

**Committee/Council: disarmament Committee**

**Issue: Incorporation of Child Protection Provision in Peace Agreements**

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## **Introduction**

The Convention on the Rights of the Child is the first charter for children's rights specifically created by the UN. It came into force on September 2, 1990, after the required number of nations ratified it. Currently, 196 countries are party to it, including every member of the United Nations except the United States. Children's rights have been improved in recent years but there are still problems such as the use of children as soldiers, sex slaves and in pornography. In addition, a lack of education is more prominent in countries participating in warfare.

## **Definition of Key-Terms**

### Child Soldiers

Thousands of children participate in military groups from the age of eight. A lot of them are used for suicide bombing missions, alongside being used as soldiers; many girls are abducted and fall victims to sex slavery. Many NGOs such as Child Soldiers International have campaigned for the complete disarmament of children. The countries with the largest number of child soldiers are Somalia, Myanmar, South Sudan and Yemen.

### Convention on the Rights of the Child

The Convention on the Rights of the Child is a treaty that sets out and defines the rights of the child. It led to the creation of a special UN committee, which reviews the progress made in terms of children's rights by member state.

## **Background Information**

### Debate over a children's rights charter

Since the ratification of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, more and more people were arguing that a further declaration specifically for children's rights was necessary. Children have always been deemed as a vulnerable group in society and thus children were a group in society largely affected by wars and environmental destruction. Finally, all

members of the United Nations besides the U.S., which had already ratified the Declaration, signed the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989.

### Child soldiers

Children have been used as soldiers throughout history and specifically in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Soldiers under the age of 18 were used in World War I and in World War II by the Soviet Union. By the end of the 90's approximately 300,000 children were directly used in war campaigns by state and non-state war parties. After World War II the United Nations added a clause to the 1949 Geneva Convention; the treaty abolished the recruitment of children under the age of 15 for both state and non-state armed groups. The issue created was that the treaty did not prohibit the use of children in supporting roles in war such as scouts and message carriers. In 1989 when the United Nations Rights of the Child was signed, many children's rights activists claimed that in order to truly protect children's rights, people under the age of 16 should not be used in any form by any war parties. They were really dissatisfied with the lack of a treaty prohibiting the use of adolescents as soldiers.

### Children's rights protection in war periods

According to the United Nations, 2014 was the worst year for children's rights as there has been a record of children's rights violations since the ratification of the declaration. Non-state armed groups, which are highly likely to exploit children, are the Anti-Balaka in the Central African Republic, the Allied Democratic Forces in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and Boko Haram in Nigeria. In addition, Boko Haram and ISIS were responsible for the abduction of thousands of girls and their transformation into sex slaves for terrorist groups' fighters. Governments such as the Somalian has not managed to control the territory of the country as many terrorist groups control specific regions.

### Incorporation of child protection provision in peace agreements

Many countries have the full-time employment limit at the age of 16. Thus, governments argue that if all adolescents have the right to work at the age of 16 why can they not join the army and be used as soldiers. In addition, government corruption in many developing countries has been the case whenever human rights violations occurred specifically in countries with authoritarian governments.

## **Major Countries and Organizations Involved**

### UNICEF

UNICEF is the prime organization for controlling and reviewing the governments' actions. The organization's aim is to protect children's rights and promote their interests as a valuable group of society that should be protected. All countries that have ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child are required to report to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child in order to be examined by a special board so that their progress can be further increased.

### United Kingdom and USA

The United Kingdom and the USA were two countries that argued that the age limit for state soldier recruiting should be 16 rather than 18. According to Child Soldiers International, the UK deployed 22 armed forces personnel aged under 18 to Iraq and Afghanistan between 2003 and 2010. The United Nations' main goal is to ensure that the UK and USA will not use underage soldiers in situations where they could endanger their lives. USA is the only country not to ratify the United Nations Right of the Child Declaration and the recent detention of child immigrants has created a global debate over the extent to which the U.S. protects children.

### **Date and Description of Event**

<b>11 December 1946</b>	<b>UNICEF is an organization, which promotes and protects the rights of children and mothers. It has become a member of the UN Development Group.</b>
<b>10 December 1948</b>	<b>The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) was signed on this day and officially became the foundation for all modern democracies. It defined the rights of all human beings globally, and it became extremely crucial as it further protected vulnerable groups such as children.</b>
<b>4 November 1950</b>	<b>The European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) is drafted by the Council of Europe and is signed by 47 nation states of the Council of Europe.</b>
<b>20 November 1989</b>	<b>All UN member states sign the United Nations Child Rights Convention, which sets out the rights of the child.</b>
<b>25 May 2000</b>	<b>Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict is signed by 134 countries. The treaty prohibits states</b>

	to recruit and use humans under the age of 18 as soldiers. The treaty wants to ensure that all the recruits will be at least 16 and those between 16-18 will not be used in the battlefield. The recruitment of adolescents under the age of 18 by non-state armed groups is strictly prohibited.
29 May 2015	The governments of Argentina and Norway initiate the Global Coalition for Safe Schools. The Coalition is endorsed by 75 states and its aim is the assurance that schools located in war zones will operate normally and that the schoolchildren will be protected.

## Relevant UN Treaties, Resolutions and Events

### Resolution 1974 (2011)

22 March 2011

Agreement between the government of Afghanistan and the U.S. to halt the recruitment and use of children by the Afghan National Security Forces.

### UN Resolution 2014 (2011)

21 October 2011

Demands the immediate disarmament of military groups in locations of peaceful protest. The United Nations requests all war parties to refrain from using children soldiers and targeting vital infrastructure.

### Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict (OPAC)

All countries with armed forces have signed and ratified the OPAC meaning that the army will not be able to recruit children under the age of 18. However, Child Rights International has investigated and found out that more than 46 countries use children under the age of 18 in their armies.

## Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue

The issue of child soldiers and the protection of children's rights has been a huge controversy in recent years in the international community. Through different agreements, the United Nations have tried to limit the role of children in wars and reduce the number of adolescents recruited by state armies.

## Possible Solutions

A solution will be really hard to find as we are talking about countries that do not have enough capital and infrastructure to further support children's rights. Nigeria, for example, is a country facing a huge nation crisis with terrorist groups such as Boko Haram conducting crimes against humanity. Nigeria has not been able to win this war so far meaning that there are still regions under the control of terrorist organizations, which do not respect fundamental human rights. I would suggest that a UN blue helmet team will be operating on the border and report any violations to the United Nations. United Nations could fund countries and help them in the war against terrorist groups, as those groups do not only harm the country but the international community as a whole. A further review on state military recruitment age and other issues invites all nation states who have ratified the treaties to ensure that their policy does not violate any of the resolutions passed concerning human rights.

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