



# International Monterrey Model United Nations Simulation

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## Security Council

**Topic:** Decommissioning child soldiers

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### I. Committee Background

The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) was founded on October 24, 1945. Its main objective is to maintain international security and peace. They seek to achieve such peace and security through investigations of any conflict or scenarios that could cause international friction; the committee then acts upon these situations imposing sanctions, authorizing the use of force, including peacekeepers missions, and fostering negotiations (*United Nations Security Council* n.d.). The Council is one of the United Nations' (UN) six main organs which consists of five permanent members: China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom (UK), and the United States (US), also known as the P-five, who can veto any resolution. Additionally, the General Assembly selects 10 non-permanent members for a two-year term (*United Nations Security Council* 2020). The Security Council meets at any needed time: when there are conflicts which escalate to a point where it is deemed by the committee that intervention is necessary to restore peace. The UN Security Council goes through a voting process to implement resolutions. Each member is entitled to a vote, and all procedural decisions are finalized with at least nine votes (*Voting System Security Council* n.d.).

### II. Introduction

#### Description and Definition of the Topic

Child soldiers are anyone under 18 that is in an army or has a role in any armed conflict. They are used in different capacities such as guards, spies, cooks, carriers, bodyguards, sex slaves, and other different roles depending on the army's needs. State and non-state armed groups prefer to recruit children rather than adults since they are more obedient, manageable, and easier to manipulate; their age also makes them easier to recruit by force or abduction. However, due to lack of education, poverty, and other factors, some children join due to desperation—seeking a chance for survival (*Child Soldiers* 2011). Another contributing factor is that in certain societies, 14 and 15 -year-olds are considered adults; when a 15-year old joins the army, they become an adult soldier. However, the International Convention on the Rights of the Child established the international age of majority at 18 years, meaning that for the purposes of international law, every individual with less than 18 years of age is considered a child (*Child Soldiers* 2011). The situations these children are exposed to affects their mental health and their

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future; most children develop post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, or anxiety. Likewise, there is little to no education given to child soldiers, resulting in a lack of employment opportunities for them in their futures.

## The Problem

Thousands of children are currently being recruited and used in armed conflicts around the world. These child soldiers suffer from work exploitation as well as abuse within the passing days. Between 2005 and 2020, more than 93,000 children were turned into soldiers, although the number of cases is believed to be much higher (*Children recruited by ... groups 2021*). Armed parties have abducted, manipulated, and threatened the youth towards joining their forces (*Children recruited by ... groups 2021*). Others find themselves joining due to desperation, for survival, or to produce income for their families (Bleasdale, 2013). While being labored into dangerous missions, these children are also experiencing cruel forms of violence. Their training and activities force them to undergo insecure varieties of labor and combat that come with risks of death, disabilities, or chronic injuries (*Child soldiers 2021*). Not only do they suffer from physical activities, but child soldiers are also deprived of healthy living conditions and proper nutrition. All of these forms of torture and abuse have significant effects on both their mental and physical wellbeing (*Child soldiers 2021*).

Typically, non-governmental groups are more likely to recruit child soldiers than actual government militaries. The predicament is that government officials lack control over such groups, making it harder to deal with this dilemma. At the same time, contrary to popular belief, child soldiers are not only those who fight in battle but they are often recruited in other lines of work within the militant scene, these include cooks, porters, messengers, human shields, and any military-related activity (*Child soldiers 2021*). This problem ties directly into other issues such as poverty and unstable socioeconomic conditions. In many cases, children have no option but to join these militias because of false promises of work, money, and stable living conditions; things these individuals do not have access to. According to Child Soldiers International, there are still about fifty countries that allow children to legally join the armed forces; these parties include Afghanistan, Myanmar, Somalia, South Sudan, Syria, Yemen, and other nations around the world. As a result, over 20 countries—including the ones mentioned above—inspected by the UN revealed that there were over four thousand verified violations of uses of child soldiers by governmental forces and over eleven thousand for non-governmental groups (*Child soldiers 2021*). The Security Council should prioritize this issue as the lives and rights of these children are of preeminent importance; yet, these children get forced, abused, and deprived of their human rights daily.

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## III. History of the Topic

### Chronological History of the Topic

The Geneva Conventions, which contained four treaties and three protocols, were created shortly after World War II and set international norms for armed warfare. The 1977 Additional Protocols to the Conventions prohibited both state and non-state groups from recruiting children and stated that using child soldiers—those under the age of 15—would be considered a war crime. In the year 2000, a worldwide agreement adopted by the UN's General Assembly forbade fighting under the age of 18, stating children must be fully aware of their obligations under the Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict (OPAC) (Mulroy et al., 2020). The agreement asserts that anyone under the age of 18 is not eligible to be recruited or exploited in any way and certainly there are no exclusions for non-state parties like non governmental organizations (NGOs) and rogue militias. By 2016, OPAC had gathered the backing of 70% of state players and 60% of non-state entities. However, more than a third of the world's countries have refused to join OPAC, indicating how the exploitation of using child soldiers for military purposes is considered a beneficial asset by many communities (Mulroy et al., 2020). Between 2005 and 2018, more than 65,000 minors have been recruited and utilized by military forces and organizations; 40% of such recruits are girls—many of which are often identified as sex slaves and named 'wives' by fellow male fighters (*Reintegration of former ... soldiers* 2018). Moreover in 2017, according to the UN Secretary General's report on children in armed conflict, some positive steps have been taken: armed groups in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and the Philippines were delisted, and Colombia reached a peace accord that included a particular commitment on child release and reintegration.

Although the problem prevails, since the 1977 resolution the problem has progressively diminished thanks to many more resolutions drafted and implemented by the UN Security Council. In 2003, for example, the UN demanded a weapons embargo—ban—from children after the Second Congo War in the DRC transitional period. In 2005, the UN Security Council set up the Council's Working Group on Children and Armed conflict to highlight the link between illicit trafficking of small arms and the use of children. In December 2005, the UN enforced stricter measures and placed severe sanctions on the DRC's government during its transitional stage after two Congo Wars. In the following years, similar actions were taken to help tackle child soldier commissioning in Timor-Leste, Sudan, and Burundi. In 2018, all delegations unanimously adopted the UN Security Council resolution number 2427, providing a framework for the protection of rights, well-being, and empowerment of children world-wide (*UN Documents for ... Resolutions* 2021). Even so, child soldiers remain in numerous developing countries, which leave children in conflictive, violent, and unstable environments (D'Alessandra, 2014).

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## Historical Case Studies

### Iran-Iraq War

In September 1980, Iraqi forces launched an invasion on Iran, commencing the Iran-Iraq War. This battle grew larger, fueled by religious, political, and territorial controversies between the two countries (*Iran-Iraq War* 2021). Nevertheless, tension began developing ever since 1921, making it a matter of time before war broke out. The battle was brutal and defined by eight years of asymmetrical warfare; this caused the demand for soldiers to increase drastically. As a result, child soldiers were forced to get involved: their original use in this context was to clean out the minefields; however the situation escalated as the war got worse. Young Iranian boys aged from twelve to seventeen got sent into battle without any protection (Ghajar, 2017). These soldiers fought in dangerous combat situations with insufficient training, serving as human shields to make the way for Iranian tanks. Also, they cleared minefields and barbed wire with their bodies; reportedly, boys as young as nine were used in human wave attacks (*Iran-Iraq War* 2021). Furthermore, during this eight-year war, over 2,853 high school students were injured, and 33,000 were killed (Stilwell, 2021). Their hard work and service were not recognized as it should have been; they were robbed of their futures, all those young students grew captured by the predicament of child soldiers.

### World War I

The first World War, also known as the Great War, started in 1914 and ended in 1918. During the battles, child soldiers were recruited for various militant groups—attesting how the use of “boy soldiers” dates back to more than 100 years (White, 2021). In just the British army, there were about 250,000 recorded teenage soldiers. Their motives to join the army varied drastically, from having ‘patriotic fever’ or seeking to escape the grim living conditions (*The teenage soldiers ... One* 2014). Historian Richard Van Emden recounts that even though the children changed their name and ages, recruiting agents knew that the soldiers were below the stipulated 19 years of age; regardless, agents still let them join the militant groups. This was conflicting for families because they could not demand their children to be returned from the battlefield as it was difficult to locate them due to their faked names and ages (*Boy soldiers in ... One* n.d.). Subsequently, most of these children died or were seriously wounded on the battlefield due to the lack of strength, practice, and maturity, showcasing the repercussions for underage recruitment. Consequently, in a major battle within WWI, the Battle of the Loos, there were 50,000 casualties, 3,600 being underaged boys who were not supposed to be at the trenches at all (Trueman, 2015). Due to the deceitment and lying from these young boys, there is yet to be an exact number of child soldiers who tragically lost their lives during the Great War.

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## World War II

The last years of the Second World War indicated the desperate urgency to take all possible measures to ensure the safety of participating and feuding countries. During 1945, Germany relied upon children to protect their nation; contrary to popular belief, children were excited and awaited the opportunity. Children believed that being in school was a waste of their time when they could be on the battlefield uniting their country (*"His Purest Creation:" ... II* n.d.). Despite their enthusiasm, the terror that awaited them in the trenches would cause a lifelong impact on their point of view on life and alter their whole perception of reality. Yet, German children were still faithfully loyal to Hitler and his actions, following him straight to his ultimate death. In the crossroads with what was morally, socially, and ethically correct, fighting countries still saw the incorporation of child soldiers necessary at times of war to defend their territories, ignoring the psychological damages these tremendous effects would cause on the children (*"His Purest Creation:" ... II* n.d.). Jost Hermand, a member of Hitlers Youth, stated how the child soldiers were emotionally drained and physically exhausted from the immense amount of work they received at such a young age. Later on, these child soldiers became known as "wolf children"; when coming home after the war, they realized that they had lost everything. Slowly drifting away from humanity, the flashbacks from the fights triggered intuitive thoughts that led to further complications—all of which Germany could have prevented if the country did not use children on the battlefield (Fletcher, 2019).

## The Rwanda Genocide

Rwanda is a country in central Africa that has experienced a horrific civil war due to ethnic discriminations. The Hutu and Tutsi are Rwanda's two main ethnic groups: tensions between both of these groups grew during Germany's and Belgium's occupation of Rwanda, the Tutsi were deemed the ruling class, while the Hutu were labeled the working class. This social distinction stimulated the Hutu to resent the Tutsi, increasing tensions in the country, until a revolution broke out in 1959. Hutu animosity against the Tutsi ethnic group was not limited to adults—it also included minors—the hatred against the Tutsi was solely based on their ethnic background. The only method the Tutsi children knew of combating prejudice was to get involved in the battle (Thomas, 2021). Even though using children to fight adult fights is frowned upon by the international community, both Tutsi and Hutu troops used child soldiers during the Rwandan Genocide. Children got manipulated with ease, and the attraction to the safety that an army could bring in chaotic and dangerous surroundings facilitated their use during war. Despite the claims done by the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) that the children were only utilized for menial duties and labor, a study conducted in 1997 indicated that over 700 of the recruits had been given a military number, hinting that they were serving as soldiers, and used as

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human shields, working as spies, messengers, cooks, and other military needs. All of this costs these kids to die, suffer from mental health illnesses, and not have any quality education (Thomas, 2021).

## Liberia's 1st Civil War

Liberia is a country in West Africa that borders the Atlantic coast, also known as Africa's oldest republic. This country has gone through much civil unrest, including its first and second civil wars. Between 1989 and 1995, the First Liberian Civil War claimed 200,000 lives, produced over 700,000 refugees, and left over 1.7 million Liberians displaced. During this conflict, children got recruited into the armies daily. The National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL), an army which continues to exist, was made up of men and children, who were both voluntarily and forcibly recruited (*Child Soldiers Global ... Liberia* 2001). After a fourteen-year civil war, a peace agreement was signed between both parties in August of 1995. Still, this was one of the most substantial civil wars in Africa and it amplified the use of child soldiers from both sides: the government and the opposing forces. The national army even had a Small Boys Unit composed of boys as young as twelve years old in the task force. At the time, President Charles Taylor, said to The New York Times that recruiting children and arming them was a way to “[keep] them out of trouble” and “a means of control” (Kaplan, 2005). Later on, the Human Rights Watch found that over 21,000 children had to be reintegrated into society after the war. Interviewed children said that recruiters forced them to join the army to protect their families, and they were under the perception that it was the only way to survive. The problem arose once again during the Second Liberian Civil War between 1999 and 2003. To this day, NPFL children soldiers continue to be recruited and are involved in burning, looting, raping, and killing of civilians. Although the UNICEF, along with other organizations, have gotten involved on multiple occasions, the recruitment of child soldiers has prevailed (*How to Fight, ... Liberia* 2004).

## **Past UN Actions**

In the year 2000, the General Assembly adopted the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, aiming to protect children from recruitment (*Child Recruitment and Use* n.d.). This protocol was a commitment in which states could not recruit children under 18 to send them to the battlefields, nor to conscript them. It entered into force in 2002, and gained support by most countries around the world (*Child Recruitment and Use* n.d.). This created a lot of awareness about the situation, seeing as how the issue has become well known around the world. Also, the countries in favor of child

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soldiers have been receiving political pressure from the nations supporting the protocol (*Child Recruitment and Use* n.d.).

In 2014, the UNICEF special representative launched the campaign “Children, Not Soldiers” to bring awareness to the topic of child soldiers (*Child Recruitment and Use* n.d.). The campaign was designed to generate momentum; therefore, it received immediate support from member states, NGO’s, and other countries. Some countries concerned by the campaign included: Afghanistan, Chad, the DRC, and Yemen (*Child Recruitment and Use* n.d.). The representatives of these nations showed full support towards the movement of children not being used in battle. In 2017, UNICEF managed to release over 8,700 children from the armed forces due to this campaign. Its partnering countries helped the children find their families and readjust to life: counseling, education, and medical care were some assets of the care the children received to recover from their trauma (*Child Recruitment and Use* n.d.).

Moreover, according to Children and Armed Conflict, the UN has tackled specific scenarios where children have been wrongfully used for the role of soldiers. There are currently 19 action plans implemented by the UN to fight this pressuring issue. Some clauses presented are: “Provide release and reintegration programmes for children” and “Implement national campaigns to raise awareness and to prevent the recruitment of children” (*Action Plans 2021*). Since the start of the implementation eight governments have been shamed for the use of child soldiers. In addition six other nations have signed agreements with the UN. Currently, Afghanistan, the Central African Republic (CAR), the DRC, Mali, Myanmar, Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Syria, Yemen and other countries, have additionally implemented action plans with the UN that tackle the problems concerning children that have been child soldiers in the past; children whose education and health have been compromised, that are currently child soldiers, and to prevent any future child soldiers in the specific countries (*Child Recruitment and Use* n.d.).

## IV. Key Players and Points of View

### Syria

Syria, formally known as the Syrian Arab Republic, is one of the countries with the highest number of unlawful child soldiers. Due to the constant battles within its country and with neighboring lands, both the government of Syria and the Free Syrian Army (FSA)—a loose joinment of groups whose main goal is to overpower the Syrian leading party—have lost countless soldiers due to long and violent wars. Such has resulted in both groups recruiting boy soldiers and children as young as six years to complete tasks, including spying missions or message carrying (*The New Child ... children 2021*). When these battles were at their peak, the

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Syrian government paid no mind against the use of these child soldiers, which continued the recruitment of such individuals and risked the lives of thousands of children. The UN's April 2021 report on children within the armed conflict in Syria revealed that at least 1,423 minors were in battle between July 1, 2018, and June 30, 2020; from these children, 394 were recruited from Syrian National Army (SNA) related militias (*SNA: "Controlling Child ... Difficult"* 2021). Yet, Syria has begun taking action and implemented new laws to fight the use of child soldiers. In August 2021, Article 26 of the current Syrian law prohibited the use of children in combat for the Syrian government and its affiliated militias. Furthermore, in December 2020, the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), implemented an age assessment committee to enforce a deeper background check on new soldiers, which would ideally prevent minors lying about their age. Since this problem has been a deeply rooted conflict within the Syrian Arab Republic for decades, it will take years to achieve the proper eradication of children in battle.

## The Democratic Republic of Congo

Over six million civilians have been killed by government military forces in the last two decades, approximately forcing five million people to flee their homes, making the DRC Africa's greatest internally displaced scenario as of 2018 (Prashad, 2020). In a war-related turmoil, children are the first victims, being uprooted from their homes, schools, families, and communities; yet, to avoid being recruited by armed organizations, children actively join forced relocation. Congolese children are the principal victims of war because kids are routinely recruited—sometimes by force—by both armed groups and the Congolese army to serve as combatants, porters, and escorts (Prashad, 2020). Armed violence persists in certain areas of the DRC, and children are particularly susceptible in these settings since they are powerless against militant organizations' cruelty. Child soldiers are also imprisoned for longer time frames in deplorable conditions, such as the constant lack of food, clean water, and medical treatment. Armed political parties have been using and recruiting child soldiers as a strategy since 2001, with up to 40% of their army made up of minors (Willemont & Sona, 2018). Subsequently, the majority of child soldiers recruited by the end of 2009 were under the age of 15. The Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children of Armed Conflict identified 631 incidents of child recruitment and usage in armed conflict in 2018. Nonetheless, economic funds are required to care for all of the children who have been abducted and now retrieved from armed organizations or militias. In 2018, UNICEF required \$11.5 million to care for and reintegrate children who had fled armed groups and militias. Without it, 5,000 children from the DRC would have been unable to be cared for, and two orientation and transit centers would have been forced to shut down (Willemont & Sona, 2018). The DRC has not developed a current plan of action to diminish child soldiers' rate.

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## Yemen

The Republic of Yemen has continuously used child soldiers as a tactic to increase the force of their armies. Recently, the nation has found itself in multiple civil wars and open fires; these conflicts began in 2012 and the UN has since declared it one of the most devastating humanitarian crises in the world (*Child soldiers used ... says 2019*). All sides of the conflict have been at fault for using child soldiers in their battles. Since the start of Yemen's civil war, over 70,000 people have been killed while 1,000 children have been forced to fight (*Child soldiers used ... says 2019*). Countless lives are constantly being lost and adolescents are being forced to defend others without having any knowledge of how to hold a gun. Also, around five million children have been found facing famine (*Child soldiers used ... says 2019*). Reports show that child soldiers are used by every group in the conflict to either fight, provide logistic support to the military, or guard checkpoints (Adrian, 2019). These actions are endangering their lives due to the fact that they are hard to execute and have a high probability of resulting in massacre. There are multiple armed groups in Yemen promoting the use of child soldiers. The Houthi rebel group—a military rebellion promoting civil wars—has been responsible for 72% of child soldiers (Adrian, 2019). The group also runs 'summer camps' in which children are supposedly brainwashed to react with violent actions and hatred. In reality, the purpose of these camps is to recruit child soldiers; in the camps the children receive special training, combat sessions, and more military preparation (*Underage 'martyrs': Recruiting ... Yemen 2021*). These teenagers are then sent to the front lines to fight. This crisis in Yemen is not being properly addressed, causing the increasing use of child soldiers.

## Myanmar

In 2001, the Child Soldiers Global Report showed that 20% of Myanmar's army was made up of minors. This is the equivalent to roughly 70,000 child soldiers. Myanmar did not have military service laws in place, however, it did require each district to meet a given recruitment quota. In order to not get fined, districts resorted to forcing children into joining the army, promising financial rewards or prestige to the family. Although the UN Human Rights Watch raised several concerns and possible sanctions, Myanmar expressed they had no intention of making legislative amendments to prevent child labor (Philipp, 2021). In 2005, officials forcibly recruited child soldiers who were given prison sentences. In 2009, rebel groups like the Chin National Front pledged to stop recruiting child soldiers. In 2012 Myanmar signed the Joint Action Plan where they agreed to work alongside the UN to prevent child recruitment. After this, only 956 child soldiers were released from the army. In 2015, Myanmar signed the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Right of the Child, which condemns the use of minors in armed conflict. Still, between 2007 and 2018, Myanmar was estimated to have one of the largest

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numbers of child soldiers in the world, with up to 50,000 child soldiers in both government armed forces and armed opposition groups (*The ordeals of ... soldiers* 2021). In 2019, Myanmar prohibited children from being used as porters, cooks, messengers, or for sexual purposes. In the same year, Myanmar established the 2019 Child Rights Law which forbids the use of children in forces or mandatory labor and released 1,700 child soldiers. Despite recent actions, in 2021, the UN verified the recruitment of 790 children (Maung, 2020).

## Somalia

In 2017, Somalia—formally known as the Federal Republic of Somalia—had the highest number of child soldiers according to a report conducted by the UN Secretary-General. Though many countries were found to have child soldiers, Somalia had 2,127 boy soldiers and 931 child deaths in battle—which are the highest from all of the countries (Regilme & Spoldi, 2021). This country has dealt with constant battles for decades, with soldiers fighting wars with neighboring countries, enduring a civil war, and fighting smaller Somali clans and non-governmental militias. This constant war and insecure climate within the country has caused adult soldiers to become scarce, which prompted both governmental and non-governmental militias to recruit children. As time progressed and this violation was reported numerous times to the UN, the Somalian government dialed down in recruiting child soldiers—but that does not mean other extremist groups backed down. In late September 2017, the Islamic extremist group Al-Shabab demanded and threatened “elders, teachers in Islamic religious schools, and communities in rural areas” within Somalia's Bay region to provide children as young as eight years old and forced them to be part of their armed groups (*Somalia: Al-Shabab ... Children* 2018). Consequently, “many children have fled school or their homes” to escape forced recruitment, as the Human Rights Watch Senior Africa Researcher, Laetitia Bader, reports (*Somalia: Al-Shabab ... Children* 2018). For decades, young individuals have been forced to take part in the devastating battles within the country and have escaped their families, homes, and communities to try to gain liberation from groups such as Al-Shabab.

## **V. Possible Solutions**

One of the root causes of child soldiers is the fact that children from low-income and vulnerable families are taken advantage of and exploited. In order to prevent this, the cycle of violence must be broken. This means that children must have access to education and healthcare to help them move forward (Plett, 2020). One might also consider teaching underprivileged kids about their civil rights, creating awareness about their situation, and empowering them to be independent from the empty promises made by recruiters and army leaders. In addition to that,

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Child Soldier Prevention Acts must be enforced by all participant countries and by the committee, and as the Security Council, the committee should find a way to incentivize countries to comply. Child trafficking also contributes to children ending in positions where they must be part of an army, this should be monitored by organizations like the UNICEF and any child protection NGO, as it is these kids that end up forced to serve as soldiers or end up as slaves of one kind or another (Stohl, 2017). Not only that, but each government should be able to ensure the safety of their children by monitoring armed conflicts and sanctioning the use of child soldiers with trading, economic, or any sanctions the committee sees fit. Also, the committee should consider working alongside the UNICEF and other UN and NGO partners to form a coalition and help prevent children being forced to participate in armed conflict (*Child Recruitment and Use* n.d.).

Another possible solution is that instead of creating new programs and organizations that fight child soldiers, already existing ones should be reinforced by the UN Security Council to create a bigger impact (Elder, 2017). World Vision, War Children, Child Soldiers International, and the UN International Children's Emergency Fund are organizations that are currently fighting this issue. Collaborating with these and other organizations would only strengthen the impact and the problem would be resolved much faster. This is due to the fact that if the UN Security Council is able to gather more funds, volunteers, and spread more awareness, then the NGOs can use it to their advantage by combining resources and knowledge. For example, Child Soldier International "works to end recruitment and use of children on behalf of armed groups", joining forces would prevent a greater number of children from being recruited (Elder, 2017). The collaborations of the UN Security Council and NGOs could improve a variety of areas such as collecting funds and providing resources like the UN's peacekeepers, raising awareness, and other needed material. This would make an impact because it saves time, meaning that the process of making the organization and programs is already done making it possible for faster action. The time saved is time that children will not be part of armed conflicts; more time children will have better access to education, dealing with mental and physical repercussions of their time as soldiers, and living an actual childhood (Elder, 2017).

Taking a different approach, another possible solution would be signing a treaty, acknowledging the upcoming peace agreement, with the UN. This treaty would condemn the exploitation of child soldiers as a human invalidation, providing an immediate consequence for those countries who breach it. Between nations, deals can be made to act on different types of consequences: removal of military weapons or a financial sanction are examples of consequences for those countries who fail to uphold the standards of the agreement. Taking into consideration that dominant nations such as China, Russia, and the US have had few to none rates of child soldiers over the last ten years, they could be the leading partners in this treaty. Settlements like

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this have been proposed in past events, however with leading countries becoming one unanimous source to establish this agreement, the odds are in the favour of it actually being implemented, benefiting children all around the world who are brutally exploited to be used as soldiers.

There is also a need to conduct operational research to understand the issue; identifying the key aspects of the crisis will result in an efficient outcome. Countries in support of movements to ban child soldiers could lead the research alongside organizations specialized in the topic. This solution would consist of governments finding out how children become involved in armed conflicts, what their experiences are like, how they could exit from their involvement, assuming they could, and what types of support they require to reintegrate and recover. As multiple NGOs have collaborated to free children, they can lend a helping hand towards sponsoring parts of the solution. Many children who were forced to battle in armed conflicts have long-term effects from trauma. Their childhood was stolen from them, so they must have the opportunity to reintegrate themselves into society. This may require practitioners and researchers to review their methods for collecting information and re-examine opportunities to tackle this issue as soon as possible.

In order to truly tackle this issue, the problem must be analyzed. Another possible solution to the problem would be an advance in the investment of resources such as medical care, security, nutrition, psychological aid, and other necessary services the children will need. According to the Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action, the total global humanitarian assistance directed towards child soldiers in crisis settings is at 0.4% (Hockin, n.d.). Yet, child soldiers require support that will aid them in a successful reintegration to society and protection. The reintegration would be handled by organizations who specialize in these areas. Many children end up being involved with armed forces due to the lack of protection and financial income they are receiving. Therefore, multiple communities would be benefited if more humanitarian assistance would be received and directed towards giving off protection for the children.

## VI. Current Status

In previous years, there have been multiple actions taken by the UN to help child soldiers and inform countries about this unethical use of children. In particular, the UNICEF launched the organization “Children, Not Soldiers” in 2014, which targeted the halt of the use of children in armed conflict. Some measures incorporated within this agreement include: issuing military orders prohibiting the recruitment of individuals under the age of 18, reintegrating former child soldiers into their community, investigating allegations of recruitment and facilitating the monitoring of progress (Touma, 2014). When this organization was launched, it involved several

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countries known for their use of boy soldiers, including Afghanistan, Chad, the DRC, Myanmar, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan and Yemen. In 2014, during the launch of this campaign, representatives of each country attended the event and expressed their full support for the causes of “Children, Not Soldiers”. This campaign came to an end in 2016; the consensus imagined that thousands of child soldiers were released due to the initiatives and the momentum both the UNICEF and the UN began. This campaign had countless achievements; one of these was that the government of Afghanistan criminalized the recruitment of children, “over 800 children (and youth recruited as children) were released from Myanmar’s army since the signature of the Action Plan in 2012” (*Children, Not Soldiers* n.d.). However, countries are still in need of many more effective initiatives to be able to get closer to achieving true liberty for these children.

On another note, “There are an estimated 250,000 child soldiers in the world today in at least 20 countries” (*Child soldiers* n.d.). This problem is not something new; a variety of countries and the UN have been acting towards combating child soldiers for many years. Myanmar and the UN signed a Joint Action Plan in June 2012, in which the Burmese government and military agreed to cease all child recruitment and usage in the armed services by December 2013. The military failed to meet its duties under the plan despite the clear criteria. The UN Secretary-General's third report to the Security Council on children and armed violence in Myanmar was issued in May 2013. The study acknowledges that the Burmese military has made considerable progress, but it also showed that collaboration was insufficient (*Child soldiers* n.d.). With this, the UN Security Council must include solutions that will encourage and ensure collaboration from all parties involved in this pressing issue.

Since 2012, the number of children in armed conflict has increased by 159% with about 30,000 recruitment cases verified (Mattews, 2019). The exploitation of girls is arising quickly too. Just in 2018, the number of girls in the armed forces totaled 893, which is four times higher than the year before. Since girls are not often perceived as associated with armed actors, they often fall outside statistics and go unnoticed by child protection agencies, making this official number likely much higher. There is also a reported 40% increase in sexual violence against children between 2012 and 2019 (Mattews, 2019). It is estimated that tens of thousands of children are currently being recruited; in 2019 alone, 7,740 children as young as six, were recruited and used as soldiers around the world. Afghanistan, Somalia, Syria, the DRC, and Yemen, currently hold the largest number of child soldiers. Their tasks include not only fighting, but informing, looting, messaging, spying, and use as domestic or sexual slaves. According to the UN International Labour Organization, the things these children are forced to do are considered child labor, abuse, human trafficking, and sexual exploitation (Wuilbercq, 2021). A numerous amount of children are being ripped from their lives and stripped from their rights; the committee must work together to find an adequate, multifaceted solution.

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Altogether, countries from this committee must join forces to ensure that no more innocent children are turned into soldiers, which is considered one of the worst forms of child labour to the date alongside abuses by sexual trafficking (Wuilbercq, 2021). Given that children in economically vulnerable situations are ultimately destined to be recruited for war, the Security Council must reinforce that no child should experience what thousands of kids from the DRC and Syria are going through (*Children recruited by ... groups* 2021). Furthermore, Save the Children, an NGO that is dedicated to providing a better lifestyle for children around nations, states that “If former child soldiers are not successfully reintegrated into society, there is a high risk of them being recruited again”, meaning that there is a great chance that these same children will be taken again by non-governmental groups to do the job of an adult soldier unless they are provided with the necessary aid to become part of a society again (*Reintegration of former ... soldiers* 2018). Special organizations such as, Save The Children, World Vision, War Child, UNICEF, ILO, Office of the UN Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, are available and open for contact to work alongside countries that envision a brighter future for more than 250,000 million children around the world (*Child soldiers* n.d.).

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