a child abuse investigation was still pending at the time. The allegations also suggest that welfare authorities later prevented that investigation from going forward, notwithstanding that the child had reportedly already informed the police of ongoing threats and sexual abuse by his father. It is further alleged that, in June 2024, the child was placed in an emergency center and that, in November 2024, the authorities issued a declaration of “Minor in Need” (*Katin Nizkak*), after which they formally placed the child in the father’s care. According to the allegations, that arrangement stripped the mother of her parental rights and reduced her contact to one hour of supervised visitation per week in a contact center.

According to the allegations, the mother faces multiple lawsuits, including defamation claims exceeding one million ILS, as well as a criminal indictment and numerous debt-collection proceedings, which have left her financially paralyzed. The allegations also indicate that the father explicitly conditioned the mother’s relationship with her son on her compliance with his demands, including withdrawing police complaints and resuming a domestic relationship, while threatening that, if she did not comply, he would ensure that the court proceedings never ended. The mother further alleges that the authorities have systematically recast her protective actions as “alienation.”

It is also alleged that the child now shows severe regression, anxiety, and physical symptoms said to be consistent with trauma and sexual abuse,

including encopresis and overflow incontinence. Rather than treating these signs as safeguarding concerns, however, the authorities allegedly attributed the child's distress to his limited contact with his mother and to her purported "alienation."

Case 12

In the case of a mother and her minor daughters, it is reported that, following ongoing physical and verbal violence by her former partner, the mother fled with her children to a shelter for victims of domestic violence. The information received indicates that, while in the shelter, her daughters reported both sexual and physical abuse by their father. It is further reported that when the mother attempted to file a police report, she was initially discouraged by the shelter's management and later encountered delays and skepticism from the police, including a statement by an investigator warning that pursuing the complaint could "ruin the father's life" and "come back to haunt" her.

Also, information indicates that, during the family's stay in the shelter, the court ordered supervised visits at a contact center. It is reported that, despite the daughters' extreme distress and refusal to see their father, the social worker at the contact center filed reports stating that the children were "happy" to see him. It is also reported that the shelter's management did not support the mother's efforts to protect her daughters and instead suggested that, notwithstanding the reported abuse, the children "must" maintain a relationship with their father.

According to the information, at a subsequent court hearing, the judge adopted a paradigm of "parental alienation" and accused the mother of "infecting" her children with reports of abuse. It is further reported that the judge gave her seven days to retract the allegations and agree to joint custody, failing to which full custody would be immediately transferred to the father. Under this pressure, and fearing complete separation from her children, the mother was reportedly compelled to enter a settlement establishing joint custody. The information received indicates that the children continue to report physical abuse during their time with their father, while the welfare authorities remain unresponsive. It is further alleged that no medical or specialized psychological forensic examinations were conducted despite the children's reports of sexual and physical harm.

Case 13

It is alleged that a mother has spent approximately seven years in a shared-custody arrangement with a father whom she describes as verbally, emotionally, and at times physically abusive. Despite recordings in which the children describe physical abuse and despite numerous complaints filed to the police by the mother, the authorities allegedly closed the cases repeatedly for lack of evidence, reportedly on the ground that the children were too young and too traumatized to speak during formal investigations. It is further informed that the father used the legal system to cast himself as the victim and to accuse the mother of "parental alienation" and "coaching" the children, and that the court

and social services adopted that account, treating her protective actions as non-cooperation rather than as safeguarding efforts.

The allegations further indicate that the situation worsened after the eldest son, now reportedly 12 years old, disclosed the reality of his father's behavior. It is said that the children have been under a protection order since November; however, the father has allegedly refused to attend supervised visitation while continuing to pressure welfare authorities to grant him unsupervised access. The information received also indicates that some of the younger children, after years of exposure to violence, have begun to normalize the abuse and say that they "deserve" to be hit. According to the mother, because she refuses to send her children into a dangerous and unsupervised environment, the authorities have relied on the logic of 'parental alienation' to discredit her—once again labeling her 'uncooperative' and a 'gatekeeper,' while actively threatening to accuse her of alienating the children. She further alleges that, by maintaining a purportedly neutral approach despite the reported abuse, the authorities are exposing the children to an immediate risk of further harm.

Case 14

In another case, concerning a mother and her minor daughter, it is reported that the dispute between the mother and father has been ongoing for approximately six years. According to the information received, the parental relationship was established through a co-parenting medical procedure and not through a romantic relationship, and a pre-signed agreement provided that the child would not spend nights at the father's residence.

The information indicates that documentation from the child's preschool and psychologist reflects violent behavior by the father toward the child. It is further reported that, when the child was six months old, the father threw the infant during a supervised visit, resulting in hospitalization and documented medical evidence. Following that incident, visits were reportedly restricted to supervised settings for approximately three years. Nevertheless, despite the absence of any material change in circumstances, the court allegedly expanded visitation progressively to the point of joint custody. It is reported that the father lives approximately 90 minutes away, requiring the child to undertake frequent journeys.

Further information indicates that the father has physically assaulted the mother on numerous occasions and filed multiple false police complaints against her. In one documented instance, he allegedly self-inflicted injuries and submitted falsified medical documents to obtain an *ex parte* protection order. It is also alleged that an indictment has been served against him; however, the Family Court failed to give this due weight, asserting that violence against the mother was irrelevant to the child's welfare. Despite clear evidence of violence and endangerment, the authorities allegedly continued to expand visitation and to level unfounded allegations of "parental alienation" against the mother, while disregarding the father's conduct and the harm caused to the child.

It is also indicated that a court-ordered parental-capacity evaluation determined that the father was dangerous and required specialized intervention for domestic violence, and that this finding was upheld in a final judicial decision. However, according to the information received, no steps were taken to implement those recommendations. The mother alleges that the child continues to live in a situation marked by instability, emotional distress, and the systematic weakening of her support network, while the father uses prolonged legal proceedings and severe financial pressure as tools of coercion and control.

Case 15

In the case concerning a mother and her three minor children, it is reported that the children's parents were never married and that, following the birth of their eldest daughter, visitation arrangements were established under a court-approved agreement. After subsequent separation, the mother gave birth to twins. The information received indicates that, when the eldest daughter was approximately four and a half years old, she began returning from visits with her father with physical symptoms and behavioral distress, including injuries to her genital area, nightmares, anxiety, and a strong refusal to stay with him. It is further alleged that, after several months of recurring pain, the child disclosed to her mother that she had experienced sexual harm from her father during visits.

According to the allegations, the mother reported the matter to the welfare authorities in accordance with her legal duty but was advised not to report it to the police. It is further reported that, after no apparent action was taken, she filed a police complaint herself. Thereafter, the father reportedly initiated proceedings against her alleging "parental alienation". The information received indicates that court-appointed professionals found no evidence of parental alienation and raised concerns regarding possible harm to the child; however, those professional opinions were later set aside by the court. It is further reported that the eldest daughter was removed from the mother's custody and placed first in an emergency center and later in a residential facility, while her two younger children were transferred to the father's sole custody. The mother was reportedly restricted to seeing her children only in a supervised contact center, based on concerns of "parental alienation," and has remained subject to such restrictions for the past two years.

The information indicates that the criminal case concerning the alleged sexual abuse was closed by the prosecution, that welfare authorities and the courts failed to give sufficient weight to the professional opinions and evidence presented, and that, instead of recognizing the daughter as the primary complainant, the focus shifted toward allegations against the mother. It is also reported that the father continues to initiate repeated legal proceedings against the mother.

Case 16

In the case of a mother and her minor son, it is alleged that the mother has been subjected to approximately eight years of proceedings that she describes as involving systemic institutional abuse and the misuse of "parental alienation" to

silence her request for protective actions. According to the allegations, the father began using the legal system against her when the child was only six months old, accusing her of “future parental alienation” before the child was even old enough to speak. It is further alleged that welfare services adopted this narrative from the outset, disregarding the mother’s concerns and the father’s allegedly unstable conduct.

The allegations further indicate that the child now suffers from severe and ongoing emotional and psychological trauma, reflected, among other things, in extreme anxiety, self-harming behavior, including hitting his head on the floor, and the normalization of violence. The mother further alleges that, despite reports from kindergarten teachers and verified professional findings, the authorities have consistently dismissed this evidence. She states that she submitted numerous medical and psychological reports from qualified professionals documenting the child’s distress, but that the court systematically ignored these materials and refused to address findings that contradicted the father’s account.

It is also informed that the judicial system repeatedly gave priority to rigid visitation schedules over the child’s emotional and physical needs and imposed financial sanctions on the mother when she tried to protect him. According to the allegations, the court fined the mother when she objected to overnight stays with the father being enforced on the child’s first day of kindergarten, arguing that the transition would cause extreme emotional overload. She further alleges that, more recently, the court fined her 5,000 ILS for not sending the child to the father while he was ill, even though she offered a make-up day immediately after his recovery.

Case 17: [REDACTED]

In another case, a mother reported that she had a child through a co-parenting arrangement, without any romantic relationship with the father. The mother reports that from the time of the child's birth the father behaved erratically, retracted prior agreements, and initiated what she describes as frivolous legal proceedings. It is further reported that, before the girl reached the age of three, she began to display unusual and distressing sexualized behaviour, including inflicting pain on her genital area, and later made statements describing painful and unpleasant sexual contact in intimate areas by her father. According to the information received, the child returned from visits with her father with redness and rawness in her genital area, referred to the matter as a “secret” that “must not be told,” and developed what the mother describes as a continuous pattern of sexual self-harm.

The information received further indicates that multiple professionals raised concerns of possible sexual abuse. It is reported that security cameras in the mother's home documented some of the child's behaviour; that child therapists who reviewed this material reported suspicions of sexual abuse by the father to the welfare authorities; and that medical examinations ruled out infection or other medical explanations for the child's persistent genital pain and preoccupation. It is further reported that a pediatrician, an emergency room

physician, and a gynecologist specializing in sexual trauma each raised concerns, and that the child was referred to the Beit Lynn Child Protection Center. Notwithstanding these concerns, it is alleged that the child was never assessed using a designated tool for identifying sexual abuse and was not integrated into appropriate treatment.

According to the information received, welfare authorities denied the child emotional therapy for approximately one and a half years, reportedly relying on the father's objection to treatment. It is alleged that the mother submitted at least seven requests to the Family Court seeking emotional therapy for the child, all of which were rejected, while the father's denial of the child's behaviour was framed as part of a parental dispute rather than as a child-protection concern. The information received further alleges that the case was managed primarily through the lens of preserving the parent-child relationship, even though allegations of parental alienation were reportedly refuted by the diagnosing institute and concerns of possible sexual abuse had been raised by several professionals.

It is also reported that the only measures undertaken were a standard child investigation at the kindergarten and a psychodiagnostic parental capability assessment for the parents and the child, which, according to the information received, was not designed to identify sexual abuse or assess the father's sexual dangerousness. The information received further indicates that the regulator responsible for sexual risk assessment at the Ministry of Health informed the judge that the evaluation conducted was not intended to identify sexual violence and did not recommend lifting supervision in light of risk factors arising from the father's assessment findings. Nevertheless, welfare authorities reportedly recommended returning the child to the father's home under equal parenting arrangements, and the judge accepted that position.

The mother further alleges that Tel Aviv welfare services lack a clear and designated protocol for investigating suspicions of sexual abuse against very young children who do not make explicit disclosures during a standard child investigation. It is also reported that welfare authorities submitted false or misleading reports to the court, omitting reports from medical and child-care professionals, unusual sexualized incidents that reportedly occurred at the kindergarten, and the fact that the Israel Police sent repeated letters requesting that the child be examined at the Child Protection Center. According to the information received, the police later informed the mother that the investigation had been reopened in light of the weight of the evidence, but the court reportedly ignored that development. The mother alleges that, for approximately one and a half years, the authorities failed to respond to the child's repeated signs of distress and systematically withheld the evaluation and treatment she needed.

Regarding the current status of the child's custody and care, the information received indicates that, despite explicit risk warnings from a Ministry of Health official, the court accepted welfare recommendations to return the minor to the father's home under an equal parenting time arrangement. Furthermore, it is reported that the child remains deprived of necessary emotional or medical care.

Case 18: The case of [REDACTED]

Additionally, we would like to recall a previous communication, [AL ISR 5/2024](#) of 27 March 2024, which concerned the case of Ms. [REDACTED], a Swiss-born woman who acquired Israeli citizenship upon marriage and who had resided for extended periods in the United States, as well as her three sons, who were reported to hold dual Israeli and United States citizenship.

That communication described allegations of a prolonged pattern of physical, emotional, and financial domestic violence, as well as coercive control, by her husband. These allegations included an assault during pregnancy that reportedly resulted in miscarriage, a later incident in which he allegedly pushed her down the stairs, and another in which he reportedly threw a metal box at her head, causing injury. The communication also referred to family court and child-custody proceedings in which the father allegedly portrayed her as mentally unstable and unfit to parent. In addition, it raised concerns that social services denied her effective access to shelter by offering refuge only to her and not to the children, that she was evicted from the family home in 2020 through an *ex parte* order without any subsequent hearing, and that the authorities limited her contact with her children to supervised visitation of only 45 minutes per week in a visiting center.

The communication further referred to allegations that the authorities ignored or mishandled reports of violence against both the mother and the children, including a child abuse investigation in which the two younger sons reportedly stated that their father had been violent towards them, and to concerns that social services and judicial authorities may have acted on discriminatory stereotypes, including in relation to her status as a migrant woman whose native language was not Hebrew.

According to the recent information received, following the last communication, no effective action appears to have been taken by the authorities in response to the concerns previously raised. It is alleged that the mother has still not been allowed to return to her home, has not recovered her belongings, and has not received the sums reportedly due to her under an existing court order. It is further alleged that the authorities have not provided any effective remedy in relation to the reported domestic violence, coercive control, or child abuse allegations, and that no meaningful corrective measures have been adopted in response to the procedural irregularities identified in the earlier communication.

The updated information further suggests that the restrictive contact regime has continued, notwithstanding earlier professional recommendations that contact should increase and take place in less harmful conditions. It is alleged that, after the Family Court reversed a District Court visitation order *ex parte* while the mother was without legal representation, she continued to see her children only under highly limited arrangements. It is also alleged that the sons have begun to display violent and verbally abusive behavior towards the mother, reportedly encouraged by the father, while the father continues to refuse spousal support and to use judicial proceedings as a means of harassment and control.

It is also alleged that the custody proceedings remain pending before the Family Court, including in relation to a permanent custody order and clarification of the reversal of the District Court's visitation schedule. The information further indicates that, despite the seriousness of the allegations previously raised, the competent authorities have not taken effective steps to investigate, remedy, or prevent the continuation of the alleged violations.

While we do not wish to prejudice the accuracy of these allegations, we express our deep concern regarding alleged human rights violations against several mothers and their children in the context of child custody, visitation, and child protection proceedings. Allegations of domestic violence, including sexual violence against children, are allegedly minimized or discounted in custody and child protection proceedings, and protective mothers are allegedly penalized through severe restrictions on contact, threats of custody transfer, emergency placement, or the institutionalization of children. It also appears to indicate how the standard of the best interest of the child is violated by imposing contact between a child and one or both parents, even where there is evidence of domestic violence.

We are particularly concerned by the allegations suggesting that the invocation of parental alienation or similar concepts may have resulted in mothers and children being subjected to continuous physical or emotional violence, secondary victimization, restricted access to justice, and ongoing exposure to alleged perpetrators of violence. Parental alienation allegations are allegedly often used by abusers to dismantle allegations of physical, sexual, or emotional abuse against their children through legal means.

Such allegations appear to be invoked by perpetrators of violence to continue their abuse and coercion and to undermine and discredit allegations of domestic violence made by mothers who are trying to keep their children safe. By reframing a mother as a liar who "emotionally abuses" her children, the parental alienation label diverts the attention of courts away from the question as to whether a father is abusive.

The information received seems to indicate a risk that the children may continue to be in grave danger at the hands of alleged abusers and that complaints of abuse may have been ignored or not taken seriously by the competent authorities. It is important to take special precautionary measures when the alleged perpetrator is a parent. Any such measures should involve careful consideration of the fact that the child's situation will not worsen and that any trauma experienced by the child is not aggravated.

The information received appears to indicate a failure by social workers and family courts to give due weight to the best interests and views of the child, to investigate serious allegations effectively, or to ensure that custody and visitation decisions were compatible with the rights of women and children to safety, physical and mental integrity, due process, and family life. Child victims should be able to effectively seek justice for the harm that they have suffered. Children who have suffered some form of ill-treatment or sexual abuse and who are not given the opportunity to be heard or provided with the requisite therapeutic care will carry the pain of this trauma for the rest of their lives. Age should not be a barrier to a child's right to participate fully in the justice process. The child should be treated as a capable witness, subject to

examination, and their testimony should not be presumed invalid by reason of their age alone, while the justice process should be mindful of their protection.

Instead, it appears that family law proceedings continue to be frequently used against mothers, placing them in difficult positions in which complaining about domestic violence or child abuse may be seen as attempts to alienate children from the other parent, which could result in the loss of primary care or contact with their children.

Concern regarding this practice specifically in Israel was already expressed by several special procedures, most notably the Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls' thematic report on custody and violence against women and girls (A/HRC/53/36) of 2023, and AL ISR 5.2024.

Despite your Excellency's Government and the Israeli Justice system being aware of these structural failings, and a protocol having been issued by the Supreme Court of Israel to expedite proceedings to ensure a relationship between a parent and the child, including those where a child's safety may be at risk, in practice, however, the protocol seems almost always used in cases where allegations of "parental alienation" are raised.

In connection with the above alleged information and concerns, please refer to the **Annex on Reference to international human rights law** attached to this letter which cites international human rights instruments and standards relevant to these allegations.

As it is our responsibility, under the mandates provided to us by the Human Rights Council, to seek to clarify all cases brought to our attention, we would be grateful for your observations on the following matters:

1. Please provide any additional information and/or comment(s) you may have on the above-mentioned allegations.
2. Please provide information on the legal status, definition and practical use of the concept of "parental alienation" and related notions in family and child-protection proceedings. In particular, please indicate whether such concepts are recognized in legislation, case law, judicial practice, welfare or expert assessments, and what safeguards exist to ensure that they are not used to discredit allegations of domestic violence or violence against mothers and/or their children, including allegations of sexual abuse of the children, to override the views and best interests of the child, or to penalize protective mothers.
3. Please provide information as to whether your Excellency's Government intends to limit or prohibit the use of parental alienation or related pseudo-concepts in family law cases and the use of so-called experts in parental alienation and related pseudo-concepts.
4. Please provide information on the legal and policy framework and the practical measures adopted to ensure that allegations of domestic violence and violence against women and children are effectively

assessed in custody, visitation and child protection proceedings. Please provide detailed information and clarification regarding the cases referred to in this communication, including the legal and factual basis for the decisions affecting the women and children concerned; the current custody, placement and contact arrangements; the status of any police, forensic, welfare or judicial investigations into the reported violence and abuse; and the measures taken to protect the mothers and children concerned from further harm.

5. Please outline the measures taken to protect the children from any risk of abuse or continued abuse, including sexual abuse, in line with the principles of do no harm, precaution and the best interests of the child.
6. Please indicate what measures have been taken to ensure that the child's views are taken into account in relevant decisions and court proceedings.
7. Please explain what measures are in place to guarantee access to legal representation, case files, independent expert assessment, review and appeal in such proceedings, and indicate what remedies, accountability mechanisms and reparations are available where failures of investigation, biased assessments or unlawful separation of mothers and children are identified.

This communication, and any response received from your Excellency's Government, will be made public via the communications reporting [website](#) at the 60 days mark. Should Your Excellency's Government respond within 60 days, both the communication and the response, may be published before the 60 days mark. The communications and responses will also be made available in the subsequent periodic report to be presented to the Human Rights Council.

While awaiting a reply, we urge that all necessary interim measures be taken to halt the alleged violations and prevent their re-occurrence and in the event that the investigations support or suggest the allegations to be correct, to ensure the accountability of any person(s) responsible for the alleged violations.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of our highest consideration.

Reem Alsalem
Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls, its causes and consequences

Ai Kihara-Hunt
Special Rapporteur on the sale, sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children

Annex

Reference to international human rights law

In connection with above alleged facts and concerns, we would like to draw Your Excellency's attention to the international standards and norms applicable to them.

We wish to refer, first, to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), ratified by Israel on 3 October 1991, in particular articles 1, 2, 5, 12, 15 and 16. Under article 1, sex-based violence against women constitutes discrimination. Articles 2 and 5 require States parties to eliminate discriminatory laws, practices, stereotyping, and institutional conduct that perpetuate violence and deny women equality before the law and in family relations. Article 12 requires equal access to health care, including mental health-related support, and article 16 requires equality in matters relating to marriage and family relations. These obligations are directly relevant where mothers reporting domestic violence or child sexual abuse are allegedly penalized in custody and visitation proceedings, where allegations of “parental alienation” or similar notions are reportedly used to discredit them, and where courts or welfare authorities allegedly prioritize contact over the safety and integrity of women and children.

We also wish to recall general recommendation No. 35 of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, updating general recommendation No. 19, which affirms that gender-based violence against women may amount to torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment and that States parties must act with due diligence to prevent, investigate, punish and provide reparation for such violence, whether perpetrated by State or non-State actors (CEDAW/C/GC/35, paras. 15 and 24(a), (b)). The Committee has further stated that “the rights or claims of perpetrators or alleged perpetrators during and after judicial proceedings ... should be determined in the light of women’s and children’s human rights to life and physical, sexual and psychological integrity, and guided by the principle of the best interest of the child” (para. 31(a)(ii)). These standards are directly engaged where women allege that the conduct of family courts, child-protection authorities, police, and court-appointed experts has had the effect of discounting allegations of violence, transferring custody, imposing supervised contact, or threatening removal of children because of reporting abuse.

We further wish to recall general recommendation No. 33 on women’s access to justice, which requires justiciable, available, accessible, good-quality, accountable and effective remedies, and calls on States to eliminate gender stereotyping in judicial systems (CEDAW/C/GC/33). These obligations are particularly relevant to allegations that mothers were denied effective legal representation, pressured into settlements, threatened with the loss of custody if they pursued or maintained complaints, and subjected to repeated litigation, fines, or economic coercion.

We also wish to refer to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), ratified by Israel on 3 October 1991, especially articles 2, 7, 14, 17, 23, 24 and 26. These provisions protect, inter alia, the right to an effective remedy, freedom from cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, fair process, protection against arbitrary interference with family life, the protection due to the family as the natural and

fundamental group unit of society, the special protection due to children, and equality before the law without discrimination. They are directly applicable where proceedings allegedly restricted or severed contact between mothers and children, imposed burdensome contact-center arrangements, ignored allegations of violence, or proceeded without adequate procedural guarantees.

We further wish to refer to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), ratified by Israel on 3 October 1991, in particular articles 10, 11 and 12, which recognize the widest possible protection and assistance to the family, the right to an adequate standard of living, and the right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health. These provisions are directly engaged where children allegedly experienced behavioral regression, anxiety, post-traumatic symptoms, encopresis, repeated infections or interruption of stability and care, and where economic sanctions, fines or the withholding of child support allegedly deepened the precarity of mothers and children.

We also wish to draw Your Excellency's Government's attention to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), ratified by Israel on 3 October 1991, especially articles 3, 9, 12, 19, 20, 24, 25, 34 and 39. Article 3 requires that the best interests of the child be a primary consideration in all actions concerning children. Article 9 protects children against separation from their parents except when such separation is necessary for their best interests and requires respect for the child's right to maintain personal relations and direct contact with both parents, except where such contact is contrary to the child's best interests. Article 12 requires that children be heard in all judicial and administrative proceedings affecting them and that their views be given due weight. Article 19 guarantees protection from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse. Article 20 addresses special protection and assistance for children deprived of their family environment; article 25 requires periodic review of placement; article 24 protects the right to health; Article 34 obliges States to protect children from all forms of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse; and article 39 requires measures to promote recovery and reintegration of child victims.

Article 8 of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, ratified by Israel on 23 July 2008, provides that States Parties shall adopt appropriate measures to protect the rights and interests of child victims of the practices prohibited under the Protocol at all stages of the criminal justice process, including by: (a) recognizing the vulnerability of child victims and adapting proceedings to take into account their special needs, including as witnesses; (b) informing child victims of their rights, their role and the scope, timing and progress of the proceedings, as well as the disposition of their case; (c) allowing the views, needs and concerns of child victims to be presented and considered in proceedings where their personal interests are at stake, in a manner consistent with the procedural rules of national law; (d) providing appropriate support services to child victims throughout the legal process; (e) protecting, where appropriate, the privacy and identity of child victims and taking measures in accordance with national law to prevent the inappropriate dissemination of information that could lead to the identification of child victims; (f) providing, in appropriate cases, for the safety of child victims, as well as that of their families and witnesses, from intimidation and retaliation; (g) avoiding unnecessary delays in the disposition of cases and the execution

of orders or decrees granting compensation to child victims. The article also specifies that States Parties must ensure that the best interests of the child are a primary consideration in the treatment by the criminal justice system of child victims of the offences described in the Protocol. In addition, States Parties should take measures to ensure appropriate training, in particular legal and psychological training, for those working with victims of offences prohibited under the Protocol. States Parties should, where appropriate, adopt measures to protect the safety and integrity of persons and/or organisations involved in the prevention and/or protection and rehabilitation of victims of such offences.

In this connection, We wish to recall general comments No. 12, No. 13, and No. 14 of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, which stress that children must be heard, protected from all forms of violence, and have their best interests treated as a substantive right, an interpretative principle, and a rule of procedure. These standards are directly applicable where children are said to have disclosed abuse or expressed fear, refused contact with an allegedly abusive parent, or asked to return home, but their views and disclosures were allegedly discounted, recast, or disregarded.

We wish to draw your attention to the *Guidelines regarding the implementation of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography* ([CRC/C/156](#)). The Committee on the Rights of the Child reminds States parties of their obligation to take special precautionary measures, as needed, when the alleged perpetrator is a parent, a family member, another child or a primary caregiver. Such measures should involve careful consideration of the fact that a child's disclosure should not worsen her or his situation and that of the other non-offending members of the family, and should not aggravate the trauma experienced by the child. With regard to child victim's right to recovery, family and social reintegration and compensation, the Committee urges States Parties to ensure that the relevant services for medical care, social reintegration and physical and psychological recovery of victims are accessible free of charge throughout the country to all children who need them, and that persons providing such services have certified training and the necessary expertise (para. 100).

We also wish to refer to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, ratified by Israel on 3 October 1991. Articles 12, 13, and 14 require prompt and impartial investigation wherever there is reasonable ground to believe that acts of ill-treatment may have occurred, the right to complain and to have the case promptly and impartially examined, and the right to redress. These obligations are directly relevant where allegations of domestic violence, child sexual abuse, or severe ill-treatment were reportedly dismissed, closed without adequate examination, or transformed into allegations against the reporting mother.

We also wish to recall the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, which affirms that women are entitled to the equal enjoyment and protection of all human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the rights to life, equality, liberty and security of person, and equal protection under the law. These standards reinforce the obligation of States to exercise due diligence to prevent, investigate and punish acts of violence against women and to ensure that institutional responses do not perpetuate such violence.

We wish to also refer to the *Guidelines on Justice in Matters involving Child Victims and Witnesses of Crime* ([ECOSOC Resolution 2005/20](#)). The Guidelines affirm children's right to participation – that every child has, subject to national procedural law, the right to express his or her views, opinions and beliefs freely, in his or her own words, and to contribute especially to the decisions affecting his or her life, including those taken in any judicial processes, and to have those views taken into consideration according to his or her abilities, age, intellectual maturity and evolving capacity (para. 8(d)). The Guidelines also provide that age should not be a barrier to a child's right to participate fully in the justice process. Every child should be treated as a capable witness, subject to examination, and his or her testimony should not be presumed invalid or untrustworthy by reason of the child's age alone as long as his or her age and maturity allow the giving of intelligible and credible testimony, with or without communication aids and other assistance (para. 18). Moreover, professionals should make every effort to enable child victims to express their views and concerns related to their involvement in the justice process (para. 21).

The guidelines specifically include recommendations on children's right to special preventive measures. In addition to preventive measures that should be in place for all children, special strategies are required for child victims and witnesses who are particularly vulnerable to recurring victimization or offending (para. 38). Professionals should develop and implement comprehensive and specially tailored strategies and interventions in cases where there are risks that child victims may be victimized further. These strategies and interventions should take into account the nature of the victimization, including victimization related to abuse in the home, sexual exploitation, abuse in institutional settings and trafficking. The strategies may include those based on government, neighbourhood and citizen initiatives (para. 39).

With regard to the specific context of custody proceedings, in her report entitled "Custody, violence against women and violence against children" (A/HRC/53/36), the Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls noted a "pattern of ignoring intimate partner violence against women in determining child custody cases across jurisdictions" and the tendency of family courts to treat allegations of violence "as deliberate efforts by mothers to manipulate their children and to separate them from their fathers", often through the pseudo-concept of "parental alienation" or similar notions (A/HRC/53/36), para. 1).

The report also stressed "the failure to address intimate partner violence and violence against children in custody rights and visitation decisions is a violation of the rights of the child and the principle of the best interest of the child" (para. 27). It also notes that when custody decisions are made in favor of the parent claiming alienation without sufficiently considering the child's views, "it may also sever the stable and safe bond with the non-abusive primary caretaker" (para. 23).

The report further underscores the relevance of the conduct of experts, evaluators, and welfare actors in family proceedings. It notes that parental alienation and related pseudo-concepts are often embedded in the legal system, including among evaluators tasked with advising family courts, and that such experts may subject adults and children to intrusive, inappropriate and retraumatizing assessments or recommend custody transfers and "reunification" measures not compatible with their welfare and rights (paras. 58 and 61). It also stresses that participating in custody and access

proceedings is costly and that lack of legal representation is a structural disadvantage, particularly for victims of domestic violence (para. 70).

In her report on *A practical approach to addressing the sale and sexual exploitation of children* ([A/HRC/49/51](#)), the Special Rapporteur on the sale, sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children highlights that making justice mechanisms freely accessible to all child victims constitutes a first real step towards providing adequate rehabilitation to child victims. Child victims not only need to access justice mechanisms, but be able to effectively seek justice for the harm that they have suffered. An indispensable part of this is to inform children about their rights in a language adapted to their age and level of maturity, and to actively listen to the child's voice. The child has a right, but not a duty, to participate in judicial proceedings and should have a representative who understands the specific situation of the child and defends their rights. The child also has a right to be accompanied by a trusted person of their own choice. A child should not be forced to face their offender and should not be brought into the court room unless it is considered in their best interests. Other means to guarantee a fair trial for the defendant should be used, such as child-friendly pretrial hearings that can serve as evidence in court. Where a child participates in the criminal justice process, the secondary traumatization of that child should be avoided at all costs (paras. 74-75).