



ARC MUN

Aristotelio College Model United Nations

DISARMAMENT AND SECURITY COMMITTEE (DISEC)

Strengthening actions to end recruitment of child soldiers Study Guide

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Introduction to the Topic	3
2. Definition of Key Terms.....	3
2.1 Child.....	3
2.2 Soldier.....	3
2.3 Child Soldier.....	3
2.4 Terrorism.....	3
2.5 Recruitment.....	4
2.6 Reintegration.....	4
2.7 Armed Conflicts.....	4
3. History of the Topic.....	4
3.1 Situation from antiquity to post-colonial era.....	4
3.2 Areas with cases of child soldiers today.....	6
4. Legal Framework.....	7
4.1 Geneva Convention.....	7
4.2 Convention on the rights of Child.....	7
4.3 Similar documents.....	9
5. Discussion of the Topic.....	9
5.1 Ways of recruitment of children.....	9
5.2 Repercussions to the child	10
5.3 Possible Solutions.....	10
6. Conclusion	11
7. Questions to be addressed.....	11
8. Bibliography.....	11

1. Introduction to the topic

Involvement in a war can be the most cruel and tough experience for every human, even for a professional soldier. There is no doubt how much horrible is for children to serve as soldiers in conflicts. Unfortunately, even today there are thousands of children associated with conflicts and battles, causing them incurable physical injuries and mental traumas and sometimes costing their lives.

Despite the numerous treaties signed by national governments and international organizations and the progress of public international and humanitarian law, every day children are recruited either by governments or military and paramilitary groups to serve as soldiers, cooks, sex slaves, workers and so on. Recruitment might be the outcome of violent abductions from schools, home, streets etc., or the result of voluntary involvement as an act in despair or as resultant of brain washing.

No matter how and why such a young individual has been involved in similar situations the steps made throughout the past decades to put an end to this phenomenon have proven to be insufficient. Governments, terrorist groups and military parties continue to successfully recruit children, to manipulate them and to use them as their more consumable members, annihilating in this way the value of those human beings which comprise the future of this world. In this frame the 1st committee of United Nations General Assembly (DISEC) has to face impasses and dilemmas concerning the matter and find sustainable and feasible solutions to eliminate cases of child soldiers.

2. Definition of key terms:

2.1 Child: According to the Article 1 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, “a child means every human being below the age of eighteen (18) years unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier”¹.

2.2 Soldier: As a soldier is defined either one “engaged in military service and especially in the army”, or “an enlisted man or woman”, or “a skilled warrior”². Sometimes exist the dissent, whether an army officer can be considered a soldier.

2.3 Child Soldier: According to the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) “a child soldier is defined as any person below eighteen (18) years of age who is, or who has been, recruited or used by an armed force or an armed group in any capacity, including but not limited to children (boys and girls) used as fighters, cooks, porters, spies or for sexual purposes”³. Considering the aforementioned to consider a person as child soldier, involvement armed clash does not comprise an assumption.

2.4 Terrorism: Until today no official and internationally accepted United Nations’ definition of terrorism exists. This impasse exists due to two main objections. Firstly, a reference to the suppression of civilians by States in the effort to reach international law and organizations seems utopian. Secondly an agreement upon the differentiation between acts of terrorism and people’s legitimate actions against foreign occupation or colonial or alien domination or non-legalized regimes in the exercise of their right to self-determination. Nevertheless, UN Security Council Resolution 1566 (2004) defines terrorism as “criminal acts, including against civilians, committed with the intent to cause death or serious bodily injury, or taking of hostages,

¹Ohchr.org. (2017). *OHCHR / Convention on the Rights of the Child*. [online] Available at: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CRC.aspx> [Accessed 4 Nov. 2017].

²Merriam-webster.com. (2017). *Definition of SOLDIER*. [online] Available at: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/soldier> [Accessed 4 Nov. 2017].

³Childrenandarmedconflict.un.org. (2017). *Child Recruitment and Use | United Nations Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict*. [Online] Available at: <https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/effects-of-conflict/six-grave-violations/child-soldiers/>[Accessed 4 Nov. 2017].

with the purpose to provoke a state of terror in the general public or in a group of persons or particular persons, intimidate a population or compel a government or an international organization to do or to abstain from doing any act”.⁴

2.5 Recruitment (of child soldiers): The recruitment can be the result either of the act by a third person or the decision and consequent act by the child itself. In any case the child must end-up involved or associated with a military force or enlisted in an army. Children may take direct part in combat but also their role can vary. They might be used in support functions, as combatants, cooks, spies, messengers, even as sex slaves and suicide bombers.

2.6 Reintegration (of child soldiers): “Reintegration of former child soldiers is a complex and long-term undertaking. It begins with negotiating the release of children and their physical separation from armed forces and groups”⁵. “Reintegration is the process through which children formerly associated with armed forces/groups are supported to return to civilian life and play a valued role in their families and communities”.⁶

2.7 Armed conflict: According to the prevailing legal opinion “International humanitarian law distinguishes two types of armed conflicts, namely:

- International armed conflicts, opposing two or more States
- Non-international armed conflicts, between governmental forces and nongovernmental armed groups, or between such groups only”.⁷

3. History of the Topic

3.1 Situation from antiquity to post-colonial era

The recruitment and use of child soldiers is a practice known from antiquity although with a different moral notion throughout the centuries. Most notably, in Ancient Sparta, the children entered a state-sponsored education, military training and socialization program at the age of 7, the Agoge.⁸ They learned how to fight, endure and, above all, obey the state so as to be ready to sacrifice themselves if need be. Their tough training was designed to provoke their inner strength, cunningness and wits to survive even by means of theft or murder.⁹ The military service was the core duty and privilege of the Spartan men, when they turned 20 and became full-time soldiers.

In the Medieval Ages, stories have been written about the Black Prince, at Crecy, and Joan of Arc, teenagers that were also exceptional military commanders.¹⁰ Apart from them, young boys and teenagers from the age

⁴Dema.az.gov. (2017). *Cite a Website - Cite This for Me*. [online] Available at: <https://dema.az.gov/sites/default/files/Publications/AR-Terrorism%20Definitions-BORUNDA.pdf> [Accessed 4 Nov. 2017].

⁵Childrenandarmedconflict.un.org. (2017). Release and Reintegration | United Nations Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. [online] Available at: <https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/our-work/release-and-reintegration/> [Accessed 4 Nov. 2017]

⁶Child Soldiers International. (2017). *Reintegration*. [online] Available at: <https://www.child-soldiers.org/reintegration>

⁷Icrc.org. (2017). *Cite a Website - Cite This for Me*. [online] Available at: <https://www.icrc.org/eng/assets/files/other/opinion-paper-armed-conflict.pdf> [Accessed 4 Nov. 2017].

⁸Historywiz.com. (2017). The Spartans Childhood - Ancient Greece - HistoryWiz. [online] Available at: <http://www.historywiz.com/didyouknow/spartanfamily.htm>

⁹Spartans, D. (2017). Sparta - Ancient History - HISTORY.com. [online] HISTORY.com. Available at: <http://www.history.com/topics/ancient-history/sparta>

¹⁰Deremilitari.org. (2017). *Teenagers at War During the Middle Ages » De Re Militari*. [online] Available at: <http://deremilitari.org/2014/03/teenagers-at-war-during-the-middle-ages/>

of 14 called “squires” followed and served the knights.¹¹ Some, called “squires of the body” even accompanied the Knight to the battlefield and, if necessary, fought alongside them, proving their skills and loyalty.¹²

Perhaps the most known case of child soldiers in this era is the janissaries, meaning “new soldiers”.¹³ They were an elite force, loyal servants of the sultan, since 1380. Janissary recruits were chosen from groups of boys who were taken into Ottoman service in periodic levies via a human tax called “*devshirme*” on Christian peasant families, mainly those in the Balkans.¹⁴ The boys were converted to Islam, despite Islamic prohibitions against the forcible conversion of Christians, and then trained for military service. The janissaries lived together in large barracks within the cities they were stationed. They were subject to celibacy and were forbidden to marry until they retired from active duty.¹⁵

Later in the Napoleonic period, the French emperor resulted in recruiting teenage boys after the defeat in Russia and the impending invasion of France by the armies of the Coalition. Those inexperienced boys were the backbone of his army and thus were mockingly called “*Maries Louises*” from the name of Napoleon’s wife. In the end, at Waterloo, Napoleon’s forces were preceded on to the field at Waterloo by drummer boys, who were mown down by the English fire.¹⁶

However, the victorious British were also used in such practices, particularly in the Royal Navy, where boys were trained on active duty ships until 1855 in a tradition originating as early as the years of the Spanish Armada.¹⁷ These boys became trainee sailors gaining real life experience of the perils in the sea and the dangers of naval warfare.¹⁸

One of the most notorious uses of child soldiers was conducted in Nazi Germany through the Hitler Youth, which in the beginning prepared the boys for military service.¹⁹ However, as the tide of war turned, in the final weeks, more and more teenagers manned front line station in the defense of the Reich resulting in the bloody climax of the battle of the Berlin where whole suburbs were protected by members of the Hitler Youth, by children as young as 12.²⁰

Such measures were also taken by the Japanese, especially regarding “kamikaze” actions, but also by the Russians who accepted teenage volunteers after the initial German invasion.

After WWII and during the post-colonial era, the use of child soldiering continued. During the Vietnam War, the Viet Cong used children and other civilians as part of the psychological warfare strategy they

¹¹Lordsandladies.org. (2017). *Squires*. [online] Available at: <http://www.lordsandladies.org/squires.htm>

¹²Medievalchronicles.com. (2017). *Medieval Squire*. [online] Available at: <http://www.medievalchronicles.com/medieval-knights/medieval-squire/>

¹³Encyclopedia.com. (2017). *Janissaries facts, information, pictures | Encyclopedia.com articles about Janissaries*. [online] Available at: <http://www.encyclopedia.com/history/modern-europe/turkish-and-ottoman-history/janissaries>

¹⁴Historyworld.net. (2017). *JANISSARIES*. [online] Available at:

<http://www.historyworld.net/wrldhis/PlainTextHistories.asp?ParagraphID=fqx>

¹⁵Encyclopedia Britannica. (2017). *Janissary | Turkish military*. [online] Available at: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Janissary-corps>

¹⁶Popham, P. (2017). *A dream that could become reality: no more child soldiers....* [online] The Independent. Available at: <http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/comment/a-dream-that-could-become-reality-no-more-child-soldiers-8443291.html>

¹⁷Histclo.com. (2017). *boys in the military: British Royal Navy training ship era*. [online] Available at: <http://histclo.com/youth/mil/cou/eng/navy/boy/msnr-ts.html>

¹⁸Cnrs-scrn.org. (2017). *Cite a Website - Cite This For Me*. [online] Available at: https://www.cnrs-scrn.org/northern_mariner/vol14/tnm_14_4_11-24.pdf

¹⁹History Learning Site. (2017). *Hitler Youth Movement - History Learning Site*. [online] Available at: <http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/nazi-germany/hitler-youth-movement/>

²⁰Ic.galegroup.com. (2017). *Student Resources in Context - Document*. [online] Available at: http://ic.galegroup.com/ic/suic/ReferenceDetailsPage/ReferenceDetailsWindow?failOverType=&query=&windowstate=normal&contentModules=&mode=view&currPage=&zid=&action=e&prodId=SUIC&display-query=&limiter=&dviSelectedPage=&displayGroupName=Reference&sortBy=&displayGroups=&disableHighlighting=false&search_within_results=&p=SUIC&catId=&activityType=&scanId=&documentId=GALE%7CXGEWTU504491882&source=Bookmark&u=la99595&jsid=9957d16ae4fe726763b4a28bba7f5274#Child_Soldiers_in_World_War_I_and_II

waged against American forces. While the fully enlisted members of the Viet Cong were typically no younger than seventeen, they also established youth corps for fifteen- and sixteen-year-olds and regularly used younger children for special missions. In addition, during the Iran-Iraq War, the Iranian military sent many children to the front lines proven by the large number of battle fatalities under the age of 15.²¹

Similarly, in Iraq, Saddam Hussein built up an entire apparatus in the 1990s designed to pull children into the military realm and bolster populace control. This included the Ashbal Saddam (“Saddam’s Lion Cubs”), a paramilitary force of boys between the ages of 10-15 that acted as a feeder into the noted Saddam Fedayeen units that proved more aggressive than the Iraqi army during the American invasion.²²

However, it is in Africa where the use of child soldiers has reached an epidemic status. Algeria, Angola, Rwanda Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Sudan and Uganda and. Unfortunately, the list continues.²³The Ugandan Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) is commonly known for abducting children from their homes, estimating about 25 000 children since the 1980s. The RUF in Sierra Leone also used abduction as one of its main recruitment methods as did the Sierra Leone Army. By 1998 about 25% percent of the fighting forces in the Sierra Leone civil war were under 18.²⁴ In Burundi, the Hutu opposition systematically recruited boys and girls under 15 years of age into its armed groups.

3.2 Areas with cases of child soldiers today

Nowadays, the use of child soldiers is a common method conducted by most terrorist and extremist groups around the globe. Predominantly, ISIS uses children for suicide operations, executing prisoners, guerrilla warfare and also as human shields. They brainwash them with hatred towards Shiites to fight in their war of religious extremism.²⁵ As a result of their shrinking territorial influence and losses, ISIS is recruiting more children than ever to fight in the front line or as suicide bombers.²⁶

Similarly the Islamic State affiliate terrorist group, the Nigerian Boko Haram recruited 2,000 children to fight in 2016 and frequently recruits children, boys and girls, for suicide missions and combatants.²⁷

The situation remains endemic in Africa due to the continuous recruitment of children by destabilized states and militant groups in civil wars. Particularly, an estimated 17,000 children were recruited in South Sudan since 2013 and child soldiers in the Central African Republic(CAR) have numbered 10,000, whilst more than 20,000 were in the Democratic Republic of Congo(DRC), nearly 9,000 in the Central African Republic and 1,600 in Chad²⁸. In addition, children are being abducted and recruited in Somalia and cases of child

²¹Al-Monitor. (2017). *Iraq's child soldiers*. [online] Available at: <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2015/08/iraq-iran-child-soldiers.html>

²²Ic.galegroup.com. (2017). *Student Resources in Context - Document*. [online] Available at: http://ic.galegroup.com/ic/suic/ReferenceDetailsPage/ReferenceDetailsWindow?failOverType=&query=&windowstate=normal&contentModules=&mode=view&currPage=&zid=&action=e&prodId=SUIC&display-query=&limiter=&dviSelectedPage=&displayGroupName=Reference&sortBy=&displayGroups=&disableHighlighting=false&search_within_results=&p=SUIC&catId=&activityType=&scanId=&documentId=GALE%7CXGEWTU504491882&source=Bookmark&u=la99595&jsid=9957d16ae4fe726763b4a28bba7f5274#Child_Soldiers_in_World_War_I_and_II

²³Human Rights Watch. (2017). *More Than 120,000 Child Soldiers Fighting in Africa*. [online] Available at: <https://www.hrw.org/news/1999/04/18/more-120000-child-soldiers-fighting-africa>

²⁴ACCORD. (2017). *Understanding the Recruitment of Child Soldiers in Africa - ACCORD*. [online] Available at: <http://www.accord.org.za/conflict-trends/understanding-recruitment-child-soldiers-africa/>

²⁵Al-Monitor. (2017). *Iraq's child soldiers*. [online] Available at: <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2015/08/iraq-iran-child-soldiers.html>

²⁶Economist.com. (2017). *Cite a Website - Cite This For Me*. [online] Available at: <https://www.economist.com/news/middle-east-and-africa/21723416-cubs-caliphate-are-growing-up-what-do-islamic-states-child>

²⁷UPI. (2017). *Boko Haram recruited 2,000 child soldiers in 2016: UNICEF*. [online] Available at: https://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2017/02/21/Boko-Haram-recruited-2000-child-soldiers-in-2016-UNICEF/8831487689926/

²⁸UPI. (2017). *Boko Haram recruited 2,000 child soldiers in 2016: UNICEF*. [online] Available at: https://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2017/02/21/Boko-Haram-recruited-2000-child-soldiers-in-2016-UNICEF/8831487689926/

soldiers have also been reported in Mali and Libya, where civil war has erupted once again²⁹. More specifically, in CAR recruitment is happening from all sides and the number of child soldiers is believed to have risen considerably due to the recent escalation in fighting and the emergence of self-defense groups³⁰. In DRC, a third of the child combatants are girls and children, in general, who were victims of recruitment within the ranks of armed groups were also victims and witnesses of other grave child rights violations, such as rape, abduction, killing and maiming³¹. In Somalia, the Somali National Army also recruited a high number of children who were used for various tasks, such as manning checkpoints and recruitment was also attributed to clan militias, Ahl al-Sunnawal-Jama'a and Galmudug forces³². Unfortunately, the violations and cases are not limited there but happen- with diminished frequency- in states such as the Philippines, Myanmar as well as by Indian militant groups and Colombia's FARC³³.

4. Legal Framework

There is a number of international legal documents regarding the rights of child and their protection from war and its atrocities. The following are the most influential and the inspiration for the rest.

4.1 Geneva Convention

In 1977, the Additional Protocols to the 1949 Geneva Conventions prohibited the military recruitment and use of children under the age of 15, which is now recognized as a war crime under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. It applies to both government-controlled armed forces and non-state armed groups³⁴. In international armed conflicts, the first Additional Protocol also requires military recruitment of 15 to 18-year-old to prioritize the oldest³⁵. The most relevant articles of the Additional Protocols regarding the child are Article 77(2) of Additional Protocol I and Article 4(3)(c) of Additional Protocol II. Both declare the prohibition that any child under the age of 15 takes part in hostilities regardless of the manner of its involvement, for example, as a soldier or a slave or a sex object³⁶.

4.2 Convention on the rights of Child

The prohibition on the use of children under 15 was reaffirmed in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), which also defined a child for the first time as any person under the age of 18³⁷. The 1989 Convention on the rights of Child is the most complete document regarding child protection. Thus, it also

²⁹Un.org. (2017). *United Nations Official Document*. [online] Available at:

http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=s/2016/360&referer=/english/&Lang=E

³⁰UN News Service Section. (2017). *UN News - Central African Republic: over 6,000 child soldiers may be involved in fighting, UN says*. [online] Available at:

<https://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=46954&Cr=central+african+republic&Cr1#.WfSVU1u0PIU>

³¹UN News Service Section. (2017). *UN News - Child recruitment remains 'endemic' in DR Congo, UN says in new report*. [online] Available at: <https://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=46330#.WfSVW1u0PIV>

³²Childrenandarmedconflict.un.org. (2017). *Somalia | United Nations Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict*. [online] Available at: <https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/countries-caac/somalia/>

³³Un.org. (2017). *United Nations Official Document*. [online] Available at:

http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=s/2016/360&referer=/english/&Lang=E

³⁴Child Soldiers International. (2017). *International laws and child rights*. [online] Available at: <https://www.child-soldiers.org/international-laws-and-child-rights>

³⁵Icrg.org. (2017). *Children protected under international humanitarian law - ICRC*. [online] Available at:

<https://www.icrc.org/eng/war-and-law/protected-persons/children/overview-protected-children.htm>

³⁶Ihl-databases.icrc.org. (2017). *Customary IHL - Practice Relating to Rule 137. Participation of Child Soldiers in Hostilities*. [online] Available at: https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/customary-ihl/eng/docs/v2_rul_rule137

³⁷Child Soldiers International. (2017). *International laws and child rights*. [online] Available at: <https://www.child-soldiers.org/international-laws-and-child-rights>

contains articles considering the position and rights of child in war zones and conflict areas. More specifically³⁸:

Article 6

1. *States Parties recognize that every child has the inherent right to life.*
2. *States Parties shall ensure to the maximum extent possible the survival and development of the child.*

Article 38

1. *States Parties undertake to respect and to ensure respect for rules of international humanitarian law applicable to them in armed conflicts which are relevant to the child.*
2. *States Parties shall take all feasible measures to ensure that persons who have not attained the age of fifteen years do not take a direct part in hostilities.*
3. *States Parties shall refrain from recruiting any person who has not attained the age of fifteen years into their armed forces. In recruiting among those persons who have attained the age of fifteen years but who have not attained the age of eighteen years, States Parties shall endeavor to give priority to those who are oldest.*
4. *In accordance with their obligations under international humanitarian law to protect the civilian population in armed conflicts, States Parties shall take all feasible measures to ensure protection and care of children who are affected by an armed conflict.*

Article 39

States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to promote physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration of a child victim of: any form of neglect, exploitation, or abuse; torture or any other form of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment; or armed conflicts. Such recovery and reintegration shall take place in an environment which fosters the health, self-respect and dignity of the child.”

We spot the existence of articles protecting the child not only from recruitment, but also from abuse and exploitation as civilian population as well as the need for their reintegration in society.

Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict(OPAC)

OPAC was the world's first international treaty wholly focused on ending the military exploitation of children. It was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 25 May 2000 and entered into force on February 2002. The treaty prohibits the conscription of children under the age of 18 and their participation in every type of hostilities. It also prohibits the voluntary recruitment of children by non-state armed groups, although, it allows state armed forces to recruit them from the age of 16, as long as the children recruited are not sent to warfare. However, these double-standards that apply to state and non-state groups is hampering international efforts to persuade non-state armed groups to release the children they have recruited.

Nonetheless, states that sign OPAC can commit to a higher recruitment age if they wish to do so, which then cannot be lowered, according to Article 3 paragraph 1³⁹. Two-thirds of the world's governments now only allow the military recruitment of adult volunteers from age 18. Among those that have so far resisted this are the USA (which recruit from age 17) and the UK (which recruits from age 16). Both had insisted on the OPAC double-standard at the time of its negotiation⁴⁰.

³⁸Ohchr.org. (2017). *OHCHR | Convention on the Rights of the Child*. [online] Available at: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CRC.aspx>

³⁹Childrenandarmedconflict.un.org. (2017). *Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict | United Nations Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict*. [online] Available at: <https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/mandate/optional-protocol/>

⁴⁰Child Soldiers International. (2017). *International laws and child rights*. [online] Available at: <https://www.child-soldiers.org/international-laws-and-child-rights>

4.3 Relevant Documents

Other documents have also tackled the issue: The UNSC Resolution 1261/1999 seeks to identify and reinforce any efforts in bringing to an end the use of children as soldiers, in violation of international law. Moreover, the International Labor Organization Convention concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor adopted in 1999, also prohibits compulsory enlistment below the age of 18. The African Union's Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (1999) prohibits state armed forces from recruiting volunteers under the age of 18⁴¹.

5. Discussion of the Topic

5.1 Ways of recruitment of children:

Children may become involved in armed forces or military groups or even terrorist organizations in various ways. Their recruitment might be the outcome of acts by other people or a decision by the child itself when no alternative seems to exist. In particular, third parties, exerting violent methods, often abduct children or exercise violence to submission. Quite the contrary young persons, being immature in most cases, might perceiving their enlistment in armed forces as prospect to escape economical impasse and wretchedness, to defend their relatives and communities or out of a feeling of revenge for possible suppression they might undergo.

The vast majority of recruited child soldiers originates from the so called **forced recruitment**. The latter, is the process when violence and force are used for the purpose of children's enlistment. The most common ways are the following: abduction from their homes or schools, violence to put them into mental and physical submission and selling of a child from its family to third party as a slave or as a warrior either for money or due to threat. In all the above-mentioned cases, the main cause of enlistment is external to the child's will. Still there many ways and reasons making children seek for their voluntary enlistment and participation in hostilities. Poverty constitutes a predominant cause, especially where it usually prevails, also the forced displacement of people deriving from war, comprises an important factor pushing children to enlist themselves in armies in order for them to secure the necessary means, for their survival, that sometimes their parents cannot grant them out of incapability. Especially orphans have greater possibilities of voluntary enlistment, as long as they are obliged to grow-up alone and they might not be capable of covering their own needs and necessities, for which normally parents take care. The prospect of securing their sustenance seems an adequate reason, considering also the fact that there is no one to protect them from abduction or to discourage them, when a family does not exist. Discriminations and attack for religious, ethnic or tribal reasons against them, their families or their communities can also drive children to join military or paramilitary groups out of sense of revenge for those acting as described above. This defense feeling is highly possible to be further cultivated by the armed groups leading occasionally to extremism and radicalism, alleging the humiliation of their families and communities. All these factors in one way or the other, affect children efficiently, causing their vulnerability to persuasion upon their recruitment.

According to the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary General for Children and Armed Conflict, "*the distinction between voluntary enlistment and forced recruitment is without meaning because even if children join on a "voluntary" basis, it is a desperate attempt to survive. Ultimately it is the decision of adult commanders to recruit children and they have to be held accountable for their acts*".⁴²

⁴¹Child Soldiers International. (2017). *International laws and child rights*. [online] Available at: <https://www.child-soldiers.org/international-laws-and-child-rights>

⁴²Childrenandarmedconflict.un.org. (2017). *Root Causes of Child Recruitment | United Nations Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict*. [online] Available at: <https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/effects-of-conflict/root-causes-of-child-soldiering/> [Accessed 4 Nov. 2017].

5.2 Repercussions to the child:

No matter which their role is, child soldiers are exposed to intense levels of violence, in a physical and verbal manner, as witnesses, victims, and forced participants. Numerous are injured, some of them luckily, in a light way while others heavily enough, thus having to live with life-term disabilities for the rest of their lives. Furthermore, those children lose their family, sometimes because they are separated from them, while in other cases child soldiers are forced to kill their relatives. Psychological problems unavoidably occur and accompany the individuals until their death. Moreover, these children are condemned in most cases to remain illiterate, without having the chance to escape from this perpetual cycle. Specifically, the recruitment of girls seems more facilitative, due to their unique vulnerabilities originating from their gender and place in society, suffer all the aforementioned consequences and additional repercussions including, but not limited to rape and sexual violence, pregnancy and related complications, stigma and rejection. The women fighters, are a huge asset on the arsenal of terrorist organizations, since they undergo hectic physical training and mental exertion. Unfortunately, the whole issue of recruitment has yet to be thoroughly addressed.

5.3 Possible solutions:

As every problem, recruitment and use of child soldiers must be encountered. Solutions towards this complicated issue have to do with four or three pillars, namely Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration and a fourth one, Prevention. Disarmament here is identified as collection, confiscation, recording and control of small arms, light weapons, explosives, heavy artillery and war material in general from child soldiers. Demobilization is the separation of child soldiers from military groups and armed forces, followed by their dissolution of those comprised in total or mostly by children, in order for the latter not to have the opportunity to rejoin them. Reintegration is a term describing the *“process through which children formerly associated with armed forces/groups are supported to return to civilian life and play a valued role in their families and communities”*.⁴³ Apart from the necessary physical needs of children undergoing this process such as home protection, security, food, water and clothing, which have to be secured and granted to them, *“Reintegration of child soldiers should emphasize three components: family reunification and community network, psychosocial support and education, and economic opportunity”*.⁴⁴

In this outline, the above-mentioned process aims to create an appropriate environment for the reunification of the child with its family, a sense of acceptance and forgiveness by relatives and community, especially when the child is associated with war crimes or other abominable acts and a general background capable to support child’s harmonization and familiarization with the civil society. Furthermore, individual psychological support seems mandatory, precisely for mental wounds originating from witnessing atrocities, suffering injuries and sexual abuse to be healed at least partially. Former child soldiers should attend special educational programs, appropriately formed for them and their reintegration, but not separately from the other children so as their socializing abilities to be rebuilt.

All these physiological, psychological, educational and economical needs can be covered through collaboration of children’s family with state’s initiatives and international organizations. Either governments or related organizations and initiatives are in duty, bound to fund programs of prevention and awareness campaigns concerning the problem and children’s education. Yet another topic relevant to prevention is of great importance. When armed conflicts are about to burst out, United Nations and other security

⁴³Child Soldiers International. (2017). *Reintegration*. [online] Available at: <https://www.child-soldiers.org/reintegration> [Accessed 4 Nov. 2017].

⁴⁴Unicef.org. (2017). Child Soldiers: Prevention, Demobilization and Reintegration. [online] Available at: https://www.unicef.org/wcaro/ChildSoldiers_CPR_Unit_Soc_Dev_Dept_World_Bank_May_2002.pdf [Accessed 4 Nov. 2017].

organizations should be ready to face the possibility of children to be recruited and involved in the imminent clash and to react immediately preventing any repercussion on them.

6. Conclusion:

Undoubtedly children comprise one of the most vulnerable groups in modern society due to their natural innocence, kindness and immaturity. Consequently, they become an easy target for military groups and terrorist organizations. Taking into consideration the easiness of manipulating a child and its reduced physical ability to resist, it is crystal clear why so many child soldiers exist and continue to be recruited either by violent abductions or by voluntary enlistment. In countries of the developing world mainly, this phenomenon is present and despite the fact that many measures have been taken in the past, it continues to expand. International community and organizations in cooperation with the various states seem to be responsible to put an end in these unprejudiced violations of human rights. It is humanity's obligation not to allow any more children to be consumable stuff in the shrine of profit making and imperialism. The delegates of this committee will have to demonstrate the various opinions and measures, promoted upon this problem by the countries of all around the world and to compose a coherent document of solutions, compromising the different optical angles.

7. Questions to be addressed

- What is a child soldier and what are the elements of recruitment?
- How can its reintegration be achieved?
- Which are the main cases of child soldiering today and why?
- How does the Geneva Convention protect children from conflict?
- Which are the main protective pillars of the Convention on the Rights of Child?
- In which ways are children enlisted in the armed forces?
- Which are the possible ramifications on a child's life and personality from serving as a soldier?
- What possible solutions are there in order to stop the phenomenon?

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