



RESEARCH REPORT

Issue: Combating military use of children in armed conflicts in Africa

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Definition of Key Terms

Child soldier

The term of child soldiers describes children, who are used for military force. The term includes every child under the age of 18, although, according to the international it is legal to use children who are 14 years or older as soldiers as long as they were not forced to be a soldier.

Introduction

An issue that is often underestimated in its importance is the military use of children. Unfortunately it has a long history as children have been used militarily across the world for a long time. Children are easy to recruit for military purposes caused by their vulnerability to influence. Moreover, especially young children are defenceless, which makes it easy to recruit by using violence. However, not all children are directly forced to be a child soldier, some join militias and troops because they are e.g. homeless or orphans and being in a troop gives them the feeling of being safer.

According to the UN, in 20 states, children's human rights are harmed in a terrible way. Estimations say that around 250000 children are used by military illegally.

Children in Africa are affected by military use in particular. In South Sudan for example a civil war, in which, according to UNICEF, around 17.000 children are involved as child soldiers, rules the country.

Child soldiers have different tasks, including but not limited to fighting, killing and committing other violent acts, cooking, being used as spies or informants. Furthermore, many child soldiers are also used for sexual purposes.

Not only boys are getting recruited, many of them are girls.

The recruitment of children affects and harms the children in many ways. They do not only run a high risk of being killed (in particularly the ones used in armed violence), but also of suffering from psychological and social problems during and after being a soldier. Often they also have difficulties with reintegrating into a society.

Countries in which children are harmed by being used militarily

Afghanistan, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iraq, Israel and State of Palestine, Lebanon, Libya, Mali, Myanmar, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, Yemen, Colombia, India, Nigeria, Pakistan, Philippines, Thailand.

Useful documents

<https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/countries-caac/>

<https://www.child-soldiers.org/how-is-recruiting-children-harmful>

<https://www.unicef.de/informieren/aktuelles/blog/2015/kindersoldaten-erzaehlen/72156>