

Committee: Disarmament and International Security Committee

Issue: Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration for child soldiers

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Position: Co Chair

PERSONAL INTRODUCTION

Dear delegates,

My name is Evangelos Tsitsiridakis and I will have the honor to serve as your Co-Chair of the Disarmament and International Security Committee in this year's ACG MUN. I am a student in Arsakeio-Tositseio in Ekali in the 11th grade and I am planning to study mechanical engineering and the near future. Unfortunately most of you reading the aforementioned will start thinking why would a prospective mechanical engineer invest time and effort in a program that does not broaden his knowledge upon the sector that he is planning to study on, the answer though is simple. Those of you that have already participated in such conferences will easily think of the answer, MUN is something more than just a very useful tool in order for someone to advance his linguistic abilities in a foreign language. Model United Nations offers you the opportunity to get in touch with other civilizations and cultures as well as undertake the challenge to support ones country policy, sometimes even against your personal moral codes, upon matters of utmost importance which concern humanity as a whole. In a nutshell MUN paves the way for your transforming into a global citizen overcoming walls, borders and differences. Nevertheless I am aware that some of you might think that you do not possess adequate linguistic abilities or face difficulties when delivering public speeches. Therefore I ensure you that we will be at your disposal at any given time in order to guide you via our experience. I expect to see well prepared and excellently informed delegates in order to have a fruitful and challenging debate which will hopefully lead us into forming effective resolutions!

Should any questions concerning the topic or you believe that something needs to be clarified, feel free to contact me via my personal email; aggelostsitsi@gmail.com

Sincerely yours,

Evangelos Tsitsiridakis

TOPIC INTRODUCTION

The very first thing that most of the times cross our mind when it comes to children is more or less a picture of a child playing, running or studying, nevertheless this is far from what some children are forced to encounter. The phenomenon of the recruitment of children as expendable military personnel in armed groups or their use in armed forces is not a recent one although only the last decade the world community has combined its forces in order to combat it. As it has concerned some of the biggest Non-Governmental Organizations (N.G.Os) in the world and has been the cause of the creation of many others it is more than frustrating that only very few steps have been made towards finding a solution to so imperative a matter. Obviously the United Nations being the world's biggest organization could not remain inactive during such a fight aiming to the preservation of the human rights of children all over the world but more specifically in the Less Economically Developed Countries (L.E.D.Cs).

More specifically when it comes to children somebody should approach the issue from a much broader point of view as there are some other factors that transform it into a highly demanding process. First of all the inhumane level of poverty that these children encounter is beyond what we can imagine, thus joining the army voluntarily seems as a very logical and natural decision in order for them to survive. On the other hand though in some cases in which conflicts have been reignited or never actually stopped the abduction of children due to deficiency of military personnel seems to be the rule rather than the exception. Unfortunately reports of N.G.Os that have extensively been involved in the matter have shed light to cases when states use children in armed groups or forces. The United Nations and other major countries have put pressure on such states not only to eliminate these instances but to take measures to prevent and condemn any similar future actions in their given region as well. Although the attempt of the United States of America to condemn such cases through this sort of "embargo" in the countries that extensive use of children in military personnel is the case is being hailed as great humane action in the West, concerns have been raised due to the fact that the list of the countries with such instances has some discrepancies, as far as certain countries are concerned, with the ones published by Non-Governmental Organizations. The question that needs to be answered is whether the actions currently on hand are enough for so mucus a matter...

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Reintegration

“Reintegration” is the process by which ex-combatants acquire civilian status and more specifically in our case it describes the re-assimilation of children into the civil society.¹

Demobilization

It is the formal and control discharge of active combatants from armed forces or other armed groups²

Child Soldiers

A child associated with an armed force or armed group refers to any person below 18 years of age “who has been recruited or used by an armed force or armed group in any capacity”³

Ex-combatants

While “combatant is a person engaged in active fighting with enemy forces”⁴ it is easily inferred that an “ex-combatant” is a former combatant that has been demobilized.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Early history

Throughout history children have been extensively involved in military campaigns. More specifically in World War I only in Great Britain 250,000 boys under the age of 18 voluntarily joined the army. In World War II, child soldiers fought extensively throughout militias all over the globe. Nevertheless, since the 1970s, a number of international conventions have come into effect thus trying to limit the participation of children in armed conflicts. Unfortunately the use of children in military forces and their active participation in



#1: A shocking moment back on the very first extensive use of children in conflicts in Berlin in 1945

¹ "Resolution A/60/705." *Security Council Report*. N.p., 2 Mar. 2006. Web.

² "Demobilize." *Dictionary.com*. Dictionary.com, n.d. Web. 07 Feb. 2017.

³ "The Paris Principles." *Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary General for children and armed conflict*. United Nations, Feb. 2007. Web.

⁴ "Combatant." *Dictionary.com*. Dictionary.com, n.d. Web. 07 Feb. 2017.

armed conflicts is widespread. As a result of the United Nations engagement in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, a number of important lessons have been learned and thus have informed the Organization's thinking on how to approach this process which should not be implemented in isolation from the broader peace building and recovery process. It is vital that these programs are coordinated within wider peace, recovery and the development of frameworks;

The importance of a successful reintegration

Community reintegration of former combatants should be the ultimate objective of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programs. Failure to assist ex-combatants to reintegrate will undermine the achievements of the disarmament and demobilization phase. Ex-combatants and in our case



2: Boys walk away from the weapons they once carried as child soldiers

child soldiers, especially where conflict has lasted a long time will

have no experience, or memory, of pre-war peaceful patterns of life thus making the process very difficult. Regardless of how children are recruited, abducted or voluntarily join the army, child soldiers are victims, whose participation in conflict bears serious consequences for their physical and emotional well-being. They are commonly subject to abuse and most of them witness death and as an inevitable sequence of events and that is why most of them suffer serious long-term psychological consequences. Thus the reintegration of these children into civilian life is a complex process.

Children released from military exploitation are typically very vulnerable. Many of them often re-join an armed group after being rejected by their communities and families. Being accepted by one's family or community is the most important factor in the process towards a successful reintegration of children. In order to achieve this, children need to participate in positive community activities giving them a valued social role, which will enhance their recovery and well-being. Reintegration of child soldiers is often portrayed as hopeless! especially where child soldiers have been forcibly recruited and made to participate in atrocities. Yet studies demonstrate that children involved in armed conflict can re-engage positive social relations. It is not easy and depends crucially on political will, and the resources to include child soldiers in peace agreements and demobilization programs and to support their reintegration into family and community. A successful reintegration program will not only prevent a return to violence, it will also

contribute to the recovery and development of a State that is emerging from a conflict. If implemented properly, this reintegration program should be a tool to promote trust and confidence between ex-combatants and the given communities. In times when long term atrocities have been the case, long-term reintegration support can also prevent the re-recruitment of children who may have joined armed forces for reasons related to poverty and ensure their being reunited with their families.

Family reunification

Family reunification or, where that is not possible, foster placement or support for independent living is crucial to successful reintegration. Family reunification or alternative family-based living arrangements, rather than centers, are the most effective strategy to reintegrate child soldiers into the community. 84 percent of former child soldiers that were freed by armed groups in El Salvador reported that their family played the most important role in their transition to civilian life. Considering that 42 percent of child soldiers had lost one or both parents during the conflict, this finding was somewhat unexpected. This is not to say that family reunifications always go smoothly. A demobilized child soldier is no longer the child he or she was before recruitment, and both the child and the family have to adjust to new roles. There may also be concerns about whether a family or community will accept a child soldier if he or she was involved in killings or atrocities.



#3: States that use of child soldiers has been reported

MAJOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED

Although it is of utmost importance to be well informed about all the countries' policies directly affected by the issue and to be ready to support your country even if it has been accused of the aforementioned you need to bear in mind that what we examine in our committee is the disarmament demobilization and reintegration of children so you need to focus on the efforts of the given country towards this process as well.

Afghanistan

In 2015, Afghan President Ashraf Ghani signed a presidential decree criminalizing the recruitment of child soldiers. However the United Nations included Afghanistan in its annual report, on countries recruiting children; reporting several cases in which children were used in government security bodies and other armed groups. Although attempts have been made by the authorities unfortunately the problem is still acute in the state.

Democratic Republic of Congo (D.R.C)

Something that should be highlighted is that the United Nations officers verified a total of 4200 children recruited in 2015 in DRC by 12 different governmental and nongovernmental armed groups, while some reports voice concerns as abduction of children seemed to be the case in the country. Nevertheless the Government endorsed the campaign "Children, Not Soldiers" in terms of eliminating the number of children army and the state authorities. Furthermore re-integration programs which are mostly run by N.G.Os have reduced the likelihood of a potential re-recruitment of 7,151 children due to poverty, who have left armed groups and been reunited with their families.

Islamic Republic of Iraq

The Human Rights Watch have documented that Iraqi Shia militias also used child soldiers in fighting ISIS forces. As the Islamic Republic of Iraq has ratified the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflicts in 2008 the United Nations and other coalitions who fight against the recruitment of children should pressure the government of Iraq in order to take any measures possible to prevent these illegal actions.

Syrian Arab Republic

Since the Al-Qaeda franchise established itself in Syria in January 2012, child recruitment has become more widely practiced, and even got wider and more organized with the emergence of Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) in 2013. The two groups created training camps for children where they are influenced to become jihadi fighters and suicide bombers. While the media has constantly focused on child recruitment by factions internationally designated as 'terrorist groups' they have totally ignored those recruited by 'moderate rebels' across the country.

Colombia

A devastating civil war began in 1964 after the success of the Cuban revolution, with the rebels wanting to use force to redistribute wealth. The Marxist rebel group named FARC has recruited tens of thousands of children in very dangerous positions such as landmines installation or explosives transportation. Almost 70% of those captured are 14 or younger, with some as young as 8 according to many reports.

Nigeria

In Nigeria, children manned checkpoints and operated as spies in a government militia, known as the Civilian Joint Task Force, according to United Nation's reports.

United States of America (U.S.A)

The United States' of America congress has voted upon a certain law "The Child Soldier Prevention Act 2008" reminding the globe of their criticizing approaches as far as the states that recruit children are concerned. The aforementioned law states that certain types of military assistance and armaments cannot be granted to countries with "government-supported armed groups" that use child soldiers." Child soldiers are defined as those under the age of 18 who are recruited by such groups to work as soldiers or perform other tasks, including working as cooks or porters.

United Nations

The U.N. has a more comprehensive definition of child usage in conflicts and it includes all governmental and nongovernmental armed groups that use and recruit child soldiers in each nation including the police forces. The United Nations has played a fundamental role in the fight against the violation of the rights of children and more specifically in their usage in armed conflicts with several protocols and

conventions. Furthermore the UN has formed a special committee under the name of Quaker United Nations Office which since the 1970s has worked to raise public awareness about the issue of child soldiers as well as its causes and consequences and most importantly to develop international standards to prohibit the military recruitment and use of children neither in combat of people nor in the government armed forces.

Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL)

The Islamic State of Iraq was a militant Islamist group that aimed to establish an Islamic state and it was formed on 15 October 2006 when a number of Iraqi insurgent groups emerged into one group. At their most height in 2006–2008, they claimed Baqubah as their capital. In April 2013, ISIS transformed itself into the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) which is still active today and constitutes one of the most urgent global issues. As so important a matter I.S.I.L shouldn't be forgotten in any means during your research. Several reports have been submitted by people and N.G.Os intensively dealing with this matter that the Islamic State uses children as suicide bombers, spies and other war related positions.

The Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers/ Child soldiers international

The Child soldiers international formerly the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers is an international human rights research and advocacy organization formed in May 1998 by leading non-governmental organizations which seek to end the military recruitment of all children. Namely some of them are Amnesty International, the Human Rights Watch and the Quaker United Nations Office. Moreover it seeks the release of child soldiers from armed forces or groups, promotes their successful return to civilian life as a form of reintegration.

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)

UNICEF is one of the most active organizations as far as our issue is concerned with several transit centers built all over Africa. Being a part of the United Nations office UNICEF has done whatever possible in order to ensure that as many children as possible receive the adequate physical and psychological treatment they deserve.



#4: A UNICEF-supported shelter and reintegration center for recently demobilized child soldiers, DRC

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

Date	Description of event
June 1914	The first extensive use of children in armed conflicts as Great Britain recruited more than 250.000 children under the age of 18 to fight against the enemy.
August 1949	Protocols I and II of the four Geneva Conventions set the age for involvement in war to 15 years old.
August 1997	A special report on the impact of armed conflict is published by the United Nations secretary general and it promotes Olara Otunnu as the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflicts.
July 1998	Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court rules that the involvement of any child under the age of 15 that is forced into conflict of war is considered to be crime.
April 2000	Resolution 1261 is passed. The UN states that any involvement of children in armed conflicts is a more severe crime than exploitative child labor.
May 2000	The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography was adopted and opened for signature, ratification and accession by resolution A/RES/54/263.
2002	The Secretary General generates a list of parties that shows who violated the law of no child being used in battle and where the party was from.
October 2003	The first of three transit centers for child soldiers released from the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam was opened by UNICEF in a ceremony attended by high-level officials of the Government in Sri Lanka.
October 2008	The Child Soldier Prevention Act (CSPA) is signed by the congress in the United States during G. Bush presidency.

RELEVANT RESOLUTIONS, TREATIES AND EVENTS

Security Council Resolutions relating to children affected by armed conflict

1261, S/RES/1261 (1999)

Adopted by the Security Council at its 4037th meeting, on 25 August 1999 and it was one of the first attempts to address the issue. The most important impact of this resolution is that it is one of the very first times that the United Nations

condemned the targeting of children in situations of armed conflicts. Nevertheless it did not contain any measures of high significance.

1296, S/R/1296 (2000)

Adopted by the Security Council at its 4130th meeting, on 19 April 2000, this resolution is an attempt to protect all the vulnerable members of the society during armed conflicts and one of its highlights is the invitation towards the Secretary General to bring refugees in his attention as well.

1314, S/R/1314 (2000)

Adopted by the Security Council at its 4185th meeting, on 11 August 2000 the given resolution emphasizes the need to protect children during armed conflicts and calls for the ratification of the International Protocol of the Rights of Children.

The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child

The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict is a protocol which aims to protect children from recruitment and use in hostilities. The Protocol was adopted by the General Assembly on 25 May 2000 and entered into force on 12 February 2002. This protocol is way of commitment for state that will not recruit children; take any possible measures to prevent such actions. At the moment, 166 countries have ratified the optional protocol, nevertheless there are still some countries that have neither signed nor ratified the protocol and 13 countries that have signed but are yet to ratify. Namely some of them are the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea and the United Arab Emirates which belong to the first category whereas the Central African Republic and the Islamic Republic of Iran to second respectively.

PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE THE ISSUE

The United Nations

As previously mentioned this issue has raised serious concerns in some of the most important N.G.Os all over the globe such as but not limited to the ones which seek the preservation of human rights. Namely some highlights of these efforts are the several peacekeeping operations that included Disarmament Demobilization and Re-integration of ex-combatants in their mandate in several regions such as but not limited to United Nations



5: Resolution A/60/7050

Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) and the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL). Nonetheless the report of the Secretary General in the sixtieth session of the General Assembly back in 2007 is the most adequate evidence that this matter has acutely concerned the global community. Furthermore, resolution A/60/705 was the first extensive attempt to tackle the issue as it was introduced in the General Assembly of the United Nations on the 2nd of March 2006.

Children, Not Soldiers

The campaign “Children Not Soldiers” aims to galvanize support to end and prevent the recruitment and use of children in conflict by national security forces. It is an initiative of Leila Zerrougui, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children in Armed Conflicts, and UNICEF. Most the countries currently affected by the issue have signed Action Plans with the United Nations to end and prevent the recruitment and use of children. The Special Representative, UNICEF and partners support the efforts of the 7 remaining Governments to release and reintegrate children into civilian life and to ensure all mechanisms are in place to end and prevent their recruitment and use. The campaign has also brought together celebrities who take photos holding a placard with the hashtag “childrennotsoldiers” to support the movement and spread its fame.



6: The photo of the campaign aiming to the spread of the movement

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Delegates are expected to emphasize four components in their resolution and during the debate as far as their countries' solutions are concerned,

Psychological support

Although many may think that family reunification should be included in this section of this study guide it is a very important phase that delegates should be informed about while reading the background information. Psychosocial support on the other hand is a process that includes traditional rituals and family and community mediation, is central to addressing the asocial and aggressive behavior learned by child soldiers and to helping them recover from stressful experience thus it should be included in this section as delegates should be able to support their given solution as far as psychological support of child soldiers is concerned.

Education and economic opportunity

As previously mentioned, child soldiers even after passing the demobilization phase successfully are very vulnerable to rejoin any given armed group due lack of any other sustainable means of surviving the extreme poverty. Thus the states need to provide these children and their families which job opportunities in order for the children not to be once again trapped in the plague of war rather than enjoying a life appropriate for their age without been forfeited of their right to education.

Transit centers

After the demobilization process has come to an end the children are often taken to transit centers being the first step towards reintegration in the community. Transit centers are camps where children are treated by experts most of the times volunteers who are in charge of helping children during their first steps towards rehabilitation before returning them to their families, which is the initial purpose,. These centers are often run by Churches, NGOs and local civil associations and provide children with essential health and psychological care. UNICEF for example laid the foundation for the erection of such camps building 3 in Sri Lanka back in October 2003 for the children freed from the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam a nationalistic militant organization which aims to create an independent state in the northeast of Sri Lanka for the Tamil people. Unfortunately funding for this camps is vastly inadequate and the available reintegration programs are often let down by the states, for instance in the D.R.C civil society is generally weak, making it harder to set up and operate such camps. On the other hand though there are arguments stating that child soldiers should remain in transit centers for as little as possible. While special centers are necessary in demobilization, studies have shown that family reunification and community-based strategies are the most effective in reintegration.

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