



GMUNC X

UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

CHILDREN IN ARMED CONFLICT



**UNHRC**

## **About the Chairs**

Head Chair: Chania Rene-Corail

Chania is a senior at Gunn High School, and is thrilled to be chairing for the Human Rights Council. This is her fourth year with Gunn MUN, where she is currently serving as Secretary-General, and her third year staffing GMUNC. For GMUNC IX, she worked as Director-General, overseeing the organization of the conference, and she is now looking forward to seeing delegates research and debate exciting topics such as human rights, international law, and national sovereignty. Outside of Model UN, Chania enjoys theatre and is part of her school's student government. She cannot wait to meet all of you!

Co-Chair: Anushka Tadikonda

Anushka is a junior at Saratoga High School and is looking forward to seeing all the delegates in GMUNC's Human Rights Council. This is her 3rd year in Model UN and she currently serves as the Co-VP for Saratoga High MUN. While she enjoys participating in conferences, she also finds joy in chairing and is excited to witness the engaging debates and discussions surrounding UNHRC's topic this year. Beyond her involvement in MUN, Anushka has a keen interest in political science and local government.

## **About the Committee**

Hello and welcome to GMUNC X! We hope you are all excited about joining the United Nations Human Rights Council. In this double-delegation committee, you will work with a partner from your school and other passionate delegates to prevent the use of child soldiers in both current and future armed conflict. We hope to see you use your knowledge of international law and relations in order to solve this incredibly relevant issue, while putting forward your country's best interests. This background guide should help you with starting your research, though we encourage that you also look at other reliable sources.

GMUNC X will be held on October 21st at Henry M Gunn High School. To be eligible for research awards, delegates must submit their position papers by October 14th. For any other type of committee award, papers must be turned in by October 20th. More information on formatting and paper requirements can be found on our [conference website](#). Please email all papers and questions to [gmunchumanrights@gmail.com](mailto:gmunchumanrights@gmail.com).

We look forward to meeting you and reading your papers!

Best Regards,

Chania Rene-Corail and Anushka Tadikonda

## **Introduction to the Topic**

In examining the history of global conflicts, a distressing pattern emerges: the recruitment of children by military groups. Referred to as "child soldiers," these are individuals under the age of eighteen who are coerced or forced into combat roles or supportive positions within armed groups. Often acting out of desperation for survival, these children are tragically found in conflicts worldwide, some as young as six years old.



**A Yemeni child soldier**

Notably, while some of these recruited children are directly engaged in battles, many serve in auxiliary roles like cooks, porters, and messengers, providing advantages to the armed groups they've joined. Typically, these armed groups target vulnerable youths from marginalized and troubled areas. They tend to be more manipulable and willing to join the war effort, as they have often been more exposed to violence, along with having significantly less access to educational opportunities. Recruiters are also aware that many children will follow them as a

way to escape poverty, gain protection from trusted adults, or find a sense of community amongst other child soldiers.

The harrowing reality of child soldiers extends beyond their roles as auxiliaries or combatants. The deliberate recruitment of children not only exploits their vulnerability but also exacts a heavy toll on their lives, subjecting them to unfathomable hardships and propelling them into a cycle of violence that defies the very essence of childhood innocence. After their recruitment, child soldiers often live in incredibly dire conditions. They undergo dangerous training and are expected to participate in physically harmful labor and initiation ceremonies, putting them at risk of injury, illness, or death. In addition to this, many of them also have to witness or partake in killing, sometimes harming their own families and communities.

These children go through intense ideological indoctrination, effectively stripping them of their identity, and suffer brutal physical punishments when they disobey orders. There have also been instances of children being drugged, and they are consistently more vulnerable to drug abuse, sexual violence, lack of healthy nutrition, and various health issues.



**Child soldiers of the Kachin Independence Army**

Tragically, the repercussions extend far beyond physical and mental health. Many child soldiers struggle to reintegrate into their families, and even after leaving armed forces, they find it exceedingly difficult to reintegrate into society.

### **Historical Background and Current Situation**

The global focus on this pressing matter was sparked during the 1990s amid the civil wars that ravaged the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Despite the official conclusion of armed conflict in the DRC in 2002, the region continues to bear the scars of instability, rendering its children vulnerable to recruitment by military forces and other armed factions due to the persisting state of turmoil.

Regrettably, this issue casts a long shadow, impacting the lives of thousands of innocent children. Disturbingly, the numbers speak volumes; between 2005 and 2022, over 105,000 children were officially verified as having been forcibly conscripted into participating in armed conflicts. However, the actual figures are likely much higher, concealed by the complexities and challenges of documenting such dire circumstances.

While most nations acknowledge the imperative to outlaw the recruitment of soldiers under the age of 18, encompassing both coerced and voluntary enlistment of 16- and 17-year-olds, the effectiveness of these measures remains inconsistent. An example lies in Chad, where despite previous agreements to demobilize child soldier recruitment, an estimated 7,000 to 10,000 children were still embroiled in combat and other perilous roles as of 2007.

Tragically, various countries have been linked to the use of child soldiers since 2011, with Afghanistan, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Colombia, India, Iraq, Libya, Mali, Pakistan, Thailand, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen being notably implicated. These children, through no fault of

their own, are compelled to endure the horrors of armed conflicts, forever altering the trajectory of their lives.

As of 2021, it is estimated that a staggering 420 million children residing in conflict zones, their innocent lives marred by the harsh realities of war. In response to these heinous violations against children, the United Nations Security Council has identified six grave offenses:

1. Killing and maiming of children.
2. Recruitment and deployment of children by armed forces or armed groups.
3. Rape and other forms of sexual violence perpetrated against children.
4. Abduction of children for various purposes.
5. Deliberate attacks on schools and hospitals, depriving children of vital services and safety.
6. Denial of humanitarian access, exacerbating the suffering of vulnerable children.

These are offenses that the United Nations is attempting to shed light upon and prevent through various educational campaigns and resolutions.

## **Past Action**

Since the mid-20th century, nations and international groups have led campaigns and pushed for legislation aimed at preventing the recruitment of children, bringing certain armed groups to justice, and reintegrating child soldiers into society.

In 2007, UNICEF and the French government held the “Free Children From War” conference. This conference led to the adoption of the Paris Commitments and Principles, which aim to prevent unlawful recruitment, release child soldiers, and support their reintegration into society. It also hopes to provide all children with methods to protect themselves from recruiters. By becoming signatories, states committed themselves to establishing procedures and taking any necessary measures to prevent the use of children in armed conflict. These measures could include—but were not limited to—legal or administrative measures, cooperation with the UN Security Council, monitoring and reporting of any violations by armed groups, prosecution of said armed groups, and helping the release of child soldiers.

In 2000, a critical stride was made with the introduction of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict (OPAC). Remarkably, as of January 2023, this protocol has garnered ratification by 173 countries. This collective commitment translates into a global pledge to cease the recruitment or enlistment of individuals under 18. Signatory states are also obligated to take robust measures to counter the recruitment of children by non-state military groups and to demobilize existing child soldiers.

Resolution 1379, created in 2001, delineates the UN Secretary-General’s responsibility to establish a watchlist of countries and groups that have previously been known to recruit children.



The Secretary-General is expected to have these groups and states be included in any further conversations discussing the usage of child soldiers.

In 2005, Resolution 1612 passed. It led to the creation of a monitoring and reporting mechanism. This mechanism served to gather data on violations of established legislation regarding the involvement of children in armed conflict. This was followed by the passing of legislation which, in 2011, declared schools and hospitals as war-free zones, making these spaces into safe havens for children.

From 2014 to 2016, UNICEF led the international campaign “Children, Not Soldiers”, which received widespread support. It focused on bringing assistance to Afghanistan, Chad, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Myanmar, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, and Yemen. These countries were asked to collaborate with the United Nations in order to create and engage in personalized action plans to combat the unlawful recruitment of children on their territory. This campaign was quite successful and led to the release of thousands of child soldiers. It even encouraged several countries to start their own national campaigns.

United Nations organizations, including UNICEF, have also deployed personnel on the ground to address immediate concerns related to child soldiers, such as medical and psychological care, as well as providing relief and aid. These solutions are more focused on short-term humanitarian aid.

Outside of the UN, media advocacy, specifically documentary films, has been particularly helpful in raising awareness, especially in more developed countries. NGOs have also been working to end armed conflict in certain areas. One such NGO would be Invisible Children, which focuses on conflicts on the African continent.

## **Goals for Committee**

In committee, you will be expected to collaborate with other delegates in order to protect vulnerable children, assist their families and communities, and rescue current child soldiers.

While researching, make sure that you are also considering your nation's own situation and interests, while still being open to collaboration. To assist you in preparing for committee, here are some of your main objectives:

- a) Preventing further recruitment and enlistment of children
- b) Better monitoring of military groups, including non-state ones
- c) Protecting children in troubled areas
- d) Bringing humanitarian aid to child soldiers
- e) Helping rehabilitation of child soldiers
- f) Protection against gender-based violence

## **Questions to Consider:**

1. What educational and vocational opportunities are available to children affected by armed conflict to help them reintegrate into society or avoid being recruited by armed groups?
2. How does your country collaborate with international organizations and neighboring nations to address the cross-border impact of armed conflict on children?
3. How can technology and social media be utilized to raise awareness about the plight of children in armed conflict and garner support for protective measures?

4. What are the specific challenges faced by girls who have been involved in armed conflict, and how can gender-sensitive approaches be applied to address their unique needs?
5. What steps can be taken to improve access to mental health services for children affected by armed conflict, especially in remote or conflict-affected areas?
6. What innovative approaches or best practices from other countries can be adapted to better address the needs of children in armed conflict?
7. How do the military and police forces function in your country?

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