



STUDY GUIDE

General Assembly of the United Nations Social, Humanitarian and Cultural- Third Committee

AGENDA ITEM

Prevention of the recruitment of child soldiers in central Africa

CHAIRING PANEL

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Welcome

- Forum:** General Assembly of the United Nations Social, Humanitarian & Cultural-Third Committee
- Topic:** Prevention of the recruitment of child soldiers in central Africa
- Member States represented:** Uganda, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Kingdom of Sweden, French Republic, People's Republic of China, Nigeria, The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Republic of the Sudan, the Republic of South Sudan, the Republic of Rwanda, UNICEF

Greetings from the chairs

Welcome to our committee!

You work may change the future of a number of potential youngsters in Central Africa! First of all, it is a great honor for us to chair this committee and we would like to thank all of you for participating in the MUN Day 2017. We are looking forward to a wonderful, heated discussion of such a controversial and interesting topic. In this study guide, we provided some background information concerning this topic as a basis of further research for preparation. We are both sure that this discussion will be a great opportunity for all of you to broaden your perspectives and come to be interested in more critical issues surrounding us. We finally would like to note that MUN is not a debate and we aim to come to an agreement with and write a resolution, so corporation will be the most importance thing on MUN Day.

Zoë Rübbert



Introduction

Over 250,000 of children are currently serving as soldiers in armed conflicts around the world. In Africa (mostly Central Africa), it is estimated that up to 120,000 children are currently used as combatants or support personnel, representing over 40 percent of the worldwide total. This number may not be exact, as there is no such thing as official record and the number of them fluctuates in accordance with the development of different armed conflicts. These boys and girls, some as young as 8 years old, serve in government forces and armed opposition groups. They may fight on the front lines, participate in suicide missions, and act as spies, messengers, or in any other way their commanders want. Especially, girls may be forced into sexual slavery. Many are abducted or recruited by force, while others choose to join a military organization as a route out of poverty, for protection, or as a way of making up for the loss of family or a lack of education.

In the chaos of armed conflict, children are often separated from their family. These children are particularly vulnerable to all kinds of abuses, including recruitment by military organizations.

General Overview

Child soldiers are children (younger than 18 years old) who are recruited for military purposes. They are boys and girls, teenagers and infants. Some of them are used to kill, fight and commit other violent crimes while others are used as messengers, spies, porters, informants, cooks or even for sexual purposes. Roughly half of the child soldiers in the world are girls. These girl soldiers can become forced to marry older soldiers.

Children involved in armed conflicts suffer from serious physical injuries and psychological traumata. They lose family members, become displaced from their homes, or even die. In the past decade alone, over one million children in conflict zones were separated from their families or orphaned, around four million children have undergone some type of physical mutilation. In armed conflict, children can suffer wounds from knives, bullets, bombs, and landmines, and more than two million children have been killed.

Furthermore, drugs may also be used on child soldiers to curb their hunger that can lead to drug addiction as well as psychological and emotional problems.



There are an estimated 200,000 to 300,000 child soldiers worldwide according to the Human Rights Watch.

Children are particularly vulnerable to all kinds of abuse and therefore easier manipulated by false promises and forced in to recruitment. Often recruited children come from unfortunate backgrounds without perspectives or are separated from their families during the chaos of armed conflicts.

Some children choose to join a military organization as a route out of several reasons such as

1. Material needs
2. Desire for vengeance
3. Fascination prestige of the army
4. Fear
5. Ideology
6. Feeling of exclusion.
7. Job opportunity

According to the UN's list of shame in 2016 there are child soldiers in Afghanistan, Central African Republic, Colombia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Iraq, Mali, Myanmar, Nigeria, Philippines, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Syria and Yemen.

NGOs such as Child Soldiers International, International Labour Organization (ILO), and UNICEF have led active campaigns against the use of child soldiers. Though these organizations have drawn attention to the participation of children in conflicts from Latin America (Colombia) to the Near East (Palestine) and even Asia (Burma), Africa is often presented as the continent hardest hit by this "unacceptable practice". Seven out of nine reports put out by Human Rights Watch on the use of child soldiers in the last ten years concern sub-Saharan African countries.

In many cases, they have nowhere to go, no home, shelter or food and water. The employment of so many child soldiers consists of one of the principal uniqueness of the post-Cold War African crises. Indeed, the image of the African child bearing a Kalashnikov bigger than himself has come to symbolize a typical African brand of violence, to Western eyes a barbaric violence beyond the bounds of the acceptable and the rational.

Mainly children become involved in government forces, opposition groups and extremist, terrorist groups. Non-governmental groups are the most dangerous association, since they are very difficult to identify and influence. Good example of these associations are found in Sudan and South Sudan, where there are children associated with and fighting for the Sudan people's Liberation army (LSPA), the Sudan People's Liberation Army in Opposition (LSPA-IO), South Sudan National Police Service, the South Sudan Wildlife Service, the South Sudan



Liberation Army (SSLA), the South Sudan Democratic Movement/Army – Cobra Faction, the White Army and armed groups allied to Gabriel Tanginye (South Sudan 2015). Nevertheless, South Sudan is also a very good example of the progress that has been made in fight against children involved in armed conflicts, because of the peace agreement made between South Sudanese Government and the Cobra Faction group, which has led to release of a total of 1757 child soldiers (UNICEF, 2015).

Despite these positive developments, much work still remains to ensure that children throughout Africa have a promising future. The United Nations and the humanitarian committee must fully support all efforts to limit the transfer of small arms to the African continent and prevent recruitment of children for military service under 18 years of age. Only then can an international consensus be achieved and strong measures are being taken to eliminate the use of child soldiers from the African continent.

Major Parties Involved

General Assembly of the United Nations Social, Humanitarian & Cultural-Third Committee

(the UN General Assembly's Third Committee) is a committee included in General Assembly and a platform for discussing agenda items relating to a range of social, humanitarian affairs and human rights issues that affect people all over the world.

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) works to release children from armed forces and armed groups as soon as possible even during armed conflict, and help them return to their families. In doing so, UNICEF supports services that care for the physical and mental health and well-being of such children, provide them with life skills and engage them in positive activities towards their future, including education, vocational skills and livelihoods training. A community-oriented approach is adopted that includes support to other vulnerable children who have also been severely affected by the conflict so as to promote reconciliation and avoid discrimination. As well as directly helping children, they have been working on rising awareness of this issue through publications, making videos, and posting information on social media.

Child Soldiers International (the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers), is a UK-based nongovernmental organization that works to prevent the recruitment, use and exploitation of children by armed forces and groups. Child Soldiers International was founded in 1998 by leading human rights and humanitarian organizations, including Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International and Save the Children. Its purpose was to campaign for the adoption of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict (OPAC). After adoption of this treaty in 2002, it has continued to promote the adoption and implementation of international legal standards protecting children from military recruitment or use in hostilities.



Timeline of Key Events

Date	Event
1977	The Additional Protocols to the Geneva Convention are signed, declaring a minimum age of 15 for involvement in conflict.
1988	The UN takes part in the CRC, Convention on the Rights of the Child, a treaty which addresses the civil, political, health, and cultural rights of children.
1998	The Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, know now as (Child Soldiers International) is established by Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International and other human rights organizations.
1999	Resolution 1261 is passed, which is a resolution that identifies the child soldier problem as affecting international peace and security.
2000	The first optional protocol of the CRC is adopted, stressing that governments must do everything possible to protect children affected by war. This protocol states that the minimal age for those who enroll optionally must be 15, while those who are forced into war must be 18.
2000	Resolution 1314 is passed, emphasizing the need for a specific action plan for children associated with the conflicts.
2001	Resolution 1379 is passed, urging UN member states to prosecute nations who recruit children in war.
2005	Resolution 1612 is passed, implementing a monitoring and reporting mechanism regarding the use of child soldiers.
2015	A report "The Future of United Nations Peace Operations: Implementation of the Recommendations of the High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations", the report of the External Independent Review of the United Nations Response to Allegations of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse in the Central African Republic is submitted.
2016	Resolution 2272 is passed, endorsing the decision of the Secretary General to repatriate a particular military unit or formed police unit of a contingent when there is credible evidence of widespread or systemic sexual exploitation and abuse by that unit.



Previous Attempts to solve the Issue

The Additional Protocols to the 1949 Geneva Conventions (1977): prohibited the military recruitment and use of children under the age of 15, which is now recognized as a war crime under the [Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court](#) (2002). It applies to both government-controlled armed forces and non-state armed groups.

Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) was adopted by General Assembly in 1989, which reaffirms the prohibition on the use of children under 15 and defines a child for the first time as any person under the age of 18. Besides Somalia and the United States, all nations have ratified or agreed to follow this convention. However, several countries continue to violate the convention's principles even after they have signed.

In February 2002, the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict went into force. It stated that anyone under the age of 18 cannot be involuntarily recruited or drafted into the military. It requested nations to do everything they can to raise the minimum age for volunteering for the military to 16. Many nations opposed it and insisted that 15 is not too young for people to serve as soldiers, while some countries and many human rights groups believed that even 16 is not old enough to be a volunteer in the military

In 2005, the Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 1612. This resolution strongly condemns the recruitment of child soldiers in armed conflict and calls for a method to monitor and report the use of child soldiers. It also provides specific mandates for the protection of children by United Nations peacekeeping units and encourages regional organizations to take appropriate measures to prevent the exploitation of children. United Nations (UN) has become one of the main parties that have most influence on this issue. It took part in the CRC and has sent a number of their staff to areas where child soldiers are recruited and they have created reports concerning the situation there for a long time. This has huge impact on creating resolutions concerning this issue. For example, resolution 2272 created last year was based on the report about sexual exploitation and abuse in the Central African Republic. This issue has been discussed at General Assembly every year and has shown a great concern about this huge problem.

As well as UN, great number of organizations, such as Child Soldiers International, International Labour Organization (ILO), and UNICEF. They both corporate with collaborate with communities and engage with International authorities. Together with local partners, they support children to avoid being recruited and used for military purposes. Besides this, they also have helped to raise standards. For example, ILO constituted Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention in 1999.



Possible Solutions

In this committee session, it is the task of the delegates to recommend a policy for the prevention of the recruitment of child soldiers in central Africa. As the humanitarian committee, the third committee, the delegates must consider the inhuman war-crimes on militarily recruited minors regarding their effects on the children's present and future life.

An ideal resolution would...

1. ...encourage more countries to sign OPAC, to rise their standards to minimize the number of children being militarily exploited and further call for a minimum recruitment-age of 18 years.
2. ...propose training governments, parliamentarians, armed forces and communities around the world on the practical implementation of OPAC.
3. ...urge the account of those committing the crimes of abusing children for military purposes.
4. ...recommend research and highlighting of the impact of military marketing, recruitment and training on juveniles.
5. ...further encourage the support of local and national governments to end child recruitment and the violation by non-stated armed groups.
 - therefore support locally and nationally functioning initiatives,
 - request financial aid to affected governments
 - consider drawing connections between governments and non-governmental organizations and international institutions such as, but not limiting to Child Soldiers International, International Labour Organization (ILO), and UNICEF.
6. ... call for the education of children and families in affected countries by advertising campaigns as well as campaigns in schools



Appendix

Guiding questions:

- What is the root cause of child soldiers?
- How can we minimize these factors that lead to such issues?
- Has your country signed any resolutions in this issue? What does it think about child soldiers?
- What further programs and services, are needed to address children in armed conflict?
- How can children be better protected from the physical and psychological effects of armed conflict, including being recruited as child soldiers?
- What actions should be taken in order to minimize the possibility of more children getting involved in extremist groups because of former child soldiers with extremist views?

Possible research sources:

<https://www.child-soldiers.org>

<https://www.un.org/press/en/2016/sc12277.doc.html>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DsotGJHtzrA>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Child_soldiers_in_Africa

http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=s/2016/360&referer=/english/&Lang=E <http://bestdelegate.com>

<https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/effects-of-conflict/six-grave-violations/child-soldiers/soldiers/>

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<https://www.un.org/press/en/2016/sc12277.doc.htm>

<https://www.hrw.org/topic/childrens-rights/child-soldiers>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Military_use_of_children

<https://www.unicef.org/sowc96/2csoldrs.htm>



