

CSHL Newsletter

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Child Soldier Under International Law

Either in the past or in today's world, having a war occur is already an unfortunate thing that could happen to human beings, however, it is even worse for children to have witnessed and participated directly in the hostilities. Those kids whose ages are under 18 years old and were recruited by an army or merely participated in an armed conflict are often referred to as Child Soldier.¹

It was reported by UNICEF that the region with the highest number of child soldiers in the world is West and Central Africa in which more than 21,000 children have been recruited by government forces and armed groups since 2016.² Child soldiering comes with quite a number of consequences to children beyond expectation, especially after the war ended or what is called long-term impacts. Based on the research studies, children who directly participated in the hostilities tend to get psychologically traumatized as they have experienced nothing but death on the battlefield.³ Some might even end up being left out of the group or society as a whole.⁴

Even though child soldiering cannot be immediately eliminated, it has received pretty much attention under international law and other international organizations. It is known as a violation of international human rights, at the same time is prohibited under International Humanitarian Law and considered a war crime by the International Criminal Court.⁵ Various conventions were established to protect children, one of which is the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict by the United Nations while the ILO Convention on the Worst Forms of Child Labor was established by ILO to prohibit the forced or compulsory recruitment of children under the age of 18 for use in armed conflict.⁶

However, conventions to protect alone are not enough, dealing with its root cause is also an efficient way to protect children as well. It would be to prevent and resolve the armed conflict that was to take place or was taking place and sustain the peace so that children do not have to participate in armed conflict anymore.

With the help of global communities, 115,000 children have been released from armed forces and groups as of 2000. This proves the power of the UN and member states working together

¹ *Child Soldiers*. (n.d.). Humanium. Retrieved from: <https://www.humanium.org/en/child-soldier/>

² *World's highest child soldier numbers in West, Central Africa*. (2021, November 23). ALJAZEERA. Retrieved from: [https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/11/23/world-highest-child-soldier-numbers-in-west-central-africa#:~:text=West%20and%20Central%20Africa%20is,Nations%20Children's%20Fund%20\(UNICEF\).](https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/11/23/world-highest-child-soldier-numbers-in-west-central-africa#:~:text=West%20and%20Central%20Africa%20is,Nations%20Children's%20Fund%20(UNICEF).)

³ Blattman, C., 2006, 'The Consequences of Child Soldiering', Households in Conflict Network Working Paper 22, The Institute of Development Studies, Brighton. Retrieved from: <https://gsdrc.org/document-library/the-consequences-of-child-soldiering/>

⁴ *Children recruited by armed forces or armed groups*. (n.d.). UNICEF. Retrieved from: <https://www.unicef.org/protection/children-recruited-by-armed-forces>

⁵ *Child Recruitment and Use*. (n.d.). United Nations. Retrieved from: <https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/six-grave-violations/child-soldiers/#:~:text=Prohibition%20under%20International%20Law&text=Recruiting%20and%20using%20children%20under,by%20the%20International%20Criminal%20Court.>

⁶ *Facts About Child Soldier*. (2008, December 3). Human Rights Watch. Retrieved from: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2008/12/03/facts-about-child-soldiers>

Library Hours

Monday – Friday
8:30AM – 5:30PM

E-Resources

- [Asia Pacific Journal on Human Rights and the Law](#)
- [Oxford Academic Journals](#)
- [And other Open Access Databases](#)

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to provide full protection for children and the crime of child soldiering will have no existence anymore in the future.⁷

⁷ *Ending the Use of Child Soldiers*. (2017, February 12). UNICEF. Retrieved from: <https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/2017/02/ending-the-use-of-child-soldiers/>