

## **ISSUE 14/ WINTER 2005/06**

### **CHILD SOLDIERS NEWSLETTER**

**A newsletter produced by the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, with the support of the Human Security Programme at Foreign Affairs Canada**

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#### **NON-STATE ARMED GROUPS AND CHILD RECRUITMENT**

**Children are used in armed conflicts by government armed forces, paramilitary and other government-backed groups and by armed opposition groups. The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, already signed by more than 100 governments, was a major step in preventing child recruitment by government armed forces and has led to a reduction in such recruitment in a number of countries. However, up to 70% of children fighting today are not part of government armed forces but armed groups. Children under the age of 18 are nowadays associated with armed groups in over twenty armed conflicts.**

Child recruitment by armed groups poses enormous challenges to human rights and humanitarian organisations. Armed groups, not being states, are not bound by international human rights law as groups, although their individual members can be prosecuted for child recruitment in international and national tribunals. They are extremely diverse in their objectives and composition, ranging from groups with a very structured line of command to semi-independent cells operating with little coordination.

The Coalition is undertaking a major exercise of rethinking strategies towards armed groups. We intend to link up with a very wide constituency of organisations, individuals and institutions in tackling child recruitment by non-state actors. Two articles in this newsletter are authored by organisations with enormous experience in dealing with armed groups although not in the area of child soldiers: Conciliation Resources and Geneva Call.

Coalition members and partners in many armed conflict situations also have a wealth of experience in dealing with armed groups at the national and local level. Their experience ranges from prevention work with communities, families and children to direct advocacy with the commanders of armed groups in the field. An action appeal by our partners in Indonesia analyses the peace process in Aceh from the field perspective, looking at the reintegration of children from both the government forces and the armed opposition group Free Aceh Movement (GAM).

Child recruitment by armed groups also poses a major challenge to the international community. This newsletter analyses The United Nations Security Council's latest resolution (1612), which establishes a research and monitoring mechanism that will begin to operate in five countries where children are recruited by armed groups. This newsletter also analyses how the European Union Guidelines on Children in Armed Conflict can deal with armed opposition groups.

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## **CHILD SOLDIERS NEWS**

### **UGANDA: ARREST WARRANTS AGAINST LRA LEADERS**

The International Criminal Court (ICC) unsealed arrest warrants for five leaders of the Northern Ugandan armed group the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) on 13 October. The five are accused of war crimes and crimes against humanity including murder, abduction, sexual enslavement, mutilation and forced enlistment of children. The warrants are the first issued by the ICC, which began functioning in mid-2003. Among those named are LRA leader Joseph Kony and his deputy Vincent Otti. The LRA has abducted about 20,000 children for use as soldiers and many have been tortured and forced to commit atrocities during the course of the 19-year conflict.

Ugandan government negotiator Betty Bigombe visited the UN four days after the arrest warrants were unsealed. She called on the governments of Uganda, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Sudan to assist in the capture of the LRA leaders. Urging the Ugandan government to support a new peace effort, Ms Bigombe noted that the ICC indictments all but rule out the surrender of LRA commanders. She stated that the implications of the indictments have yet to unfold.

While there is some support for the work of the ICC in Uganda, civil society groups have expressed concern that the safety of child soldiers - and of the children born into the LRA - may be threatened if ICC indictments are issued while children remain in its ranks. International human rights organizations have also called on the ICC to investigate crimes against humanity and war crimes by the Ugandan armed forces and their civilian superiors as well as the LRA. (see also Demobilization and Reintegration updates)

(Source: Various; ICC, 14/10/2005)

NEPAL:  
CHILD RECRUITMENT BY MAOISTS CONTINUES

The Chief of the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Nepal, Ian Martin, has urged the Maoists to bring an immediate end to the forced recruitment of child soldiers in the eastern region and to respect child rights.

At the same time as expressing concern over the increasing number of child soldiers recruited by the Maoists, Martin also appealed to the security forces to engage seriously in protecting human rights.

Meanwhile, the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) has denied reports of the abduction of teachers and students and extortions in various parts of the country: "We want to clarify that the teachers and students participating in our organizational activities have been labeled as 'abductions' by the royal regime," declared a spokesperson for the group.

(Source: Kantipur online, 30/09/2005)

INDIA/PAKISTAN:  
INDIAN GOVERNMENT CLAIMS USE OF CHILD SOLDIERS IN KASHMIR

Islamic militants in the Indian part of Kashmir are using children as young as ten as porters, spies, cooks and bomb planters, while children just a little older are being recruited as combatants, according to Indian security forces.

The trend of using children in military operations started in the early 1990s but it has been on the rise in recent months. According to Indian intelligence sources who intercepted wireless messages from militants in the Pakistani portion of Kashmir, cadres in militant groups were being ordered to recruit children for military operations.

More than 500 children between the ages of 13 and 18 are reported to be missing from the mountainous regions of Doda, Rajouri and Poonch districts and are believed to have been sent to Pakistan to receive military training.

(Source: Middle East times, 13/10/2005)

UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL:  
RESOLUTION 1612 CALLS FOR A MONITORING AND REPORTING MECHANISM

The United Nations Security Council adopted Resolution 1612 on 26 July 2005. The resolution proposes a series of measures, including the establishment of a comprehensive monitoring and reporting mechanism aimed at "triggering" action by the international community to stop violations of children's rights during armed conflict.

In response to the resolution, the Coalition stated that the monitoring and reporting mechanism would be a positive development if it meant that serious efforts will be made to report in detail on five serious violations of children's rights. These violations are: killing and maiming of children, rape or other sexual violence against children,

recruitment and use of children in armed conflict, abduction of children, denial of humanitarian access for children and attacks against schools or hospitals.

The practicalities of implementing the mechanism have yet to be confronted, particularly as no extra resources have yet been allocated. For the mechanism to work successfully it is vital that information from a wide range of government and civil society organizations is properly utilized and channelled upward to the Security Council and other international mechanisms responsible for child protection.

The resolution establishes a Security Council working group to monitor the process of time-bound action plans to stop the use of children in armed conflict and to review reports of the violations outlined above. The creation of a working group is to be welcomed. However, if the Security Council fails to take concrete action in response to reports of continuing violations then the new mechanisms will have failed, children will continue to suffer egregious human rights violations and the Security Council will lose credibility on this issue. (See article in this newsletter)

(Source: Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, 27/07/2005)

#### SRI LANKA: RECRUITMENT OF CHILD COMBATANTS REMAINS A THREAT

As political problems persist in Sri Lanka, recruitment of child combatants by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) is rising again. In the aftermath of the tsunami, there was a brief interlude of harmony as Sinhalese and Tamils worked together to rescue survivors and rebuild damaged coastal areas. Fears that the LTTE might capitalize on the tragedy by forcibly recruiting orphans of the tsunami were not realised, and while recruitment of child combatants did not end, it remained low. In recent months, however, recruitment has increased and children and adolescents remain vulnerable to forced conscription.

The eastern coastal district of Batticaloa, which was hard hit by the tsunami, is an area of political tension where LTTE child recruitment remains a constant threat. Figures from UNICEF, which monitors the child recruitment situation nationally, show that recruitment in July reached its highest level since before the tsunami, with 135 under-age combatants known to have been recruited.

(Source: Refugees International, 12/10/2005)

#### CÔTE D'IVOIRE: GOVERNMENT RECRUITS CHILD SOLDIERS IN LIBERIA

Since September, Ivorian army officers and Liberian former commanders have been conducting a recruitment drive. They are seeking ex-combatants in Liberian towns and villages bordering Côte d'Ivoire for recruitment into the Ivorian armed forces, in anticipation of renewed fighting with rebel forces.

"The Ivorian government is bolstering its military manpower by recruiting children who fought in Liberia's brutal civil war," said Peter Takirambudde, executive director of the Africa division of Human Rights Watch. "The international community must do all it can to ensure that these children are demobilized and that their recruiters are prosecuted."

In the past year, Human Rights Watch has documented two other periods of intense

recruitment of Liberians to fight alongside the Ivorian government: in October 2004, just prior to a government offensive against the rebel New Forces (Forces Nouvelles), and again in March, before the parties met for peace talks in South Africa.

The human rights organisation called on the UN Sanctions Committee for Côte d'Ivoire to immediately activate travel and economic sanctions against individuals identified as responsible for the recruitment and use of child soldiers, in accordance with UN Security Council Resolution 1572.

(Source: Human Rights Watch, 28/10/2005)

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## **DEMOBILIZATION & REINTEGRATION UPDATES**

### **BURUNDI: FORMER CHILD SOLDIERS STRUGGLE TO FIT IN**

Jean-Noel was 12 years old when militiamen scooped him off the streets, forcing him to lug heavy ammunition as they battled rebels on the outskirts of Burundi's capital. "It was terrible," he said. "I'd never experienced war before. When you heard shooting all you wanted to do was run away, but if you did your own guys would shoot you."

Jean-Noel, now 17, is one of about 3,000 child soldiers demobilized in the central African country since the return of relative peace after 12 years of civil war. Most have been resettled in their former communities with help from international organizations like UNICEF and other UN agencies, and a handful of relief charities.

Another boy nicknamed Safari was just 11 years old and already an orphan when violence engulfed his neighbourhood on the outskirts of Bujumbura in 1993.

Running for his life, he found himself caught up in a tide of refugees fleeing the country. Eventually he arrived in southern Sudan, where he was recruited by Sudanese rebels waging their own civil war. For the next nine years Safari fought alongside them, taking orders from men twice his age who beat him if he put a foot wrong.

"If they said kill, you killed," said Safari, who was finally rescued in the desert by a UN helicopter after he became separated from his battalion in heavy fighting. "If they told you to get them food, you couldn't say no. There was nothing to eat out there. You had to shoot some animal and cook it up."

The difficulties Safari faced on his return to Bujumbura are common to many former child soldiers: psychological problems, social exclusion and few opportunities to make a living. "After so many years in the bush, it's impossible to talk about returning to a normal life right now," he said. "Maybe with time. It's really hard."

(Source: Alertnet, 27/10/2005)

INDONESIA:  
WHAT'S NEXT FOR THE CHILDREN OF ACEH?

The peace agreement signed on 15 August 2005 between the Indonesian government and the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) revived the hopes of the people of Aceh. Many are hoping to return to their homes to start life anew through an albeit slow and tedious rebuilding process.

In the midst of the euphoria surrounding the peace treaty, child soldiers remain a crucial issue in the war-torn province. For the time being, child soldiers have already laid down their arms and joined groups to take on the role of messengers, spies and cooks for adult soldiers who remain in remote jungle areas of the province. But the situation in Aceh is still uncertain, since the conflicting sides have yet to build mutual trust in implementing the peace agreement.

According to the peace treaty, the government will make efforts to help reintegrate ex-rebels into their communities and allocate some farmland and money for them, but it remains unclear how the social reintegration and rehabilitation will be conducted on the ground. (See also Action Appeal and CSC Highlights in this newsletter)

(Source: Yakarta Post, 6/10/2005)

UGANDA:  
FORMER CHILD SOLDIERS EXCLUDED IN ADULTHOOD

By abducting their soldiers young, the leaders of the opposition armed group the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in northern Uganda ensure that they have pliant, easily malleable underlings.

Escape from the LRA doesn't always mean a return to civilian life. For a young boy schooled in the bush, the prospect of life subsisting on World Food Programme rations in a camp is not necessarily enticing. Many prefer taking their chance, and a paycheck, with the Ugandan armed forces (UPDF).

UNICEF is starting to develop a programme with the army to ensure the enforcement of children's rights is more effective. "There have got to be mechanisms within the UPDF to identify children," says UNICEF's Gulu coordinator Michael Copland. "That's the only way we can genuinely deal with the issue of child soldiers here in Uganda. We need to have training linked to internal systems and then external monitoring of those systems."

Yet there is a large group of child abductees who aren't covered, those who have grown into young adults whilst in captivity. "Theirs is a lost childhood," says Save the Children's Geoffrey Oyat, National Coordinator of the Uganda Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers. He argues that the returnees should be forced to break from their abusers, rather than be drafted directly into the UPDF's Unit 105 where they fight in the same conditions, using similar tactics, under ex-LRA commanders.

(Source: Euan Denholm. Appeared in Amnesty International news, 14/10/2005)

AFGHANISTAN:  
DEMOBILIZING THE CHILD SOLDIERS

Nearly 8,000 child soldiers are scattered throughout Afghanistan, according to UNICEF, which is now working to disarm and demobilize them.

They are part of the many militia units left over from the years of factional warfare, which are themselves being gradually disarmed and disbanded to make way for the new Afghan National Army.

The children carry guns when they are on guard duty. Most of the time they work in their commanders' houses or on their land in return for three meals a day.

According to the UN, no child soldier will remain in a military force once the programme is completed. To see the plan through, officials are working through village elders who know which local commanders have child soldiers. The officials ask the elders to talk to the commanders and persuade them to hand the children over to UNICEF.

(Source: Institute for War and Peace Reporting, 25/08/2005)

SIERRA LEONE:  
SPECIAL TRIBUNAL PRESSES NIGERIA TO HAND OVER TAYLOR

The Special Tribunal on Sierra Leone (STSL) a UN-backed tribunal prosecuting those accused of war crimes during the country's 1991-2002 civil war, is pressuring Nigeria to hand over former Liberian President Charles Taylor for trial. It is also searching for a rebel leader.

The tribunal hopes to prosecute Taylor and the rebel leader Johnny Paul Koroma before wrapping up its work in about 18 months, according to Desmond De Silva, the chief prosecutor. He warned that the two men will not escape prosecution even if they are found at a later date. The tribunal is trying several rebel military commanders on charges stemming from accusations of systematic killings, rapes, enslavement of child soldiers and mutilation with machetes during the civil war.

Koroma was reported in 2003 to have been killed by Liberian soldiers, but his body has not been transferred to authorities. De Silva told a news conference that the most recent report received by the tribunal indicated that Koroma was alive in Guinea last year: "I can't say that's hard intelligence, but it is intelligence of a kind," the prosecutor cautioned.

Washington helped arrange Taylor's flight to Nigeria as rebels besieged his capital, Monrovia, in August 2003. He was later indicted by the war-crimes tribunal for backing rebels in Sierra Leone, but Nigeria granted him asylum. Taylor has denied the charges.

(Source: The Guardian Unlimited, 1/10/2005)

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## THE EXPERIENCE OF CONCILIATION RESOURCES

### LESSONS FOR NEGOTIATING WITH ARMED GROUPS FOR AN END TO THE USE OF CHILD SOLDIERS

By Aaron Griffiths and Sarah Wheeler, Conciliation Resources<sup>1</sup>

*“...With whom are you going to discuss a conflict if you don’t discuss it with the people who are involved in the conflict, who have caused the conflict from the beginning, and who are still engaged in trying to kill each other?”*  
(Former US President Jimmy Carter, President of the Carter Center, February 2005)<sup>2</sup>

**Underlying Jimmy Carter’s response to the question of why he believes that it is necessary, as an intermediary, to talk to non-state armed groups are two important points about violent armed conflict. First, that armed groups are key actors in many of today’s internal armed conflicts, and secondly, that dialogue is an effective way to address the problem. Indeed, when conflicts end it is not usually the result of military victory or the re-drawing of international borders, but of a negotiated political agreement reached after years of painstaking dialogue, often beginning with long periods of discreet talks.**

However, Carter’s clear-cut reasoning is frequently resisted by governments or security forces unwilling to “reward” those who have resorted to violence against sovereign states or elected governments.

Yet if we are committed to ending violent conflicts and the use of child soldiers, protecting civilians and promoting democracy, there is little choice but to explore how we can best engage with non-state armed groups.

The following reflections on this challenge are drawn from a new publication by Conciliation Resources, *Choosing to engage: armed groups and peace processes*, and broadly reflect four key lessons:

- 1) There is a case for more engagement with armed groups.
- 2) There are a multitude of engagement options and third party roles, and humanitarian and peacemaking interventions can usefully complement each other.
- 3) The importance of a greater understanding of armed groups and their decision-making.
- 4) Creative thinking is needed to overcome obstacles to engaging armed groups.

#### **The case for broader and better engagement**

Armed conflicts are often an expression of real or perceived political, social or economic exclusion, or the result of poorly addressed historical grievances. Exclusively military responses to armed opposition fuel antagonism and further violence, resulting in civilian casualties, entrenching violence as the currency of political exchange and strengthening hardliners on all sides.

Many commentators recognize this situation in Chechnya for example, where the Russian government’s own “war on terrorism” stands accused of undermining the

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<sup>1</sup> Conciliation Resources is an international NGO that works to prevent violence, promote justice and transform conflict into opportunities for development. For more information see *Choosing to engage: armed groups and peace processes* at: [www.c-r.org/accord](http://www.c-r.org/accord).

<sup>2</sup> In ‘Choosing to engage; armed groups and peace processes’ *Accord: an international review of peace initiatives*, issue 16 (2005).

debilitated political leadership of the “Chechen resistance”. This strengthens Chechen support for the more extreme elements of the armed opposition who adopt terrorist tactics that proactively target innocent civilians.

Strategic and principled engagement with armed groups can lead to improved understanding of the root causes of conflict, identify the obstacles to settlement, and pinpoint possible ways forward. Far from “rewarding” armed groups with talks, engagement can draw upon a broad menu of dynamic and context-specific options which identify who is best placed to engage with armed groups, when, and how.

### **Understanding armed groups**

An important lesson emerging from the experience of both peacemakers and humanitarian agencies is that to engage effectively with armed groups it is necessary to understand them. This requires more than intelligence reports. An understanding of their constituency of support, relationship with criminal networks, views about violence, internal dynamics, experience of past peace initiatives and their adversaries’ characteristics is required. It is also important to understand how and why these characteristics change over time and how outsiders and evolving circumstances, including state behaviour, can influence this process.

It is also necessary to understand how such groups make strategic choices about when and whether to engage in talks. Conflict resolution expert Clem McCartney argues that strategic shifts occur because the balance of arguments at any one time favours the analysis of one or other group within the armed movement. He imagines a weighing scale with factors tending either towards militancy or towards a desire to transform violent conflict. “Militancy” factors include a “council of despair”, a perceived need to avoid compromise, distrust in a peace process and the need to avoid internal splits. “Conflict transformation” factors include a framework for possible outcomes, the need for legitimacy and recognition, the capacity to manage the inevitable risks, a scenario of mutual dependence, safety guarantees and third party mediation.

Such an in-depth understanding can be gained from a variety of intermediaries. The nature, depth and quality of their interaction with an armed group, both direct and indirect, will affect the quality of the information obtained. An in-depth understanding of an armed group is an essential pre-requisite for developing an engagement strategy, and assists in the identification of entry points. Potential intermediaries need to predicate their engagement on a detailed analysis of the issues, actors and arenas that present the clearest opportunities for successful engagement.

### **Diverse third-party roles**

Third parties can play a variety of roles aside from direct mediation, such as assisting in the process of understanding armed groups, building the willingness of armed groups to participate in dialogue, or simply keeping lines of communication open. Even during particularly “hot” phases in a conflict, informal intermediaries can maintain discreet contacts with elements of armed groups who are open to dialogue. These forms of low-key engagement can allow intermediaries to explore options for future engagement without being seen to confer undue legitimacy.

Trusted intermediaries may need to work exclusively with a group to help them understand and review their engagement options, enable them to engage more effectively in political negotiations, and act as a “translator” of meanings between protagonists. Such work can complement the efforts of other third parties who may

be well placed to convene dialogue between belligerents. In Sierra Leone, for example, sustained personal contacts between members of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) and members of the Civil Society Movement and the Inter-Religious Council of Sierra Leone helped bring the RUF to the negotiating table at Lomé.

The involvement of third parties in engagement efforts presents a variety of risks, as they do not always conduct themselves responsibly or accountably. Where there are too many groups working confusion may occur, and not everyone is well-placed to engage on all issues at all times. Good coordination and communication are required to minimize these risks, avoid damaging contradictions between engagement initiatives, and take advantage of the potential, where it exists, for different roles to complement each other.

### **Humanitarian engagement**

Engagement with armed groups on humanitarian, development and relief issues outside the context of full political negotiations can be – aside from achieving humanitarian objectives – a confidence-building measure when more explicit political and security issues are too contentious to address. However, there is the risk that humanitarian goals are used as a tool for conflict resolution purposes, or that all parties to the conflict can derive political capital from being seen to uphold humanitarian norms or alleviate suffering while at the same time postponing serious efforts to resolve the conflict.

Third parties concerned primarily with humanitarian issues need to consider the political context and implications of their interventions. The international NGO Geneva Call has grappled with this challenge in its global efforts to secure the agreement of 27 armed groups to ban the use of antipersonnel mines and adhere to humanitarian norms through a *Deed of Commitment for Adherence to a Total Ban on Anti-Personnel Mines and for Cooperation in Mine Action* (see article by Geneva Call in this Newsletter). Many other actors in the humanitarian and human rights field are also exploring new ways of engagement with armed groups and possible guidelines for good practice.

A key challenge for all third parties is to recognize the likely impact of institutional interests on the dynamics of engagement with armed groups. A third party who comes to an engagement initiative with a clear set of humanitarian goals (and interests) will need to consider different ways of engagement to an intervener who is concerned to promote conciliation between parties without taking a specific position on the outcome of such a process. In many situations, experience seems to indicate that clarity on the boundaries of roles is essential to building trust between any of the parties. However, situations do arise where humanitarian actors may find that their engagement initiatives with an armed group can generate momentum towards and trust in their assuming a broader role. The opportunities posed by such success must, however, be balanced against the risks associated with a blurring of lines of responsibility and interest.

### **Overcoming the barriers to engagement**

In order for third parties to work effectively, policymakers need to guard against actions that entrench the unequal capacities and opportunities that make armed conflicts particularly difficult to resolve, and find ways to counteract the uneven abilities of different parties to engage.

For example, anti-terrorist legislation placing restrictions on the movement of people associated with armed opposition groups can undermine opportunities for peacemaking, while such listings are problematical for peacemakers, who run the risk of being labelled as terrorist sympathizers. While there is a need for laws to protect populations from security threats, much current legislation is not smart or nuanced: listing and de-listing can send unintended and non-constructive messages.

The targeting or nuancing of sanctions against groups using violence can be used to encourage dialogue. Also, creative procedural agreements can help overcome some of the issues described above and can address armed groups' concerns about domination at the negotiating table. For example, the 1995 Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees between the Government (JASIG) of the Philippines and the National Democratic Front established equal terms for both parties to enter into peace negotiations. While there have been problems implementing the guarantees and no outcome to the substantive negotiations themselves, the JASIG at least built up an understanding that allowed those negotiations to begin.

### **Lessons for efforts to prevent the use of child soldiers**

Some of these lessons may be useful for those working to prevent the use of child soldiers. As those working in the field recognize, the recruitment of child soldiers may require especially sensitive and well-targeted interventions. In armed groups like those in Sierra Leone or northern Uganda, abducted child recruits often go on to abduct the next generation of child recruits – a vicious cycle that demands careful analysis of engagement options and approaches.

It is essential to try to understand the armed group's perspective, even if their reasoning appears skewed to outsiders. For example, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) have been accused of extensive recruitment of child soldiers, yet from its perspective the threatened use of international sanctions on these grounds looks like state bias. LTTE advisors complain that the *Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child* (to which it is not a party to and thus claims not to be legally bound by) gives more scope for states to recruit under 18 year olds than non-state groups, while there is no provision for what it sees itself as: a national liberation movement and a *de facto* government. Attempting to understand and positively influence armed groups' analysis of such questions is an important step towards finding solutions.

One of the key challenges is balancing constructive engagement with the need to take action against human rights abuses and deter behaviour that contravenes international legal standards. Condemning human rights abuses, taking action against perpetrators and exploring effective ways of transforming or ending conflict are all essential responses to organized violence. The challenge for interveners is managing tensions between the twin pursuits of peace and justice through careful and strategic consideration of timing and roles, including due sensitivity to the views of affected communities. Creativity and innovation is needed to meet all these challenges.

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## VOICES OF YOUTH

### EMMANUEL JAL: SONGS OF EXPERIENCE

By Michael Brunton<sup>3</sup>

**In September 2005 the album *Help: A Day In The Life*, recorded in just 24 hours by a roster of artists including Radiohead and Coldplay, became the biggest-selling download album ever. All the proceeds go assists children affected by violent conflicts all over the world. The musicians involved have rallied to that cause, but only one fully understands the appalling realities of its mission: Emmanuel Jal, onetime child soldier in Sudan and now a fast-rising star of African rap.**

Jal's new album, *Ceasefire*, is an appeal for peace, rather than money. And although he is now a powerful spokesman for campaigns like Make Poverty History and the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, it was Jal's music — a blend of old and new Africa — that got him on the bill at this summer's Live 8 concert. For any other young performer, an appearance at a blockbuster like Live 8 would be a high point. In Jal's case, it's one of the least dramatic events in his life so far.

A child of war, Jal has painfully vivid memories of his earliest years. Yet certain details, like when he was born, got lost on the way. "Normally, I give the date of 1 January 1980. But ask 50,000 child soldiers and they will all tell you 1 January," Jal says with a chuckle and a flap of his long, expressive hands. He is remembering his friends, with whom he was sent, aged about seven, to Ethiopia to escape the vicious civil war between Sudan's Christian south, where he was born, and the Muslim north.

In Ethiopia, the boys were given books and English lessons, but when the aid agencies were not looking, the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) gave them AK-47s and uniforms and sent them into battle, first in Ethiopia and then in southern Sudan. Jal, a nine-year-old officer with the passion of a freedom fighter, rarely saw the face of his enemies, who mostly attacked the child fighters with gunships and shells. "Young people are so brave when they go to fight," he says. "Before, you are afraid, but when you shoot you get that strength. What they don't know is, you can die at once."

When the SPLA's factions turned on each other, Jal and about 400 other boys trekked out in search of safety. Weeks later, when they reached a rival rebel camp in Waat, they numbered fewer than a dozen; the rest had died from fighting, starvation, animal attacks and suicides. It was at this camp that Jal met Emma McCune, a British aid worker who took a shine to the boy, adopted him and smuggled him onto a flight to a new life in Nairobi. Three months later she died in a road accident. (Nicole Kidman is soon to play McCune in a biopic by director Tony Scott.)

Ironically, with no gun to bolster his courage, Jal found Nairobi a frightening place. Remembering how, in the worst hours of his desert trek, his prayers to "the God of my Mother" had been answered, he started going to church and joined the gospel choir. He had a vision telling him to use his voice to ease his pain. His inspiration may have been divine but he chose to express himself in the earthy rhythms of American hip-hop. When Jal started rapping in church, the congregation wasn't so

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<sup>3</sup> Reproduced by kind permission of TIME Magazine.

sure. But in 2004, when he released his single *Gua*, on which he raps in Arabic, English, Dinka and his native Nuer, all of Kenya went crazy for it; it stayed at Number 1 there for eight weeks. Although Jal is widely described as a Christian rapper, he dreams of secular peace in Sudan, of a day "*When my people will plant seed in their land/ When my people will be free in the land.*"

That message resonated with Abdel Gadir Salim, a 58-year-old traditional Arab singer and *oud* (a type of lute) player from northern Sudan whose own fight for freedom — that of musical expression under Shari'a law — has also been bloody: he was injured by a knife-wielding Islamic militant in 1994. Salim invited Jal to collaborate with him on *Ceasefire* — 10 songs that reach across their religious, cultural and age divides. On *Lemon Bara*, Salim sings like a poet of "tears that water the drought," while Jal rides the percussion of *Aiwa* with the rap, "If you got love, you got the victory." Together on *Ya Salam*, they greet Sudan's fragile new peace as a time to draw breath.

Sung in the many tongues of Africa, wedding ancient rhythms to modern youthful optimism, *Ceasefire* is a reminder that peace needs open ears as well as open wallets. It helps that it's also one of the freshest and funkier albums around.

#### Questions for Emmanuel Jal

**Do you have any happy memories from childhood?** My earliest memories are from five when it used to be my whole family, when there was war running here and there. I used to hear that so-and-so died. As a child, I didn't know what they mean by "to die." So I grew up in a place where people used to die all the time but a child is not allowed to see a dead body. When you ask "where is so-and so?" you're told he's gone to another world where we all go to live in the future. There are no happy memories — everything was just violence, trauma, war. That's what I remember.

**What was your first experience of battle?** I did a "soft one" at the age of nine. We stayed near a village and we would sometimes go and steal their animals — we would practice like we were going to fight. Those are the terrible things kids would do. Then we would dig a pit and bury the cow or the sheep in the sand along the river and sit on top. The owner would ask you, "Did you see my cow?" and we'd be sitting on top of it saying "No." Then at night we'd take it to the camp. When the villagers discovered, they attacked us. It was terrible because they killed some of us. But we managed to burn all their villages which was really bad. That was my first experience as a fighter and everyone was like "Yeah! We are fighters now." Then we went to defend Ethiopia from being overthrown. But we lost the battle and had to make our way to the south. Thousands died in the river because they didn't know how to swim. One group walked to Kenya but I ended up in Juba in south Sudan. That's where the most terrifying events took place. Young people are so brave when they go to fight. Before, you are afraid, but when you shoot you get that strength. What they don't know is, you can die at once.

**Did you know what you were fighting for?** Yes. For freedom. Because the government of Sudan was oppressive. They brought in Shari'a law in Sudan, which means if you're not a Muslim you are considered an unbeliever and you don't get a good job. There was slavery; if you were black you were meant to be their servants. That's what I knew. When the SPLA [split into] factions, that's when I lost the motivation to fight for them, because we were fighting each other.

**Were you a devout Christian back then?** For many Sudanese it's for strength they choose to be Christian rather than Muslim. My mum was a Muslim but she became a Christian later. In our terrible times she used to pray when we ran, and she told us, "Don't worry, it's OK. There is someone called God watching over us." So [in my terrible time] I remember saying, "God of My Mum take care of me." That's where my belief became strong.

**When did you start making music?** In 2000 in church, because that's where there was hope. I looked at my life and I said, "I've been in hell and I'm told there's another. Why choose that when I have another option?" So I used to go to church and joined the gospel choir. We put on concerts in church and the school. Then I started to rap. People would come and watch. At first they resist, but then they like it. Rap was only just growing in Nairobi then. Now it is strong.

**Do you find it ironic that rap music is often associated with guns and violence?** I've seen those people. They have so much hatred and bitterness. A lot of them want to fight an enemy they can't see, so they end up being violent to anyone around. That's because they were slaves, in poverty and in a violent place. For me, I had the same violence, the same bitterness, but it changed. I was influenced by the Christian belief that you must forgive your enemy. But also by people like Nelson Mandela, he suffered so much but he still had to speak the word of peace and what he spoke is healing South Africa now. You have to give your enemy security, for them to trust you. Because they're insecure, they think you'll take what they have.

**You now do a lot of work for charities trying to do good things in Africa. What will make a real difference for the continent? And what part can you play in that?** Maybe I can make a difference because when they hear the voice of someone who has suffered, people will be willing to give more help. But the main thing is, I want Africa to participate in fair trade. And debt cancellation should be done too, because Africa can't afford to pay if there's no fair trade. The world owes Africa a lot, but they can't pay back for the pain they've caused. ... And I want to start a campaign to end corruption in Kenya [where Jal now lives] telling everyone it's all our responsibility. Because if we don't, it will kill Kenya. Kenya will go down.

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## UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL

### ARMED GROUPS AND RESOLUTION 1612

By Enrique Restoy <sup>4</sup>

**In July 2005, the United Nations Security Council adopted resolution 1612.<sup>5</sup> This resolution represents an important step towards carrying out effective measures against child recruiters and violators of the rights of children in armed conflict by creating a Monitoring and Research Mechanism (MRM). The Security Council has been playing a pivotal role in reducing child recruitment by government armed forces across the world, but, how effective can resolution 1612 be in addressing child recruitment by armed opposition groups**

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<sup>4</sup> Enrique Restoy is Programme Manager at the International Secretariat of the Child Soldiers Coalition. This article is an extract of a larger presentation that can be obtained by contacting [regiona@child-soldiers.org](mailto:regiona@child-soldiers.org)

<sup>5</sup> Resolution 1612 (2005). Adopted by the Security Council at its 5235<sup>th</sup> meeting, on 26 July 2005. United Nations S/RES/1612 (2005)

## **while protecting children, communities and humanitarian agencies on the ground?**

### **The challenge of child recruitment by armed groups**

The nature of today's conflicts is changing rapidly; wars between countries are less frequent than in previous eras and now constitute less than 5% of armed conflicts.<sup>6</sup> The Coalition's research shows that in 2004, up to 70 per cent of the world's child soldiers were involved with a range of non-state armed groups, mostly fighting in opposition to government forces. The research also found that while the recruitment and use of children in official armed forces declined between 2001 and 2004, tens of thousands continued to be involved in a variety of armed opposition groups.<sup>7</sup>

The phenomenon of child recruitment by armed groups (as by government armed forces) however, needs to be analysed from three different angles: as a human rights violation, as a humanitarian question, and as a wider developmental question.

The treatment of child recruitment as a human rights abuse or violation that must be combated, and its perpetrators punished according to international standards of justice, poses a major challenge when dealing with recruitment by armed groups in ongoing conflicts. Concentrating on child recruitment exclusively as a human rights violation in ongoing conflicts would ignore the other two dimensions of child recruitment and could endanger the security of children within the ranks of armed groups or forces, other children and their communities, and humanitarian workers.

The use of children by armed groups is also undoubtedly a humanitarian question. When children are released from an armed group there is a long list of humanitarian needs to be covered from providing shelter and food, to tracing the children's families, to psychosocial support. But demobilisation of children never happens without the approval of the armed group. This means humanitarian organisations need to engage with armed groups on the ground in order to carry out their work of providing protection to vulnerable groups, securing a "humanitarian space", and promoting respect for humanitarian principles, regardless of any political or judicial action taken against child recruiters.

Child recruitment must also be seen as part of a larger developmental question: it can be both the cause and the consequence of a breach in the right to development - a breach of economic, social and cultural rights as well as civil and political rights. While child recruitment always means the commission of a crime by the recruiter, it is often the consequence of a series of factors and not just a unilateral action by the recruiter.

Although there are cases of widespread abduction, like the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in Uganda, it is important to note that on many occasions child recruitment, especially of adolescents, is voluntary. In such cases it frequently follows a series of breaches of the rights of the child, which are often the same factors that gave rise to the creation of an armed group in the first place. The range of causal factors is wide

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<sup>6</sup> Human Security Report, University of British Columbia. October 2005. [www.humansecurityreport.info](http://www.humansecurityreport.info)

<sup>7</sup> The Child Soldiers Global Report 2004, published by the Coalition, documented children's involvement in armed conflict in more than 20 countries and territories where hostilities occurred between April 2001 and March 2004. Between those dates, children under the age of 18 (under-18s) were involved with armed opposition groups in Afghanistan, Angola, Burundi, Chad, Central African Republic, Colombia, Côte D'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Guinea, India, Iraq, Occupied Palestinian Territories, Indonesia, Liberia, Myanmar, Nepal, Philippines, Republic of Congo, Russian Federation, Rwanda, Sri Lanka, Somalia, Sudan and Uganda.

and includes widespread poverty, lack of education, privation of civil rights, exclusion, marginalisation, humiliation and displacement.

Stopping voluntary recruitment is mostly a question of prevention: it is a matter of development and human rights in its broader conception and not only a fight against impunity for those who recruit. It requires demobilisation, rehabilitation and reintegration programs as well as prevention programmes for the long term. These should go beyond the humanitarian notion and start addressing the issue of development. By mitigating the breach of children's right to development, such programs will give children alternatives to being actively involved in armed conflict.

### **The Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism in Resolution 1612**

All three dimensions of child recruitment by armed groups - human rights, humanitarian and the right to development - need to be taken into account in a holistic way if we really want to end the use of child soldiers in the long run. How does the action of the UNSC address the multifaceted nature of child recruitment by armed groups?

Resolution 1612 inherits the spirit of previous UNSC resolutions which were based on plans for dialogue and naming and shaming.<sup>8</sup> This latest resolution contains three major points emerging from the 2005 Secretary General's Report to the Security Council: a proposal for a research and monitoring mechanism, dialogue, and an action plan.<sup>9</sup>

The landmark of Resolution 1612 is a comprehensive Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM) to record six grave violations committed against children in armed conflict, including the recruitment of children in armed forces and armed groups. It includes a Task Force on Monitoring and Reporting on the ground (TF) led by UN representatives (UNICEF and the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary General) but with the participation of other UN agencies, NGOs and community based organisations. The task force will aim to obtain timely information on violations against children including the use of child soldiers in areas of concern to the UN Security Council.

Another working group (WG) will be created within the UNSC made up of some of its members. It will make recommendations to the UNSC based on the information furnished by the task forces in the field to the UN Headquarters. There is no room for international or local NGOs to influence either the reports given to the working group within the UNSC or the recommendations made by the working group to the UNSC.

The mechanism is expected to be implemented in a first phase in Burundi, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia and Sudan; it is possible that Nepal and Sri Lanka will be added to that list.

The MRM could represent a major qualitative change for the international humanitarian organisations and local organisations who are asked to join the mechanism. In practice, they are being asked to add to their humanitarian character the monitoring and reporting kind of work carried out by human rights organisations.

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<sup>8</sup> The United Nations Secretary General's report to the UNSC prior to resolution 1612 identified 42 parties in 11 countries for violating international laws banning the recruitment of child soldiers. Of these, 30 had been listed at least once in previous UNSC Secretary General's reports to the UNSC. 21 Twenty-one have been listed in each of his last three reports. Among the 21 three-time repeat offenders only two governments were identified: the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Myanmar (Burma).

<sup>9</sup> See Report of the Secretary General of 9 February 2005. United Nations (S/2005/72)

This means that while trying to preserve their perceived neutrality and impartiality in the field, these organisations will be identified as taking part in a mechanism of denunciation that will be the basis for political action against the very people with whom they are constantly engaged to secure their humanitarian work. This identification could be potentially dangerous for these organisations, especially since the mechanism does not allow organisations in the field to participate in the final recommendations for action to the UNSC.

At ground level, the Coalition is concerned about how the mechanism will interact with the humanitarian aspect of child soldiers: will it prompt humanitarian agencies to respond to the violations they are reporting and support their efforts to protect children and their communities from these violations? Most local organisations have to live in contact with armed groups on a daily basis: how are security and confidentiality going to be guaranteed for those local organisations that will take part in the task force? How are they going to be financially and technically supported for being part of the task force? What is their power to influence the outcome of the research that the TF will compile?

### **A mechanism to trigger appropriate and effective action?**

Resolution 1612 states that the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism “will not prejudice or imply” a decision by the UNSC as to whether or not include a situation on its agenda. The agenda is actually not just the result of a straightforward analysis of the situations where children are most vulnerable to armed conflict; other considerations inherent to the nature of the UNSC apply. These include the likelihood of the conflict to spread to or destabilise other states, and whether key UNSC members are likely to strongly oppose action in certain situations. This explains the non-inclusion on the agenda of the UNSC of Northern Ireland and Chechnya, due to the opposition of Great Britain and the Russian Federation respectively.

To date and after five resolutions on the issue of Children in Armed Conflict, the UNSC has yet to take action of any sort against child recruiters.<sup>10</sup> The wording of Resolution 1612 is not reassuring in this case, since it makes no connection between the targeted measures to be considered by the UNSC and the recommendations to be submitted by the task force to the UNSC.

It is important to note, though, that the UNSC is not the only potential actor the Mechanism is supposed to approach. It is very positive that the resolution identifies other “destinations for action” to which the mechanism can provide information for timely action. These include national governments, regional and international organisations, the UN General Assembly, the Commission on Human Rights and the International Criminal Court.

The mechanism should also be useful for the task force at the country level, independently from its connection to the UN agencies’ headquarters and the UNSC. If it is designed properly, it could help international and local NGOs and UN agencies in the field to better coordinate their activities and allow for effective response to increase child protection.

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<sup>10</sup> Resolution 1539 contemplated the possibility of introducing targeted measures for those parties to conflict that refuse to collaborate in dialogue and the establishment and implementation of action plans. This resolution failed to establish clearly what measures and how, and when and against whom, they would apply. Resolution 1216 simply reiterated the UNSC intention to consider imposing targeted and graduated measures (once again with barely the same formulation as in resolution 1539).

## **Dialogue in resolution 1612**

Resolution 1612 requests the UN Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict (SRSG-CAC) or the UN Country Representative within the context of MRM to initiate contact with parties that recruit children and engage in dialogue to establish action plans to halt recruitment of child soldiers.

This dialogue, however, is limited by the UNSC itself: according to the resolution, dialogue “between UN entities and armed groups is limited to peace processes where they exist and in the context of cooperation between the UN and the concerned government”. This formulation bears an intrinsic problem: all dialogue with armed opposition groups is circumscribed to a context of collaboration with the government against whom they fight.

This statement also encapsulates the problem of cooperation with armed groups within the UNSC resolutions. There are many areas where peace processes have stalled, like Colombia, Uganda or Nepal, but where child recruitment continues. In those areas, dialogue and negotiation is being carried out by local NGOs and humanitarian agencies, as it is essential from the humanitarian point of view in order to secure the release of child soldiers and facilitate their reintegration. Such initiatives seem to be below the radar of the UNSC but need to be taken into account when applying targeted measures against recruiters under the MRM.

The Dialogue component of the latest resolution is inherited from previous UNSC resolutions on children in armed conflicts (1539, 1416, 1379), which have alternated measures to enhance dialogue with armed forces and groups to stop recruitment and collaborate in the demobilisation and reintegration of child soldiers with coercive measures aimed at stopping recruitment. These measures have fallen short until now: commitments by armed groups to stop child recruitment were all made to the UNSR-CAC before 2000 and have not been followed up, and focal points for dialogue have not been properly established.

## **Action plans in resolution 1612**

Action plans were initially introduced in Resolution 1539 (2004). Parties reported as recruiting children were called upon to prepare time-bound action plans under the monitoring of the Secretary General. Resolution 1612 “expresses serious concerns regarding the lack of progress in development and implementation of these action plans.”

The resolution mentions briefly that the UNSC urges “all parties concerned” to support the development of national institutions for child protection and rehabilitation; it also mentions that the UNSC urges member states and others to take measures against cross-border illicit activities harmful to children, such as the illicit trade in small arms, or abduction for recruitment. But it is the action plans that should reflect the three aspects of child soldier use - human rights violations, humanitarian and development. They should make concrete time-bound provisions for all parties involved in these areas, including UN agencies, the government and other states.

In devising action plans, it is not only the armed group that has a responsibility to act. From the humanitarian point of view, implementing agencies, institutions and the government need to explain their plans for the demobilisation and proper rehabilitation and reintegration of children. Humanitarian agencies and donor governments have the responsibility to make public their provisions for that job to be done professionally and with sufficient resources. The longer perspective is excluded

in the terminology of action plans, but tackling the root causes of child recruitment in the longer term should also be an integral part of them. Humanitarian agencies, governments and donors have to share the responsibility of delivering effective prevention programmes.

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## **ACTION APPEAL**

### **INDONESIA: PROPER DEMOBILIZATION AND REINTEGRATION OF CHILD SOLDIERS IS VITAL**

**Following the loss of life and destruction caused by the tsunami that hit Indonesia on 26 December 2004, the inhabitants of the northern province of Aceh renewed their calls for an end to the armed conflict there as an integral element in the reconstruction and rehabilitation of the province. New peace talks between the armed opposition group “Free Aceh Movement” (*Gerakan Aceh Merdeka*, GAM) and the Indonesian Government began in Finland in early 2005 and a new peace deal was signed on 15 August 2005.**

**The Indonesian government now has a unique opportunity, through the implementation of the peace treaty, to ensure that all children involved in the armed conflict in Aceh are effectively demobilized and reintegrated into civilian life.**

### **Background**

Twelve thousand people, mostly civilians, have been killed during the past 30 years as a result of the armed conflict between the Indonesian armed forces and the Free Aceh Movement (*Gerakan Aceh Merdeka*, GAM) in the northern province of Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam (commonly known as Aceh). Around 500 schools have been burned, and health and sanitation services have been continuously disrupted. Serious human rights violations, including arbitrary detention, torture and killing of people suspected of being GAM supporters have been widespread. The Indonesian government has failed to provide basic education, housing and health for thousands of families displaced by the conflict. Children, as in many other parts of the world, have been caught in the middle of the armed hostilities.

Indonesia has yet to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, which it signed on 24 September 2001. In 2002 it enacted the “Republic of Indonesia Law No 23 of 2002 on Child Protection” (also known as the Child Protection Act) providing a general framework to ensure the rights and welfare of children and also affording special protection to children who are victims of abuse, neglect, discrimination or violence.

Article 15 of the Child Protection Act states that every child shall be entitled to protection from being misused for political activities and from involvement in armed conflict, in social unrest, in an event that involves violence or in war. Furthermore, Article 63 states that “[a]ll persons shall be prohibited from recruiting or equipping children for military or similar purposes, and from putting the lives of children in danger.” Article 59 establishes that “the government or an authorized state institution shall be responsible and accountable for providing special protection to children in

emergency situations..." and including children "who find themselves in the midst of armed conflicts" (Art. 60).<sup>11</sup>

Despite the existence of special protection measures in national Indonesian legislation, children have continued to be used in the conflict. There are reports that boys and girls aged between 14 and 17 years were involved in the GAM at the time of Martial Law in Aceh (2003-2004).<sup>12</sup> Boys have been used as informants, to run errands, for logistical support, as cooks and messengers. Some were reportedly asked to steal weapons from military posts, throw hand grenades and burn schools. In June 2003, members of a military unit detained two teenagers for allegedly attempting to set fire to a school. The youths later reportedly claimed to have burned 60 schools after being forced to join GAM. A 14-year old boy was arrested holding a grenade in 2004.<sup>13</sup>

Following the loss of life and destruction caused by the tsunami that hit Aceh on 26 December 2004, the inhabitants of Aceh renewed their calls for peace as an integral element in the reconstruction and rehabilitation of the province. According to Indonesian Vice-president Dr H Muhammad Jusuf Kalla, "the people of Indonesia cannot waste time to resolve the conflict in Aceh by war."<sup>14</sup> In early 2005, new peace talks between GAM and the Indonesian Government began in Finland.

The key points of the peace agreement signed on 15 August 2005 include the following provisions:

- Cessation of hostilities;
- Withdrawal of non-organic military and police forces from Aceh by the end of 2005;
- Disarmament and demobilization of around 3,000 GAM forces;
- Facilitation of the establishment of Aceh-based political parties within the year;
- Introduction of a new law by March 2006 to govern Aceh;
- Demobilization of GAM members and release of political prisoners within 15 days of signing the agreement;
- Establishment of a human rights court and truth and reconciliation commission;
- Creation of an Aceh Monitoring Mission with the participation of representatives from the European Union and ASEAN countries.

The peace agreement does not mention the issue of child soldiers. Although there are provisions for the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of GAM forces, there are no specific provisions for children who have been involved in the conflict on either side.

Although Indonesian authorities have continuously denied the existence of under-age political detainees, at the time of writing – according to reports - more than 30 children are in detention charged with several "subversive" crimes.<sup>15</sup> According to

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<sup>11</sup> Republic of Indonesia Law No. 23 of 2002 on Child Protection, [http://www.rn.go.id/produk\\_uu/isi/uu2002/uu23'02.htm](http://www.rn.go.id/produk_uu/isi/uu2002/uu23'02.htm) (in Bahasa Indonesian). English translation provided by the Ministry of Women Empowerment, Indonesia.

<sup>12</sup> Communication from Coalition partners in Indonesia, September 2005.

<sup>13</sup> See Indonesia entry, Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, Child Soldiers Global Report 2004: <http://www.child-soldiers.org/global-reports>.

<sup>14</sup> See <http://www.acehkita.com/content.php?op=modload&name=berita&file=view&coid=895&lang=2>

<sup>15</sup> Farid, Mohammad (National Human Rights Commission of Indonesia), Civil Society Consultation on Children Involved in Armed Conflict in Aceh at Coalition workshop, Medan, Indonesia, 7 September 2005.

some sources, they were intimidated and scolded during court hearings, parents were not allowed to be present nor were they informed about developments in their child's case. Some children from Aceh had been detained in other provinces.<sup>16</sup>

After the signing of the peace agreement, the government granted amnesty to many prisoners, including children who had been convicted of committing "subversive" acts, including involvement in activities supporting the GAM.<sup>17</sup>

Indonesian non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have strongly urged the Indonesian government and GAM to make sure that all children involved in the armed conflict are included in the list of 3,000 GAM members to be disarmed and demobilized.<sup>18</sup> The Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers believes that the demobilization of child soldiers should not end with their release but should include a comprehensive programme to advance their prompt reintegration into community life.

According to initial agreements between the government and some international organizations, demobilized (amnestied) soldiers will receive a reintegration package of supplies including clothing, food, school and hygiene kits, household goods and recreational items.<sup>19</sup>

Some NGOs have criticized the reintegration package, pointing out there are no provisions for psycho-social support and counselling, quality education including peace education or opportunities for employment for demobilized soldiers, including children. These are essential to aid a lasting and peaceful transition to civilian life.

The Coalition also believes that the Indonesian government should adopt effective and immediate measures to protect children from being recruited or re-recruited by any armed group such as the GAM.

### **Model letter**

Please use the letter below to write to President Yudhoyono, expressing your concerns about the proper demobilization and reintegration of children involved in the armed conflict in Aceh.

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[your name and address]

[date]

Dear President Yudhoyono,

I welcome the Indonesian Government's commitment to restore peace and initiate reconstruction in Aceh as manifested through the signing of the peace accord with the Free Aceh Movement (GAM). The decades-long conflict had created a situation of fear and insecurity among the people of Aceh, with an increasing number of serious human rights violations being reported.

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<sup>16</sup> South East Asia Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, Civil Society Consultation on Children Involved in Armed Conflict in Aceh, Medan, Indonesia, 7 to 8 September 2005.

<sup>17</sup> Coalition communication with Mr. Hafid Abbas, Director General, Directorate for Human Rights Protection, Department of Justice and Human Rights of Indonesia, 28 September 2005.

<sup>18</sup> Recommendations at the Civil Society Consultation on Children Involved in Armed Conflict in Aceh, Medan, Indonesia, 7 to 8 September 2005.

<sup>19</sup> Confidential source, October 2005.

The recently adopted UN Security Council Resolution 1612 (2005) “calls upon all parties to ensure that the protection, rights and well-being of children affected by armed conflict are specifically integrated into all peace processes, peace agreements and post-conflict recovery and reconstruction planning and programmes.”

The peace agreement has no specific provisions to protect or respect children or ensure that their rights are fulfilled. The agreement is silent on instructing either party to demobilize and reintegrate children involved in the conflict into civilian society. Hence, I am concerned about the extent to which the agreement will positively impact the lives of children, particularly those who have been involved in the conflict in Aceh.

The granting of amnesties to some children allegedly associated with the GAM is welcome and should be sustained. I urge the government to ensure that children who were involved in combat and non-combat roles in the GAM are included in the demobilization process. Children who have been associated with the government armed forces and militia-groups should also be traced and demobilized.

These children should be given appropriate psycho-social support to resume normal lives. The government has the duty to ensure these children have access to formal or vocational training and receive livelihood support and counselling to foster healing and reconciliation.

Consistent with the spirit of the Child Protection Law (No 23/2002), children who have been recruited, used or involved in the conflict by government armed forces, militia groups or non-state armed groups should be viewed as victims and not as offenders. I urge the Indonesian government to review and amend existing laws penalizing children who have been involved in the activities of separatist or insurgent groups.

In relation to this, I also appeal to the government to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, to reinforce existing legal and other measures to protect children from the impact of armed conflict.

I look forward to the effective and serious implementation of the agreed political, economic, social and security reforms by both parties, which the children of Aceh deserve.

Sincerely,

[your name]

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Address your letter to:

H E Dr H. Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono  
President  
Republic of Indonesia  
c/o Department of Foreign Affairs  
Jalan Taman Pejambon No 6,  
Jakarta, Indonesia 10110  
Fax +6221-3855481

Copies to:

Dr Makarim Wibisono  
Ambassador  
Permanent Mission of Indonesia  
16 rue de Saint-Jean  
1203 Geneva  
Fax +022-345-57-33

Mr Ariest Merdeka Sirait  
General Secretary  
National Commission for Child Protection  
Jl TB Simatupang No 33, Pasar Rebo, Jakarta Timur  
13760 Indonesia  
Fax +6221-8416158

Dr Meutia Hatta  
Minister  
Or  
Mrs Sumarni Dawam Rahardjo  
Deputy IV Children and Welfare Unit  
Ministry of Women's Empowerment  
Jl Merdeka Barat 15 Jakarta Indonesia  
Fax +6221-3805562

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## THE EXPERIENCE OF GENEVA CALL

### A DEED OF COMMITMENT FOR ARMED GROUPS TO STOP CHILD RECRUITMENT?

By Alexandra Boivin<sup>20</sup>

Since 2000, twenty-seven armed non-state actors (NSAs) from Africa, the Middle East and Asia have publicly committed to a total ban on anti-personnel mines promoted by Geneva Call.<sup>21</sup> This is significant when one considers that NSAs are important mine users and that many of them control large parts of mined territory where civilians live and work.<sup>22</sup> NSAs that have adhered to the mine ban have done so by signing a document that by and large replicates the obligations undertaken by States under the Mine Ban Treaty.<sup>23</sup> This document, which is known as Geneva Call's Deed of Commitment, derives some of its formality from the fact that, once signed, it is deposited with the Government of the Republic and Canton of Geneva.<sup>24</sup> Geneva Call identifies the NSAs, negotiates to obtain a commitment from them,

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<sup>20</sup> Alexandra Boivin is conducting a study on child soldiers and NSAs for Geneva Call with the financial support of the Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF).

<sup>21</sup> Geneva Call is an international humanitarian organisation dedicated to engaging armed non-state actors (NSAs) to respect and to adhere to humanitarian norms, starting with the ban on anti-personnel (AP) mines. Geneva Call is committed to the universal application of the principles of international humanitarian law and conducts its activities based on the principles of neutrality, impartiality and independence. For a list of signatories of the ban, see [www.genevacall.org](http://www.genevacall.org).

<sup>22</sup> A recent study that covers the period 2003 to mid-2005 identifies 43 NSAs and 10 states as users of antipersonnel mines. *Armed Non-State Actors and Landmines*, Geneva: Geneva Call and the Programme for the Study of International Organizations, 2005 (forthcoming).

<sup>23</sup> Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction, 18 September 1997.

<sup>24</sup> *Deed of Commitment under Geneva Call for Adherence to a Total Ban on Anti-Personnel Mines and for Cooperation in Mine Action* (Deed of Commitment). Text available online: [www.genevacall.org](http://www.genevacall.org).

supports the implementation of this commitment, and raises the profile of the landmine issue in NSA-controlled territories.

The organisation was officially launched in 2000 and ever since it has promoted an inclusive approach to armed groups and international humanitarian norms. This approach seeks to complement advocacy and engagement efforts aimed at states. It also allows for a platform of dialogue, and ultimately it provides NSAs with a mechanism for making humanitarian norms their own.

In the early stages of the organisation there was some scepticism regarding the idea of entering into formal dialogue with armed groups and engaging them in a process that comes close to an area traditionally understood as the prerogative of states. While some international humanitarian law treaties explicitly allow NSAs to express their consent to be bound by their terms, this mechanism is generally reserved for a specific category of groups.<sup>25</sup> The Mine Ban Treaty contains no such provision. Thus, not only does Geneva Call complement the international legal framework by providing NSAs with a mechanism for adhering to a specific set of international norms, but it also widens the category of groups affected by opening the process to a more broadly defined notion of NSA.<sup>26</sup>

### **From landmines to child recruitment**

In November 2004, Geneva Call convened a meeting of signatories to the Deed of Commitment in order to discuss a number of issues relating to the implementation and monitoring of commitments, including the value of extending Geneva Call's approach to other humanitarian issues, such as child recruitment, torture and the prohibition of other indiscriminate weapons.<sup>27</sup> In part as a result of this consultation, Geneva Call decided to conduct a study on child soldiers to assess whether or not it would be relevant for the organisation to develop a Deed of Commitment around the issue of child recruitment. The findings of the study will also feed into the research phase of a three-year project on armed opposition groups and child recruitment initiated by the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers.

Assessing the feasibility of extending Geneva Call's approach to the ban on child recruitment raises a certain number of questions. First, it is important to explore the legal and political distinction between the norm that prohibits landmines and the norm that prohibits the use of child soldiers. Some of the issues to consider in this respect are:

- the difference in the international legal frameworks applicable to landmines and child recruitment;
- the political sensitivity and profile of the child soldier prohibition as compared with the mine ban;

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<sup>25</sup> Those specific groups are authorities representing a people "fighting against colonial domination and alien occupation and against racist regimes in their exercise of their right of self-determination". See Article 1(4) of Additional Protocol I of 1977 to the Geneva Conventions of 1949.

<sup>26</sup> For Geneva Call, NSAs include any armed actor operating outside state control that uses force to achieve its political or quasi-political objectives. This definition encompasses groups that act as *de facto* government authorities without benefiting from recognised statehood. For a recent analysis of Geneva Call's approach to NSAs and humanitarian norms, see "Non-State Actors in Times of Armed Conflict", in A. Clapham, *Human Rights Obligations of Non-State Actors*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005 (forthcoming).

<sup>27</sup> See "Armed Non-State Actors and International Humanitarian Norms: First Meeting of Signatories to Geneva Call's Deed of Commitment", Geneva, 31 October to 2 November 2004, available online: [www.genevacall.org](http://www.genevacall.org).

- the relevance of targeting recruiters when there are many other actors that influence the fact that children end up in the ranks of an armed group;
- whether or not there is a knowledge gap among recruiters regarding the humanitarian impact of involving children in an armed struggle;
- the role of international criminal law in framing the issue and in framing interactions with recruiters.

Second, there are questions regarding the organisations that have so far been actively engaged with NSAs, many of whom are non-governmental organisations working on child protection issues in areas that are completely or partially controlled by NSAs. Such organisations have no choice but to interact with the armed groups in order to pursue their child protection programmes. Understanding the challenges they face and finding out from them whether a formal commitment made by the group would facilitate their work is one of the objectives pursued by our study.

A third set of questions addressed by the study concerns the incentives that NSAs might have for agreeing to commit not to recruit children. In Geneva Call's experience, there are numerous factors that explain why groups are willing to sign the Deed of Commitment. It is overly simplistic to state that NSAs are keen to take any step that might raise their profile or might appear to improve the legitimacy of their struggle. This is certainly one of the factors that positively influence NSAs, indeed it is a factor that influences most political actors including states when they decide to adhere to a treaty. However, there are many other factors to consider, such as the prospect of attracting attention and resources for landmine victims in the regions in which NSAs operate.

What needs to be explored in the context of child recruitment is whether better prospects for the children – through, for instance, demobilization, rehabilitation and reintegration programs that are well administered and properly funded – can constitute an incentive for NSAs to adhere to the norm. Part of this answer can only be found by having an open discussion with the NSAs themselves.

A clear conclusion emerges: the issue of child recruitment by armed groups is multi-faceted and challenging in ways that the landmine issue is not. If Geneva Call were to conclude that it should develop a Deed of Commitment on the issue, this would have to be done in close consultation with the relevant stakeholders and involve considerable input from child protection agencies and non-governmental organisations.

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## EUROPEAN UNION GUIDELINES ON CHILDREN IN ARMED CONFLICT

### WILL THE EU TAKE EFFECTIVE ACTION ON GOVERNMENTS AND ARMED GROUPS?

By Martin Nagler<sup>28</sup>

**The European Union (EU) adopted its Guidelines on Children and Armed Conflict in December 2003 to help protect children from the effects of armed conflict, including from being recruited and used as soldiers. The EU aims to “influence third countries and non-state actors to implement international human rights norms [...] and to take effective measures to protect children from the effects of armed conflict, to end the use of children in armies and armed groups, and to end impunity.”<sup>29</sup>**

**How effective have the EU Guidelines been in putting policy into practice and marking a significant change towards an “era of application” in the field of Children and Armed Conflict? In what way can the EU influence armed opposition groups to help make this happen?<sup>30</sup>**

To answer these questions we will first analyse the two years since the adoption of the EU Guidelines to see if the EU has delivered on the commitment it made in adopting the Guidelines. Secondly we will be looking at the avenues that the EU has to influence armed groups that are not under the direct control of any government.

#### **The first two years since the adoption of the EU Guidelines**

The Guidelines on Children and Armed Conflict were the first specific EU policy strategy on children. They do not introduce new policies but aim at mainstreaming the rights of children affected by armed conflict throughout the EU policy agenda. “The EU will build on existing initiatives in order to consolidate, strengthen and advance EU actions for children affected by armed conflict”.<sup>31</sup> The Guidelines foresee various areas for EU involvement including monitoring and reporting, assessment and recommendations for action, as well as tools for action in relations with third countries. The tools for action include political dialogue, *démarches*, funding for projects such as DDR through multilateral co-operation, crisis management, training and other measures such as the imposition of targeted sanctions.

#### THE COALITION'S ACTION APPEAL TO THE EU

As with many other policy strategies, there is a danger that the EU Guidelines on Children and Armed Conflict will remain a paper document that is never acted upon.

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<sup>28</sup> Martin Nagler is the European Union Outreach Officer at the Child Soldiers Coalition.

<sup>29</sup> EU Guidelines on Children and Armed Conflict, Art. 6. The EU's Guidelines are available at: <http://ue.eu.int/uedocs/cmsUpload/GuidelinesChildren.pdf>.

<sup>30</sup> Olara Otunnu, *Making the 'era of application' a reality for war-affected children*, Statement before the Security Council, New York 20 January 2004.

<sup>31</sup> EU Guidelines on Children and Armed Conflict, Part C.

Since the adoption of the Guidelines, the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers has raised that concern and made concrete proposals as to how the guidelines could be improved, for instance by appealing for an EU Special Representative on Children and Armed Conflict.<sup>32</sup> The Coalition has recently launched a new campaign to coincide with the two-year review that the EU Presidency, currently held by the United Kingdom, is undertaking to assess the implementation of the EU Guidelines on Children and Armed Conflict. The main objective of the campaign is to achieve better implementation of the EU Guidelines in order to finally “translate the general objective of the Guidelines into more concrete and practical EU involvement”, as the EU itself has stated.<sup>33</sup>

To join the action appeal, please log on to: [www.child-soldiers.org/coalition/action-appeals](http://www.child-soldiers.org/coalition/action-appeals)

Looking back at the two years since the adoption of the Guidelines shows that the outcomes are at best mixed. First of all, the Guidelines did not represent a sudden or dramatic change in the EU agenda. Before the Guidelines were drawn up, the EU already had a wide range of policy elements in place from which conflict-affected children benefited. In multilateral fora such as the UN Commission on Human Rights the EU Presidency had delivered statements on Children and Armed Conflict and had tabled resolutions on the issue. The Commission had funded projects, for example to support the demobilization and reintegration of child soldiers. These activities have continued after the adoption of the Guidelines, but without a significant rise in Commission funding for projects on Children and Armed Conflict. Additional activities since the adoption of the Guidelines have been more political than programmatic in nature. There is no doubt that the increased awareness within and outside the EU, and most of the recent political steps taken on children and armed conflict issues, are largely due to the existence of the Guidelines.

One of the first steps taken by the EU was to select a list of priority countries where the situation of children affected by armed conflict is particularly serious: Burundi, Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Liberia, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Sri Lanka, Sudan and Uganda. Afghanistan, Burma and Nepal were later added to the list.

The EU asked Heads of Mission in these countries to provide information for a survey on the situation of children affected by armed conflict and on the possibilities for both political and practical EU action. Unfortunately little input from civil society was sought and NGOs on the ground were not contacted in most cases, although they would have provided valuable information and improved the quality of the reporting.

In December 2004 the results of the survey were published in an EU Plan of Action, which suggested a division of labour building on the existing priorities of Member States. On the programmatic side, EU Member States would, in a self-selection process, agree to expand EU activities in one of the priority countries. On the political side, Member States would raise these issues in their bilateral contacts with the countries concerned, in EU dialogues with third countries and in EU action at the UN. The biggest disappointment about the Action Plan was its lack of implementation. To date, only the Netherlands has specified that it will focus on Northern Uganda to promote education to socially excluded adolescents in Internally Displaced People's

<sup>32</sup> See Coalition to stop the Use of Child Soldiers: Child Soldiers Newsletter 11/May 2004, p.8/9.

<sup>33</sup> Council of the European Union: EU Plan of Action 2004/2005 and Progress Review 2004 on the implementation of the EU Guidelines on Children and Armed Conflict, Council doc. 15957/04, p. 2.

camps in the north of the country. No other member state has stepped forward to take unilateral programmatic action.

Further political action was taken by means of *démarches* that have been carried out by EU Member States' diplomats in many of the countries prioritised by the EU. These official statements, which are in the majority of cases directed at the government of a third country, are confidential. They can differ enormously in nature: they can be on friendly terms, merely pointing out the dire situation of children in a country, or they can be much harsher, explicitly condemning a government for the use of child soldiers. Such *démarches* can only be useful if they are regularly followed up upon and if an evaluation of their impact is undertaken by the EU. At this point it is not at all clear how this follow up will be handled in the future.

In addition to the Heads of Missions of Member States, the Guidelines invite a number of EU institutions and actors to become involved, especially in the monitoring and reporting mechanism. On the basis of this involvement the EU can take further action if appropriate. The regional Special Representatives that the Council of the EU has appointed for various crisis regions of the world are specifically signalled in the Guidelines to take an active role. So far, only the mandate of the Special Representative for the Great Lakes has been amended to make specific reference to the Guidelines, and even in this case the degree of involvement in bringing up the issue with interlocutors on the ground is unclear. In other relevant situations where children are or have been affected by armed conflict, such as Afghanistan, Israel and the Palestinian Occupied Territories, Iraq and Sudan, Special Representatives have not been involved at all.

Despite important first steps in the right direction, the Guidelines have not so far met the expectations they raised when they were first adopted. In particular the question of the appointment of an EU Special Representative on Children and Armed Conflict, or another high-level focal point, has to be taken up. This point, which was mentioned in the Guidelines for subsequent discussion, has been strongly advocated by NGOs ever since the idea of the EU Guidelines first came on the agenda.

### **How should the EU address non-state armed groups?**

In the light of this, the question of how the EU could address and influence non-state armed groups is certainly one for future discussion. There are several possible avenues, given the variety of personal resources and tools at the EU's disposal.

In addition to 25 Member States with missions all over the world, the Commission has delegations in over 120 countries and the EU has Special Representatives for various crisis regions in the world. Therefore, the EU has, in principle, enough staff on the ground to become involved in discussions with armed opposition groups, many of which have political wings and aspire to be internationally recognised.

It is understandable that engaging with these groups is a very delicate matter for a supranational organisation that mostly deals with the governments of third countries and requires government consent when dealing with non-state entities. If an armed opposition group is classified as a terrorist organisation, or is likely to be in the near future, that automatically renders engagement much harder.<sup>34</sup>

However, the Guidelines on Children and Armed conflict do make reference to EU involvement with armed opposition groups. Activities of armed groups should be included in all the monitoring and reporting that the EU is undertaking. In addition to this, the Guidelines state that the EU "will make *démarches* and issue public

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<sup>34</sup> See for instance: Robert Riciliano: Engaging Armed Groups in Peace Processes, in: *Accord, an international review of peace initiatives*, Issue 16, 2005, p. 4.

statements urging relevant third countries to take effective measures to ensure the protection of children from the effects of armed conflict, to end the use of children in armies and armed groups, and to end impunity. The EU Special Representatives and Heads of Mission will be tasked to continue to address the matter with non-state actors where relevant.”<sup>35</sup>

The EU has, over the last year, started very cautiously to put this strategy into practice. The *démarche* that was made to Nepal not only included general reference to the effects of the conflict on children but also condemned the use of child soldiers by the Maoist armed opposition group.<sup>36</sup> It seems unlikely though, that EU diplomats have been in direct contact with the Maoists on this issue.

Things have evolved much more in this regard in the case of Sri Lanka, where the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) have repeatedly recruited children into their ranks. The EU did not carry out a *démarche* to the government of Sri Lanka but had some informal and highly confidential talks with the political wing of the LTTE on the ground. While the outcome of these talks is unknown, it is a very significant step towards influencing armed groups directly, and similar processes might be initiated with other non-state armed groups. After the recent killing of Sri Lanka’s Foreign Minister, Lakshman Kadirgamar, the EU not only condemned the continuing violence by the LTTE, including child recruitment, but agreed that LTTE delegations will be no longer received in any of the EU Member States until further notice.<sup>37</sup> This combination of informal talks and targeted measures might prove effective in the case of groups like the LTTE who are constantly seeking international recognition.

The EU Guidelines certainly have enormous potential to make a difference to children affected by war and the EU has tools at its disposal to influence both governments and non-state armed groups. To realise this potential the EU should use this year’s review of the Guidelines to extend the list of both conflicts and parties to conflict that will be approached under the Guidelines, encourage the wide use of the Guidelines across the EU, and make every effort to ensure that policy leads to effective practice on the ground.

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## CSC HIGHLIGHTS

### **GREAT LAKES REGIONAL COALITION: PLANS TO INCREASE THE CAPACITY TO MONITOR CHILD USE**

By Victoria Forbes Adam

CSC Great Lakes Programme Manager

For more information on the Great Lakes Coalition, please contact: [csc.gl@sciug.org](mailto:csc.gl@sciug.org)

In June, regional coordinator Henri Nzeyimana took part in a workshop on the protection of orphans and vulnerable children in celebration of the Day of the African Child. The workshop was organized by the Africa Union (AU) Commission in collaboration with the International Red Cross mission to the AU. The conference looked at how children become vulnerable to violence or exploitation and worked to define what is needed – in terms of laws and programs – to protect them.

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<sup>35</sup> EU Guidelines on Children and Armed Conflict, Art. 14.

<sup>36</sup> See Press release issued by the British Embassy in Kathmandu on 12 August 2005, available at: <http://www.ambkathmandu.um.dk/en>.

<sup>37</sup> See European Union Declaration condemning terrorism in Sri Lanka, issued by the UK Presidency of the EU on 29 September 2005, available at: <http://www.delika.cec.eu.int/en/>.

Henri Nzeyimana resigned his post at the end of August 2005 and has joined a Masters program on Human Rights and Democratization in Italy. Henri worked with dedication while on the Coalition's staff, and we wish him every success in his studies and future career.

During the second half of the year, planning began for a series of Coalition projects to be carried out by national coalitions in Burundi, DRC and Uganda over the next two years. The first project is to run a series of workshops in each country on how to monitor and report on child soldier use. In the second project Coalition members will work together to produce lively, accessible printed materials giving information on laws protecting against child recruitment, and recruitment prevention among other topics. The materials will be translated into local languages. The Coalition will also create radio programs in each country for transmission on community radio stations. The Great Lakes Programme Manager at the International Secretariat visited Burundi and the DRC in October to discuss the plans with Coalition members.

### **Burundi**

National Coalition members held discussions with the regional coordinator in June on priorities for child protection in Burundi. A key objective will be for the new Burundi government to adopt laws setting the minimum voluntary age for recruitment into the armed forces at 18 – promoting the “straight 18” position advocated by the Coalition. Coalition partners have stressed the need for a national debate on the need to protect children from involvement in armed conflict.

The Great Lakes Programme Manager met government representatives involved in DDR, UNICEF, and other UN officials in Bujumbura to discuss the Coalition's work and child soldier issues in Burundi. Ongoing child recruitment by the *Forces Nationales de Libération* (FNL) was one topic of major concern.

### **DRC**

In May, the DRC armed forces Chief of Staff issued a formal order to all military officers to refrain from recruiting under-18s. The order stated that military officials found responsible for child recruitment would face disciplinary action. The order – an important step forward – was partly a result of pressure exerted by the DRC Coalition and others campaigning to end child recruitment in the Congo.

In July, the DRC Coalition organized a meeting in Bukavu for local and international NGOs, UN agencies and others to evaluate the current situation of child soldiers in South Kivu province. Coalition members pledged to investigate reports of ongoing recruitment by armed groups in Uvira and to pressure army commanders to release any remaining child soldiers in their ranks.

DRC Coalition organizations have engaged in numerous activities in the wake of the 31 July assassination of Pascal Kabungulu, director of the human rights organization *Heritiers de la Justice* and an active Coalition member. They have advocated for a thorough investigation into the killing as well as strategies to protect human rights defenders.

The Great Lakes Programme Manager visited Bukavu in October. She met Coalition members, government officials involved in DDR, UNICEF and other UN officials and local journalists.

## **Uganda**

Plans were set in motion to run a campaign to raise awareness among local councillors in Northern Uganda about the legal prohibition on recruiting under-18s into the armed forces. Meetings will also be organized within local communities to discuss issues related to child recruitment.

## **SOUTH-EAST ASIA COALITION: INVOLVING CIVIL SOCIETY AND CHILDREN**

By Ryan Silverio

CSC South-East Asia Regional Coordinator

For more information on the South-East Asia Coalition, please contact:

[seacoordinatorchildsoldiers@yahoo.com](mailto:seacoordinatorchildsoldiers@yahoo.com)

In March 2005, the Executive Committee of the SEA Coalition met and discussed the priority actions for the year. In response, various workshops have been organized over the past few months by member organizations with the common objective of mobilizing specific groups; particularly NGOs, media and youth organizations.

## **Indonesia**

After years of fighting, the Indonesian government and the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) finally entered into a peace accord in August 2005. NGOs in Indonesia, however, were concerned because there was limited participation by civil society during the peace process. Also, there are substantive issues which are not addressed in the agreement, particularly strong child protection measures.

In response to this, the Regional Coalition organized the "Civil Society Consultation on Children Involved in Armed Conflict in Aceh" which was held in Medan, Indonesia on 7 and 8 September 2005. Various NGOs and media from Aceh and Medan participated in the meeting, which aimed to raise awareness of the Optional Protocol and to brainstorm possible directions for DDDR implementation after the signing of the peace agreement.

NGO participants saw the need to integrate the issue into existing community development programs such as peace education, research, and livelihood and psycho-social work. Research and documentation work that was stalled due to the tsunami has to be resumed with a focus on identifying and tracing children who were associated with both the Indonesian Armed Forces (TNI) and GAM. Advocacy work has to be strengthened to urge the Indonesian government to ratify the Optional Protocol, to ensure the demobilization of child soldiers, and to guarantee these children appropriate support to resume civilian lives.

There was also a similar initiative organized for young people on 5 September 2005. Sixteen young people from Aceh and Medan participated in the meeting, which was called "Youth Forum on Peace Building".

## **Philippines**

A youth camp on the theme "Strengthening the Participation and Resiliency of Children in Situations of Armed Conflict" was organized by the Philippine Human Rights Information Center on 12-14 May 2005. Around 90 children from various villages affected by the conflict in North Cotabato and Maguindanao participated in the activity. This workshop was also a way for PhilRights to present and validate the results of their research on child soldiers in the Philippines.

One of the results of the workshop is a children/youth statement which urges the government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) to reactivate and sustain the peace process. The statement also demanded the government fulfill its obligations to ensure educational support through scholarships for children in conflict areas who cannot go to school, and urged civil society to organize children in the communities.

## **Thailand**

Last August, two advocacy workshops were organized for NGOs and youth organizations from various provinces of Thailand. These workshops aimed to discuss and promote the Optional Protocol and to mobilize Thai civil society to support campaigning and lobbying work on the issue of child soldiers. These workshops were made possible with the support of the East Asia and Pacific Regional office of UNICEF.

Currently, an advocacy training module on child soldiers is being finalized. As recommended by the youth participants, this will be implemented through a “road show”, a series of workshops for young people from various provinces of Thailand.

## **Myanmar (Burma)**

Partner organizations working at the Thai-Burma border are currently implementing a project aiming to mobilize community leaders to enhance child protection mechanisms in the camps. There is also an attempt to develop a community-based DDDR framework.

Human Rights Education Institute in Burma (HREIB) continued dialogue with the Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP) to raise awareness of UN Security Council Resolution 1612 and to seek their cooperation in supporting its implementation, particularly on monitoring and research on abuses against children. The KNPP has stated that only 10 children remain in their ranks.

Human rights education work was sustained and targeted community-based organizations in different Karenni refugee camps in Mae Hong Son. These organizations include the Karenni Student Union, Karenni National Youth Organization, and Karenni Leadership School.

## **MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA NETWORK: ADVOCACY AS A PRIORITY**

CSC MENA Regional Coordinator: Nuha Ma'ayta

For more information on the MENA Network, please contact: [coordinator@child-soldiers-mena.org](mailto:coordinator@child-soldiers-mena.org) or visit [www.child-soldiers-mena.org](http://www.child-soldiers-mena.org)

The Middle East and North Africa Network to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers agreed to organise the next regional meeting around the theme of advocacy, focusing both on key governments in the region that have yet to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of Children in Armed Conflict, and on strategies to influence armed groups in the region. The meeting will take place in the second half of 2006 in Sana'a, Yemen.

The Palestine Section of Defence for Children International (DCI-PS), with the collaboration of the Child Soldiers Coalition, organised a seminar in Ramallah, the West Bank, in April titled: “Dealing with alleged child collaborators in the Occupied

Palestinian Territories (OPT) in the spirit of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.”

DCI-PS published a thorough study on the use of Palestinian Children in the Israel-Palestinian conflict in July 2004 with the support of the Child Soldiers Coalition. Among other aspects of the involvement of Palestinian children in the armed conflict, the document analyzed the practice and implications of the use of Palestinian Children as collaborators and informers by the Israeli forces and concluded that an integrated approach by key stakeholders in the OPT to end this practice was needed.

The Ramallah workshop came as a follow up to that study. DCI-PS took the initiative to convene this meeting with stakeholders in the West Bank to explore methods and procedures to strengthen the legal and social protection of Palestinian children who are accused of collaboration with the Israeli forces. Participants included the Palestinian Authority (Preventive Security Force, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Social Affairs, Ministry of Detainees), lawyers and scholars, local and international non governmental organizations, intergovernmental organizations in the West Bank, and members of civil society. The Coalition’s Programme Manager for the Middle East also attended the seminar.

As a result of the event, the Ministry of Education decided to introduce a module on the prevention and protection of alleged child collaborators in the syllabus of the summer camps organized by the Palestinian Authority.

**INTERNATIONAL COALITION:  
LAUNCH OF ARMED OPOSITION GROUPS AND CHILD RECRUITMENT  
PROJECT**

The Coalition’s new armed opposition group project aims to gain further insight into why armed opposition groups continue to recruit and use child soldiers, and to look for more effective strategies for ending the practice.

The core of the project will be an international forum, to be held in June 2006 in Geneva. The forum will bring together a broad range of invited participants including NGOs, UN and inter-governmental agencies, government representatives and academics with expertise in the field of armed groups, not only in relation to child soldiers. The project will also provide opportunities for coalition partner organizations to engage in this broader discussion.

In preparation for the forum, the Coalition will compile a document to be circulated in advance to participants. The report will be used as a resource tool to examine the various approaches to armed groups and to further develop strategies and methods of collaboration.

A series of action plans and strategies for collaborative action will be devised at the end of the week-long international forum, to be implemented over the following two years.

## **THE COALITION IN WEST AFRICA: SURVEY ON CHILD SOLDIERS PROGRAMMES**

CSC West Africa Project Manager: Guillaume Landry

For more information on West Africa, please contact Guillaume in Dakar:

[coalition@scswa.org](mailto:coalition@scswa.org)

The Coalition is finalising a survey and a database on organisations and programmes involving child soldiers and DDR in four countries of West Africa: Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea. The survey will map out which relevant international and local organisations carry out programmes in the field, in order to foster collaboration among them. The document will also be a tool for other stakeholders to describe the main challenges and needs these programmes are currently facing.

The Coalition now has a presence in West Africa. Guillaume Landry, the Coalition's new West Africa Project Manager, will liaise with Coalition members in the field to carry out the Coalition's advocacy and research work in the Region. The Coalition's regional office is hosted by the West Africa regional office of Save the Children Sweden in Dakar, Senegal.

The Coalition has also launched a programme to support an independent West Africa Network of Community Based Organisations to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers. The Network will be created in the first half of 2006 under the management of Christiana Solomon, and its secretariat will be based in Freetown, Sierra Leone.

## **LATIN AMERICAN COALITION: CHANGES IN THE REGIONAL SECRETARIAT**

By Claudia Ricca. Programme Manager for Latin America

For more information on the Latin American Coalition, please visit [www.cns.org.py](http://www.cns.org.py)

### **Borders Project**

Coalition members in Ecuador and Venezuela carried out research visits to their respective borders with Colombia, as part of the Coalition's Borders Project. Human Rights Watch researcher Mike Bochenek, lead project researcher and trainer, conducted a series of capacity building workshops in Quito and Caracas for Coalition members in March and April. Mike then led fact-finding missions to border areas in Ecuador and Venezuela, to obtain a better picture of the situation of boys and girls at risk of being recruited by armed opposition groups and other armed units operating in Colombia and border areas. The visits were made possible by the generous assistance of the Swedish and Finnish Governments.

A final report of the research is being produced by the Colombian, Ecuadorean and Venezuelan Coalitions, with the assistance of the International Secretariat.

### **Changes in the Latin American Coalition**

In September, we said goodbye to Andrés Vázquez, our long standing Regional Coordinator and a good friend of the Coalition. Following changes to the way we are running regional programmes, the Coalition will now be working on specific national and regional projects with target organizations and Coalitions.

Andrés's enthusiasm and initiative supported the emergence of a new Coalition in Ecuador and the continuing work of the Paraguayan and Peruvian Coalitions. We wish him well in all his future endeavours.

## **Colombia**

The Colombia Coalition (Coalico) has produced an alternative report for the Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC), to be considered at the May 2006 session when the Colombian Government's Third Periodic Report will be discussed. The report (in Spanish) is available from Coalico ([coalico@elsitio.net.co](mailto:coalico@elsitio.net.co)).

In September, Coalico organized a regional training workshop with the Center for Justice and International Law (Cejil) on the Inter American system of human rights and the Organization of American States. Members of our Coalitions in Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Paraguay and Peru attended the workshop. For more information on the outcome of this training or to learn more about the work of Coalico, please visit their website ([www.coalico.org](http://www.coalico.org)) or contact them at [coalico@elsitio.net.co](mailto:coalico@elsitio.net.co).

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## **EDITORIAL: SOUND BASIS FOR NEW CHALLENGES**

As many of you know, I am leaving the Coalition after three and a half intense and exciting years in the Director's seat.

During my tenure, the Coalition has supported innovative research and other project work carried out by our members and partners, published its worldwide survey in the *Child Soldiers Global Report 2004*, put the issue firmly on the UN Security Council's agenda for action and reminded the European Union member states of their own commitments to promote the end of child soldiering in their relationships abroad.

I am pleased to leave this alliance at a high point in growth, activities and financial stability. The Coalition also has a firm sense of the new challenges it faces as a global movement. None are bigger than the use of children by wary, often difficult to reach, armed opposition groups.

The issue of how to effectively engage with and influence armed opposition groups for the release of children in their ranks arose repeatedly in the Coalition's consultations. In some regions like Southeast Asia and Central Africa, Coalition members in the field already have experience in dealing with armed groups and asked for help in sharing lessons learned with members and partners in other regions.

In our analysis of the data collected for the *Child Soldiers Global Report 2004*, it appeared that the Optional Protocol to the CRC on the involvement of children in armed conflict is working: proportionally fewer governments are using children in armies than in 2001. The majority of child soldiers are now found in the ranks of armed opposition groups and government-linked paramilitaries and defence groups.

I am particularly proud of the new staff-led initiative to explore ways to influence these non-state actors to end their use of children. We are facilitating local NGOs in sharing ideas for local advocacy, bringing together members and partners from Colombia to Uganda and the Congo, and from the Occupied Palestinian Territories to

the Philippines and Indonesia. And the ICRC, UNICEF, Conciliation Resources, Geneva Call, DCAF and others are also involved in supporting our search for effective approaches.

This project is just one portion of the larger work of all the Coalition's member organisations. Our proposed Strategic Plan not only outlines new directions but continues our important joint work for the ratification and effective implementation of the Optional Protocol.

As I step back from helping steer this movement, I have a satisfying sense that the Coalition's future holds both a continual series of new beginnings and a firm follow-through to protect children from armed conflict. Thank you for the support that so many of you have given that has made our joint work so successful.

**Casey Kelso**  
**Director**

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## **ABOUT CHILD SOLDIERS NEWSLETTER**

CHILD SOLDIERS NEWSLETTER is a free publication bringing you news, information and campaign updates from the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers (CSC). It is produced with the financial support of the Human Security Program at Foreign Affairs Canada.

All submissions to the newsletter are the sole responsibility of contributing authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the Coalition, its founding organisations or members.

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THE COALITION TO STOP THE USE OF CHILD SOLDIERS (CSC) works to prevent the use of children as soldiers and to promote their demobilization, rehabilitation and social reintegration. The CSC is comprised of national, regional and international organisations and coalitions in Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and the Middle East. It was founded in 1998 by Amnesty International, Defence for Children International, Human Rights Watch, Jesuit Refugee Service, Quaker United Nations Office Geneva, Save the Children Norway for the International Save the Children Alliance, International Federation Terre des Hommes and World Vision International.

PLEASE SUPPORT OUR WORK: We welcome donations and/or practical support for our on-going campaign. Donations may be sent by any currency cheque or bank draft to the address below. You can also make a donation through our website. To obtain more information about local campaigns and activities, or to share information about your own activities and events relating to child soldiers, please visit our website or contact the Coalition Secretariat.

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International Secretariat  
2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, 2-12 Pentonville Rd, London N1 9HF, United Kingdom  
Telephone: +44 20 7713 2761  
Facsimile: +44 20 7713 2794  
Email: [info@child-soldiers.org](mailto:info@child-soldiers.org)  
Website: [www.child-soldiers.org](http://www.child-soldiers.org)

The Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers is registered as a limited company (no. 4411965) in England.  
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