



HTU MUN

TOPIC GUIDE



The Militarization Of Children



Topic Overview

Children may be made regular combat soldiers, or forced into fighting militia or guerrilla forces. They may be employed as paramilitary support in front-line areas, as messengers, scouts, supply carriers and so forth. In these capacities children may face professional, adult fighting forces who will not discriminate by age in identifying and attacking the enemy. Many of these teenagers and pre-teenagers face death and mutilation, but beyond this they face the terror of warfare that they cannot comprehend. Children are taken as prisoners of war, and are also sent to civilian internment camps. As civilians they may survive the destruction of their home and the killing of family members. There are no horrors that children are not exposed to in total war.

Thousands of children as young as 9 and 10 years of age are used as soldiers in armed conflicts around the world. Many of these children are directly involved in fighting, often equipped with fully automatic assault rifles. Thousands have been killed, and thousands more have been seriously wounded. Children themselves have killed and wounded civilians as well as opposing fighters. Many take part in terrible atrocities. These children bear appalling physical and psychological injuries.

In 2001, it was reported that some 300,000 child soldiers were operating in 41 countries -- a third of which are in Africa.

Despite the protection afforded to children under the law, they continue to be recruited into the armed forces and to participate in hostilities. Boy soldiers, aged fifteen or less, appeared in the Nazi forces at the end of the world war in Europe. Children have been recruited by the Viet Cong, by the Khmer Rouge in Kampuchea and Thailand, by terrorist groups for action against Israel, by the Khomeini regime in Iran to fight the war with Iraq, by radical groups in Northern Ireland and by the Sandinistas in Nicaragua. Children fighters are also reported in Afghanistan, El Salvador, Colombia, Uganda and Ethiopia.



Countries Involved

Czech Republic: In the Czech Republic soldiers have reportedly started touring elementary schools nationwide in an effort to introduce students to military life. Children from the age of 10 are being familiarized with and encouraged to play with machine guns. The Czech Ministry of Defence presented the initiative as an educational program, emphasizing the army's role in defending the nation, the value of patriotism and so on; the same old hypocritical rhetoric, to which the profound analysis of Tolstoy still applies: while on the one hand there is great talk of compassion, of justice, of humanity, what is effectively supported, either silently or explicitly, is a society based on violence.

Central African Republic: As many as 10,000 children were used by armed groups involved in the latest conflict in CAR, according to Child Soldiers International. Armed groups in the mainly Muslim Séléka coalition and predominantly Christian militias called Anti-Balaka both used children as young as eight. The children are used as combatants, guards, human shields, porters, messengers, spies, cooks and/or for sexual purposes.

Nigeria: The terrorist group Boko Haram recruited 2000 child soldiers in 2016, according to the UN. It was also reported that they used girls as suicide bombers in Maiduguri, when two bombs went off killing at least one person.

Syria: Since 2014, warring sides have recruited children as young as seven. More than half of children recruited in cases verified by UNICEF in 2015 were under 15. Children have been filmed executing prisoners in grisly propaganda videos by the Islamic State group. Last year the UN said: "A total of 362 cases of recruitment and use of children were verified and attributed to ISIL (274), the Free Syrian Army and affiliated groups (62), Liwa' al-Tawhid (11), popular committees (5), Kurdish People's Protection Units (4), Ahrar al-Sham (3), the Nusra Front (2) and the Army of Islam (1). Of the verified cases, 56% involved children under 15 years of age, a significant increase compared with 2014. The payment of salaries and ideology continued to be major influencing factors."



Yemen: There have been nearly 1500 cases of child recruitment in Yemen since the escalation of hostilities in 2015. According to UNICEF, this is a long-term problem in Yemen. In Yemeni culture, it's considered that a boy enters manhood at the age of 14 or 15 - and part of being a man is taking up a weapon.

Democratic Republic of Congo: In 2011 it was estimated there were 30,000 child soldiers in DRC. In January-February 2016, Child Soldiers International spent six weeks in eastern DRC and interviewed more than 150 former girl soldiers. Children continue to be recruited and used by numerous armed groups. Girls are often used as "wives" and sexually abused by their commanders and other soldiers.

Organizations Involved

UNICEF: Most child casualties are civilians. But one of the most deplorable developments in recent years has been the increasing use of young children as soldiers. In one sense, this is not really new. For centuries children have been involved in military campaigns—as child ratings on warships, or as drummer boys on the battlefields of Europe. Indeed the word 'infantry', for foot-soldiers, can also mean a group of young people. What is frightening nowadays is the escalation in the use of children as fighters. Recently, in 25 countries, thousands of children under the age of 16 have fought in wars. Children have other advantages as soldiers. They are easier to intimidate and they do as they are told. They are also less likely than adults to run away and they do not demand salaries.





Incidents Caused by the Militarization of Children:

1) The child soldiers of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS), are being brainwashed. They are lured or kidnapped from their homes and then they are trained to fight and to kill mercilessly. "The Sunni extremists of ISIS appear to be brainwashing an entire generation to create an army of impressionable young soldiers." Child soldiers are defined as any children under the age of 18 who are recruited by a state or non-state armed group, however, some children are as young as 10 when they begin service.

2) The child soldiers are often forced out of their homes to join a negative cause, fight and sometimes die for the people they thought were going to offer them security but only provided danger. This is what happens to child soldiers for the benefit of whatever regime is intending to show its power. They are unwitting participants in someone else's fight.

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