Committee: Youth Delegate Forum (YDF)

Topic: Protecting Children in Armed Conflicts from Violations of International Law Prohibiting Attacks on Minors

Student Officer: Boris Nikolov

Position: Deputy President

PERSONAL INTRODUCTION

Dear Delegates,

My name is Boris Nikolov and I am honoured to be participating in the 9th DSTMUN conference as Deputy President of the Youth Delegate Forum on Protecting Biodiversity and Climate Action (YDF). By the time of the conference, I will be a 10th grader at Pinewood the American International School of Thessaloniki.

I would like to warmly welcome all of you attending the conference, and I eagerly await the upcoming debate, it being an immense opportunity to grow public speaking, writing, and critical thinking skills. I wish you all the best and am looking forward to seeing what solutions are proposed for this issue.

This study guide will help you to understand the issue at hand, being “Protecting Children in Armed Conflicts from Violations of International Law Prohibiting Attacks on Minors”, and provide you with the stepping stone to guide your research for sample resolutions and speeches during the days that the debate is ongoing. With minors being exploited and harmed worldwide as a result of low enforcement of international law during armed conflicts, an innovative solution is needed to ensure children are protected from the great atrocities of war.

I expect you all to be prepared and ready for guaranteeing the YDF of the 9th DSTMUN creates a fruitful debate. Should you have any questions regarding the topic, my email is; bnikolov@pinewood-school.gr.

All the best,

Boris NIkolov

TOPIC INTRODUCTION

During an armed conflict, children remain to be the most vulnerable victims of grave human rights violations, with these conflicts affecting their safety worldwide. As children are easily overpowered, lack full physical and mental development compared to adults, and oftentimes lack essential knowledge to report violations on their rights, 300,000 grave violations against children in conflict have been verified from 2015-2023, with 120,000 of those maimed or killed. [UNICEF][1] Protections stated in the International Humanitarian Law (IHL), International Humanitarian Rights Law (IHRL), Convention on the Rights of Child (CRC), Rome Statute, and Geneva Conventions directly advocate for aiding the safety of children in conflict zones. However, despite the numerous policies and protections for children on an international scale that aim to safeguard the rights of minors, continued denied access to the human rights of minors appears in armed conflict.

Significant challenges remain in the implementation and prolonged enforcement of these legal protections, with state and Non-State Armed Groups (NSAGs) deliberately targeting civilian populations, resulting in great exposure to violence and danger for innocent minors. The root of the issue lies in the difficulty in applying long term protection mechanisms in the often politically unstable and hostile environments of conflict zones, whether continuing the implementation of further international assistance or instead focusing on providing sovereign aid and capacity building for nations affected by armed conflict. Situations in the DRC, Syria, Sudan, Myanmar, Yemen, Somalia, and Palestine also show numerous violations in international laws prohibiting attacks on minors, with urban warfare and involvement of non-state groups causing an increasing difficulty to distinguish combatants and non-combatants.

Many steps have already been taken in this issue, including UNSC resolution 1612, which created the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanisms which gathered information on the Six Grave Violations on children in armed conflict, among other UNSC resolutions such as 1261 or 1882. Also providing aid in the issue are the safe schools declaration and various International Criminal Court (ICC) prosecutions for child soldier recruiters, which help in improving accountability in the unreliable combat zones. Nevertheless, many of these treaties as well as those stated above continue to be ignored and infringed, with western and european countries such as the USA supporting the implementation of increased international oversight and regulation, while countries affected by such conflicts or developing countries advocate for a sovereign response built around capacity building and state-led peacemaking operations due to the previous ineffectiveness of international oversight on the matter.

[1] More than 300,000 Grave Violations against Children in Conflict Verified Worldwide in Past 18 Years, http://www.unicef.org/press-releases/more-300000-grave-violations-against-children-conflict-verified-worldwide-past-18 Accessed 29 June 2026.

Addressing the ensured protection of children in armed conflicts therefore requires a multilateral response from this committee. As conflicts continue to evolve, the international community faces the urgent responsibility of ensuring that children are protected from violations of international law and that those responsible for such violations are held accountable in order to guarantee the safety of future generations.

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Abduction

The unlawful removal or detention of a person against their will. Used in armed conflicts as means of gathering hostages or extracting information against one's will. Abduction of children is one of the Six Grave Violations monitored by the United Nations, marking it as an extremely serious offence against children.

Armed Conflict

"A situation in which there is resort to the use of armed force between States or protracted resort to the use of armed force between governmental authorities and organized armed groups or between such groups within a State." [UNTERMS][2]

Child Soldier

"Child soldiers are defined as individuals under 18 years of age who are recruited or used by armed forces or groups in various roles, including combatants, support personnel, or for sexual purposes, often leading to significant physical and mental health consequences."[SCIENCE DIRECT][3] The recruitment of child soldiers is one of the largest violations of children's rights in armed conflicts around the world that should be addressed in this topic's debate.

Convention on the Rights of Child (CRC)

Created in 1989, the CRC is the most ratified human rights treaty in history, advocating for the human rights of children specifically, and creating various economic, political, and social protections for them worldwide.

International Humanitarian Law (IHL)

"International humanitarian law (IHL) is a set of rules that seeks, for humanitarian reasons, to limit the effects of armed conflict. It protects persons who are not, or are no longer, directly or actively participating in hostilities, and imposes limits on the means and

[2] Unterm, unterm.un.org/unterm2/en/. Accessed 29 June 2026.
[3] Child Soldiers - an Overview | Sciencedirect Topics, www.sciencedirect.com/topics/social-sciences/child-soldiers.

methods of warfare."[REDCROSS][4]International humanitarian law is extremely relevant to the topic because it acts as the legal basis for child protections in armed conflicts.

Maiming

"To injure a person so severely that a part of their body will no longer work as it should" [CAMBRIDGE DICTIONARY].[5] One of the most common forms of failed protection of children during an armed conflict, children as well as adults often suffer maiming as a result of attacks, bombings, and other forms of violence in armed conflicts.

Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM)

"In 2005, with the adoption of resolution 1612, the Security Council took the unprecedented step of establishing a Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM) on grave violations committed against children in times of armed conflict. The purpose of the MRM is to provide for the systematic gathering of accurate, timely, objective and reliable information on six grave violations committed against children in situations of armed conflict." [UNSRG][6] This is one of the largest steps taken by the United Nations on the issue, and allows for increased surveillance on the most important violations on the rights of children.

Non-State Armed Groups (NSAGs)

An organized group that is capable of using violence to achieve its political, economic, or ideological objectives and operates independently of, or in opposition to, state control.

Sexual Assault

Any unwanted sexual contact, behavior, or act committed against a person without their freely given and explicit consent. Sexual assault becomes more common in armed conflicts, as civillains including children are often more vulnerable due to displacement and breakdowns in law enforcement and security.

---

[4] What Is International Humanitarian Law? | International Committee of the Red Cross, www.icrc.org/en/document/what-international-humanitarian-law. Accessed 29 June 2026.

[5] Cambridge Dictionary | English Dictionary, Translations & Thesaurus, dictionary.cambridge.org/. Accessed 29 June 2026.

[6] Monitoring and Reporting on Grave Violations | Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/en/tools-for-action/monitoring-and-reporting. Accessed 29 June 2026.

The Six Grave Violations

"The six grave violations serve as the basis to gather information and report on violations affecting children, and are: Killing and maiming of children; Recruitment or use of children as soldiers; Sexual violence against children; Abduction of children; Attacks against schools or hospitals; Denial of humanitarian access for children." [UNSRG][7]

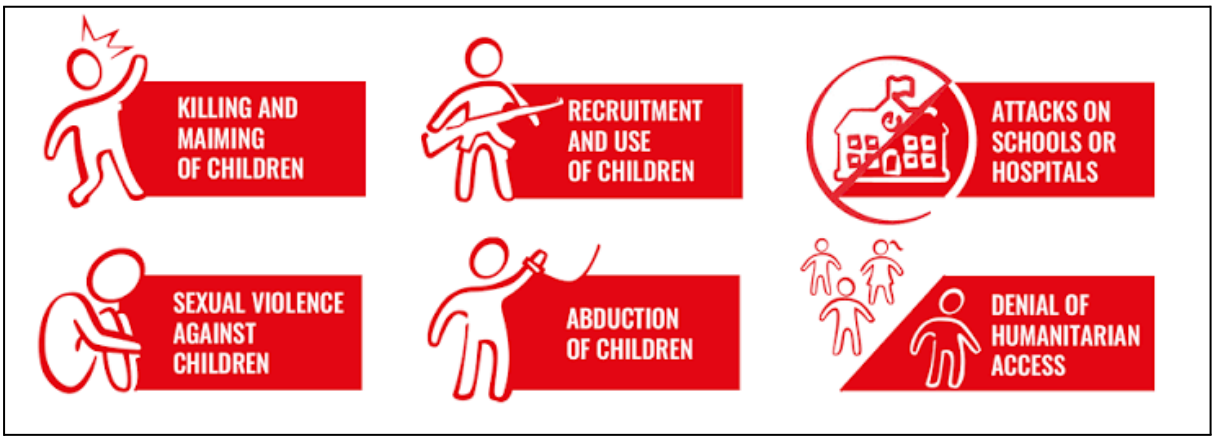


Figure 1: Graphic by the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict on the Six Grave Violations [STC][8]

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Prevalent Threats to International Law Prohibiting Attacks on Minors

Across the world, there are numerous armed conflicts that continuously have or are currently disregarding international law concerning the protection of minors. Armed conflicts such as those in Sudan, Syria, DRC, Myanmar, Yemen, Somalia, and Palestine are some examples of areas with high amounts of the six grave violations and infringement of International Humanitarian Law. With the various ongoing wars, it is evident that recorded numbers of violations continue to grow annually, demanding a solution greater than those proposed in the past. Violations on children such as these are especially common in armed conflict since minors are often used by armed groups, either State or Non-State as both effective hostages and bargaining agents as well as easily exploited forces in the low communication conditions of such wars.

One of the first conflicts to severely violate the treaties imposed by the UN such as the Geneva Conventions and Additional Protocols, and Convention on the Rights of Child

[7] The Six Grave Violations – Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/six-grave-violations/. Accessed 29 June 2026.
[8] Stccanada. "What Are the Six Grave Violations against Children?" Save the Children Canada, 3 July 2026, www.savethechildren.ca/what-are-the-six-grave-violations-against-children-in-times-of-conflict/. Accessed 25 Aug. 2026.

was the Second Congo War, which lasted from 1998-2003 (officially). This multinational war created many opportunities for the enlistment and use of child soldiers, as well as many other violations such as killings of children, sexual assault, and denied access to education. Thomas Lubanga Dyilo was one such child recruiter, who later on came to be prosecuted under the International Criminal Court as the first ever conviction of the ICC. This monumental conviction became one of the greater actions taken against this issue, as it showed a real form of accountability forLubanga. However, the conviction did not end the recruitment of child soldiers in the DRC, demonstrating that while international justice can punish individual perpetrators, it cannot alone resolve the ongoing instability and armed conflict that allow such violations to continue. Although the war officially ended in 2003, Rwandan troops still remain in eastern DRC, violence continues, and minor rights are being infringed on a large scale with over 15.4 million children requiring humanitarian assistance currently. [CAC][9]

Since then, many armed conflicts have only added to the global need for action against children rights violations. This includes the conflict between the RSF and SAF in Sudan since 2023, which deprived 10.8 million children of learning opportunities due to the attacks on school infrastructure in the area and has become another major conflict disregarding international protections set for minors. [UNICEF][10] Additionally, civil wars such as those in Yemen, Myanmar, Somalia, and Syria having thousands of grave violations and millions of cases of displacement reported through MRM, due to the complicated internal conflicts between state and NSAGs unreliable accountability measures from the UN such as the largely ineffective pressure from the List of Shame. Lastly, other Multilateral conflicts such as that in Palestine, Israel, and Iran show a failure of protection towards children, rather deliberate targeting and exposure to violence as means of wartime exploitation specifically aimed at minors.

These violations on children rights do not inherently occur due to a nation's disregard for human life, rather due to the fact that children and civilian infrastructures become strategically useful in the context of armed warfare. Schools, hospitals, and other residential areas can be attacked during an armed conflict by both state and non-state armed forces in order to weaken the opposition as well as pressure civilians into displacement. In some cases, governments publicly justify such attacks as essential counter terrorism measures and issues of national security due to their vast political, military, and economic incentives in the midst of an armed conflict. On the other side of the conflicts, NSAGs often recruit children because they can simultaneously be low-maintenance soldiers when forces can be limited in numbers, as well as bargaining tools.

[9] Home | Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/en. Accessed 07 July 2026.

[10] UNICEF Annual Report 2023 | Unicef, www.unicef.org/reports/unicef-annual-report-2023. Accessed 07 July 2026.

Impact on a Global Scale

These numerous attacks and violations of International Humanitarian Rights Law have profound impacts on the community, including social, economic, and deeply political consequences that echo beyond the affected conflict zones. The attack of children not only induces immediate suffering on the victims and others, but also has long term effects on the development of countries and their populations. As stated in the introduction, despite the various international guidelines, the violations of children's rights continue to grow in armed conflicts.



Figure 2: FFP verified grave violations in years 2021-2024 [FFP][11]

One major impact of armed conflicts and their resulting children IHL violations is the decline of education on the community. Both state and non-state armed forces deliberately target hospitals and educational institutes during an armed conflict, especially in a multilateral war in order to occupy potential military bases, disrupt education of opposing forces, and forcefully negotiate. As a result of this, education in countries affected by armed conflict severely declines due to many student's inability to take classes, reducing employment opportunities, increasing poverty, most importantly making children vulnerable to enlistment of armed forces. Similar points can be made about attacks on hospitals, which although not specifically related to children also harm minors significantly. With the various bombings seen on hospitals during armed conflict, children are denied vital healthcare and often leads to grave injury or even death of children due to a denial of essential medical

[11] The Fund for Peace, fundforpeace.org/. Accessed 19 July 2026.

resources. These attacks violate 2 of the 6 grave violations, yet are committed all across the world in large scale armed conflicts.

Lastly, low humanitarian assistance and sexual assault in armed conflict leads to profound mental health effects on the child victims. With many cases of trauma and displacement, countries afflicted by armed conflicts suffer immense social impacts on their communities. Ultimately, protecting children during armed conflict is not only a humanitarian obligation but also an essential component of sustainable peace and development, ensuring the safety of children supports the development of peaceful communities, stronger institutions, and long term stability.

Major Challenges

Although international frameworks and treaties provide a strong foundation and detailed descriptions of the rights of children, implementation and enforcement of humanitarian development remains the greatest challenge in armed conflict zones. Treaties such as the Geneva conventions, Additional Protocols, and Convention on the Right of Child only contain voluntary guidelines that are nearly impossible to enforce internationally. In the many conflict zones affected, crippled governance, constant violence, and low capacity for protection lead to grave children's rights violations due to an inability to enforce child protection laws.

Another challenge in applying international guidelines is the principle of national sovereignty, which means that the international community must not interfere with a nation’s own affairs. As this is the main point of contention in this debate, extremely strict international oversight and interference is often rejected by many states due to its restricting nature. As a result of this, low enforcement measures have been taken by the United Nations even in the legally binding resolution of the Security Council. This lowers the ability to create accountability measures, especially with the addition of NSAGs, which are oftentimes even less compliant and able to be held accountable than national governments even though many are responsible for a majority of the Six Grave Violations in armed conflicts. With the low compliance of governments and Non state armed forces, the MRM of the UN is unable to collect reliable information, thus significantly weakening the ability of the international community to respond effectively and prevent violations.

MAJOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED

Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)

DRC remains to be one of the countries suffering most from grave human rights violations, especially those against children. In 2023, the Democratic Republic of the Congo reported over 4,000 grave violations against children, and 7 million cases of displacement

internally across the duration of the conflict. [UNSRG][12] Through the numerous international humanitarian law and children rights violations as well as the failure to internally regulate these breaches of international law, the DRC is currently on the United Nations list of shame, facing sanctions.

This is because officially, the DRC government overall supports international efforts and treaties to protect children, as well as cooperating with UN mechanisms such as MRM. However, this greatly contrasts the situation in reality, where factors such as limited state control, corruption, and ongoing violence have prevented significant protection. This has allowed armed groups and some mining networks to profit from the exploitation of natural resources such as cobalt, coltan, and gold, often relying on child labour and violence against local communities.

France

As a permanent five member of the United Nations Security Council, France has been a key contributor to international peacekeeping operations and the creation of various resolutions of the SC such as resolutions 1261, 1621, and 1998. Additionally, France's humanitarian assistance is one of the highest in the world, donating over €500,000,000 to supporting crises affecting many children such as those in Sudan, DRC, and Myanmar, as well as contributing to approximately 6% of the UN peacekeeping budget. [UN][13] However, France's role in Africa is viewed differently by various states and individuals, as some argue that its military presence and the activities of French companies in former colonies can reflect strategic and economic interests, particularly in regions rich in natural resources. This perspective creates the possibility that, while France promotes a large amount of humanitarian assistance and child protection, its actions may also be influenced by broader geopolitical and economic considerations, making its involvement in the issue more complex.

Norway

Norway was the country that hosted the conference that launched the Safe Schools declaration on May 29, 2015, which aimed to protect students, schools, and faculty from assaults during armed conflict. Additionally, Norway exceeds the UN target for official development assistance (0.7% GNI), donating nearly 1% of its GNI to international aid every year, greatly increasing the available pool of funding for combating the issue.

[12] Home | Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/en. Accessed 07 July 2026.
[13] "UN80: France and the UN—A Cooperation Serving All." *United Nations Regional Information Centre for Western Europe (UNRIC)*, 2025, https://unric.org/en/un80-france-and-the-un-a-cooperation-serving-all/.

Sudan

Sudan is a country that is currently afflicted with one of the largest humanitarian crises since April 15, 2023, due to the conflict between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and Rapid Support Forces (RSF). Due to this, more than 7,000,000 children have been displaced, as well as 10,800,000 children in Sudan deprived of safety and learning opportunities[UNICEF].[14] This is an especially large number given Sudan's total population of nearly 53 million. Additionally, Sudan remains an area with high rates of recruitment and use of child soldiers, attacks on schools and hospitals, and conflict related sexual abuse, violating the Six Grave Violations as well as International Humanitarian law through the armed conflict. Sudan is epically relevant in this issue as it shows how failure to comply with laws protecting minors can have devastating effects on the safety of children, and the urgency on the matter.

Ukraine

Since the invasion of Russia on Ukraine that began in February of 2022, over 7,500,000 children have been affected by the armed conflict such as displacement, physical harm, and denied access to education [UNICEF].[15] In the same report by UNICEF, more than 3,700 educational facilities were destroyed in the conflict, leaving many children unable to receive proper education. Thousands of grave violations such as maiming, killing, sexual assault, and abduction have been committed solely during 2023 according to the Secretary General's 2024 Children and Armed conflict report. [UNSRG][16]

United States of America (USA)

The United States of America is the country with the largest financial contribution to humanitarian assistance worldwide, providing billions of dollars annually to agencies such as UNICEF, USAID, and other UN organisations. The large amounts of funding from the USA directly support emergency education, healthcare, and protection for many minors afflicted by conflict in their communities, including those in Sudan, DRC, Ukraine, and Syria. The USA additionally has substantial contribution in international treaties, being a member of the Security Council Permanent 5 and signing various SC resolutions namely 1621 and 1882, which both expanded the UN's international monitoring capabilities in armed conflicts. Lastly, the USA has greatly improved conditions domestically as well, creating the Child Soldiers Prevention Act in 2008 [LOC].[17] However, the United States has also faced numerous criticisms regarding their priority on political and capital strategies over humanitarian aid in

[14] Sudan Appeal | Unicef, www.unicef.org/appeals/sudan. Accessed 03 July 2026.
[15] UNICEF Ukraine, www.unicef.org/ukraine/en. Accessed 07 July 2026.
[16] Home | Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/en. Accessed 07 July 2026.
[17] Child Soldiers Prevention Act: Security Assistance Restrictions | Congress.Gov | Library of Congress, www.congress.gov/crs-product/IF10901. Accessed 07 July 2026.

some instances, especially its political relationship with Israel, supporting the country despite allegations of major human rights violations against Palestinian children.

International Criminal Court (ICC)

The ICC is an international court created for prosecuting individuals for crimes such as genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes, and crimes of aggression under the Rome Statute. This connects with the issue as the recruitment of children under the age of 15 constitutes a war crime, meaning the ICC has the ability to prosecute child recruiters. In 2012, the International Criminal Court convicted Thomas Lubanga Dyilo, who was guilty of recruiting children under 15 for armed conflict, setting a precedent for the offence and convicting others guilty of the same crime such as Bosco Ntaganda [ICC].[18]

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)

The United Nations Children's Fund is the UN's leading agency for children, operating in more than 190 countries worldwide, including every major armed conflict zone. UNICEF has delivered over 6 million children life saving assistance in conflict zones in Sudan, with many contributions elsewhere such as ensuring children essential resources such as food and water in Ukraine[UNICEF].[19] Creating opportunities for education, reintegration, and psychological support for children in conflict zones, UNICEF has helped millions of children recover from human rights violations and aid mental recovery [UNICEF].[20]

United Nations Security Council (UNSC)

The United Nations Security Council is the main UN organ responsible for maintaining international peace, and has led the international effort of protecting children in armed conflict. Responsible for creating numerous essential resolutions on the issue starting from UNSC resolution 1261, as well as resolutions 1612, 1882, and 1998 and others. One of the Security Council's greatest contributions is the creation of the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM), which actively tracks and reports instances of the Six Grave Violations, allowing for more targeted humanitarian efforts and peacekeeping missions. The Security Council additionally has created the "List of Shame" in order to threaten sanctions to countries that continuously fail to protect the safety and wellbeing of children. All of these efforts from the SC have drastically improved conditions for children since its first resolution addressing the issue, and have been a continued actor in enforcing child humanitarian law.

[18] Lubanga | International Criminal Court, www.icc-cpi.int/drc/lubanga. Accessed 07 July 2026.
[19] UNICEF Annual Report 2023 | Unicef, www.unicef.org/reports/unicef-annual-report-2023 . Accessed 07 July 2026.
[20] UNICEF Annual Report 2024 | UNICEF, www.unicef.org/reports/unicef-annual-report/2024. Accessed 07 July 2026.

BLOCS EXPECTED

Bloc A

This bloc is composed of high income democracies and large humanitarian donors, as well as strong supporters of International Humanitarian Law. These countries aim to strengthen accountability measures on a strict international scale and advocate for expanding the role and influence of the United Nations on the issue. The countries include already large actors on the topic including donors such as the USA and France as well as Norway and many other EU states who wish to expand international intervention. In some cases, these states may advocate for child protection internationally while simultaneously benefiting from economic systems that disadvantage local industries or maintain unequal global economic structures.

Bloc B

Bloc B includes states that are experiencing or have experienced large scale including internal armed conflict, or states that hold national sovereignty with great regard. These advocate for the protection of children in armed conflict, but unlike bloc A support sovereign and nationally led solutions rather than international action and restrictive policies. Unlike many states in Bloc A, some more authoritarian governments such as those of Russia may overall be less concerned with presenting a strong humanitarian image internationally. Greatly prioritizing the establishment of capacity building measures, optional humanitarian assistance, some countries expected to be on this bloc include Sudan, China, Russia, or Iran.

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

Date	Description of Event
12th August, 1949	**Establishment of the Geneva Conventions** Following the second world war, the UN established the foundation of current international humanitarian law, the Geneva Convention. It was ratified by every UN member state and created legally binding regulations for the protection of civilians during armed conflict, which includes children. Although these do not specifically focus on the rights of children, they created the legal basis from inhumane treatment and remain the base of subsequent treaties

	concerning children in armed conflict.[ICR].[21]
20th November, 1989	**Adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child** In the UN headquarters of Geneva, the Convention on the Rights of Child was held and became the current most ratified human rights treaty, with 196 state parties ratifying it. This treaty recognized all individuals under the age of 18 as special rights holders and created government obligations to protect them from abuse such as exploitation and violence. The convention remains the most significant and earliest treaty that specifically advocated for the rights of children, and recognized children's broader rights to survival, education, healthcare, and development[UNICEF].[22]
2nd August, 1998	**Beginning of the Second Congo War** The Second Congo War began in 1998, involving 9 African Countries and many armed forces. Although it officially ended in 2003, violence is still ongoing in eastern DRC and remains one of the world's largest child protection crises.
25th August, 1999	**Adoption of UNSC Resolution 1261** UNSC resolution 1261 was adopted, being the first Security Council resolution specifically focused on the protection of children in armed conflict. The resolution itself condemned many grave violations of IHL such as recruitment of child

[21] The Geneva Conventions and Their Commentaries | ICRC, www.icrc.org/en/law-and-policy/geneva-conventions-and-their-commentaries. Accessed 07 July 2026.
[22] Convention on the Rights of the Child | Unicef, www.unicef.org/child-rights-convention. Accessed 07 July 2026.

	soldiers and destruction of schools and hospitals.
25th May, 2000	**Creation of OPAC on Children in Armed Conflict** The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of Child on the Involvement of Armed Conflicts (OPAC) was created, which strengthened many of the policies stated in the first CRC. This included raising the minimum age for recruitment in an armed conflict to 18 years old.
26th July,, 2005	**Establishment of the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism** In 2005, one of the most meaningful steps to combating children's human rights in armed conflict by the UN was taken, with UNSC resolution 1612 being adopted and establishing the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM), which reported instances of the six grave violations.
29th May, 2015	**Launch of the Safe Schools Declaration** In Oslo, Norway, the Safe Schools Declaration was launched and led by Norway and Argentina. This declaration assigns political commitment to countries in order to maintain safety and protection of students, teachers, and educational institutions. Endorsed by 121 countries.
24th February, 2022	**Russian Invasion of Ukraine** The beginning of the invasion of Russia on Ukraine began, with Russian forces invading Ukrainian territory on the 24th and evolving into the large-scale humanitarian crisis that it

	is today.[UNICEF].[23]
15th April, 2023	**Outbreak of the Sudan Armed Conflict** On April 15th of 2023, conflict between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and Rapid Support Forces (RSF) erupted, creating a large-scale armed conflict and period of humanitarian violations[UNICEF].[24] This conflict in particular has shown not only many violations to International Humanitarian Rights Law (IHRL), but also a continued refusal to internally regulate them. Because of this, it is one of the topic's highest priorities to enforce International law prohibiting attacks on minors.

RELEVANT RESOLUTIONS, TREATIES, AND EVENTS

Conventions

Geneva Conventions and Additional Protocols

The Geneva Conventions and Additional Protocols established the legal foundation of protecting civilians in armed conflict as well as the basis of many policies in later treaties, being the cornerstone humanitarian treaty of the United Nations. This did not specifically focus on the inherent rights of children but is still extremely important in the context of this issue, as it was essentially the first global and internationally recognized treaty on warfare regulation. The additional protocols created the age requirement of 15 years old in order to participate in an armed conflict, shaping modern standards for child recruitment. The main issue with these treaties is that they had no strict enforcement measures as well as not being targeted toward the protection of children, thus having less impact on the topic. [OAS][25]

[23] Conflict in Ukraine - How UNICEF Is Helping Children - UNICEF UK, www.unicef.org.uk/what-we-do/emergency-response/conflict-in-ukraine-how-unicef-is-helping-children/. Accessed 08 July 2026.

[24] Sudan Appeal | Unicef, www.unicef.org/appeals/sudan. Accessed 03 July 2026

[25] Organization of American States, Department of International Law, and International Committee of the Red Cross. Introductory Course on International Humanitarian Law (2007): IHL Instruments. 2007, Organization of American States

Convention of the Rights of Child and Optional Protocol

The Convention on the Rights of Child was held in 1989, which recognized that children hold fundamental rights, and created the requirement for states to protect children during armed conflict, which is the basis of the topic itself. This convention is the most ratified human rights treaty in UN history, with 193 ratifications. This however was far from a solution as ratification was not a verification of guaranteed action, and NSAGs were not bound by treaty obligations. This meant that the convention had a large impact on defining the rights of children, but did not inherently protect these rights.

The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of Child on the Involvement of Armed Conflicts was made in 2005, which strengthened the policies in the original CRC and raised the minimum age for recruitment in armed conflict to 18, but suffered from the same problems as the CRC as well. This convention did not have any enforcement or accountability mechanisms in order to guarantee meaningful change. [UNICEF][26]

Resolutions

S/RES/1261

This was the first Security Council resolution dedicated to children specifically, and set the foundation for the UN's Children and Armed Conflict agenda (CAAC). The resolution's largest contributor is the condemnation of the Six Grave Violations towards children, essentially creating the base for which other UN actions would be built on such as MRM using the principles created in this resolution. However, it did not directly address the issue or establish any meaningful enforcement or monitoring mechanisms, lacking consequences for parties that violated the rights of children. [UNSC][27]

S/RES/1612

One of the most impactful resolutions from the Security Council and from the United Nations as a whole, the UNSC resolution 1612 established the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM), as well as allocated more of UN resources to protecting children in armed conflicts as a whole. This creation of MRM allowed the United Nations to accurately gather information on the amount of children having grave human rights violations in armed conflicts, and allowed for more targeted prevention efforts in conflict zones.

---

[26] Convention on the Rights of the Child | Unicef, www.unicef.org/child-rights-convention. Accessed 07 July 2026.
Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict | Ohchr, www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/optional-protocol-convention-rights-child-involvement-children. Accessed 25 Aug. 2026.

[27] S/RES/1261 (1999), www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/CAC%20SRES%201261.pdf. Accessed 25 Aug. 2026.

Although the MRM significantly improved documentation and information gathering, it is unable to enforce complete compliance with the mechanism. Verification is in some cases difficult as governments and armed forces may deny UN access as a whole, leaving the MRM ineffective. Additionally, many listed parties with high amounts of violations often continue attacks on minors. [UNSC][28]

S/RES/1882

This resolution from the Security Council was adopted on the 4th of August, 2009 strengthened accountability for grave human rights violations against children, most importantly expanding the List of Shame to include patterns of maiming, killing, and sexual assault on children. In addition to this, it overall increased the pressure from the list of shame by requiring time bound plans from the party named in order to avoid sanctions, which aimed to greatly urge improvement of humanitarian conditions towards children in armed conflict zones. [UNSC][29]

PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE THE ISSUE

Safe Schools Declaration

The Safe Schools Declaration was launched by Norway and Argentina in Oslo, with the main objective of protecting schools (Students, Teachers, Facilities) during an armed conflict. 123 states have endorsed the declaration, encouraging many countries to incorporate school protection measures into their national policies and demonstrating international support for ongoing education of children even in the midst of an armed war. Much like many other declarations, this agreement is not legally binding, meaning countries may continue to ignore these commitments as can be seen in the various bombings on schools in Ukraine, Sudan, and many other war afflicted states [SAFE SCHOOLS DECLARATION].[30]

ICC convictions

The ICC established that recruiting children under the age of 15 years old for an armed conflict is a war crime under the Rome Statute. Because of this, Thomas Lubanga Dyilo was the first conviction for this charge in the ICC and their first conviction as a whole, setting a precedent for such a war crime in 2012. Because of this, subsequent cases against Dominic Ongwen and Bosco Ntaganda also ended in conviction for their crimes committed

[28] "Resolution 1612 (2005) /." *United Nations*, digitallibrary.un.org/record/554197?v=pdf. Accessed 25 Aug. 2026.
[29] Security Council Resolution 1882 (2009) [on Children and Armed Conflict] | Refworld, www.refworld.org/legal/resolution/unsc/2009/en/69295. Accessed 07 July 2026.
[30]Safe Schools Declaration. *An Inter-Governmental Political Commitment to Protect Students, Teachers, Schools, and Universities from the Worst Effects of Armed Conflict*. Protecting Education, https://ssd.protectingeducation.org/. Accessed 7 July 2026

against children. However, many perpetrators still remain out of reach for the ICC due to their limited jurisdiction, as well as this form of action being largely ineffective when combatting a global issue.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Strengthening International Oversight and Accountability Mechanisms

This possible solution involves strengthening existing mechanisms for accountability and oversight, including the MRM or the influence of the "List of Shame" by the United Nations. By increasing the international funding and data collection of the UN, higher levels of monitoring and accountability measures will be possible, as well as international cooperation with judicial bodies such as the ICC. However, this solution would only prove effective with large amounts of funding from the United Nations, and the willingness of countries to act on the information gathered by the mechanisms.

Create Optional State-led Peacemaking Operations

This sovereign approach is to establish a voluntary and completely state led peacekeeping and child protection mission on a nationwide scale. Under UN coordination, states affected by conflicts can facilitate dialogue between governments and armed forces using their own nation's needs to create personalized solutions. A major challenge with this solution is that it relies on the willing participation of all affected member states, which is oftentimes not the case. However, the state-led nature of the peacekeeping operations makes the proposal more feasible to states focused on sovereignty.

Cross Border Intervention Policies for Minimizing Parties Violating Minor Rights

The solution involves developing internationally agreed upon humanitarian assistance operations in order to guarantee protection in areas with otherwise unreliable communication channels or low compliancy. Such measures would require authorization through the United Nations and be limited to delivering humanitarian aid, evacuating vulnerable children, and monitoring violations. The main difficulty would be obtaining authorization and cooperation from states whose sovereignty could be affected by cross-border operations. Strict limitations on the scale and duration of cross border operations may be necessary to avoid missions being seen as military intervention rather than humanitarian.

Funding and Capacity Building for Countries Amidst Minor Law Threatening Conflicts

Increasing international funding in order to strengthen the national protection systems of conflict afflicted countries in a sovereign manner. This could include assistance such as rebuilding schools and hospitals, reintegration programs for former child soldiers, and strengthening internal judicial and governmental control and power. The largest problem is that funding may be difficult to effectively distribute among countries, especially

those suffering from ongoing fighting or corruption that risk ineffective use of the funds. Despite this, the solution is a feasible and long term way to ensure that states develop their own methods of addressing the issue instead of relying on aid from other states.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

General Bibliography

The Paris Principles Principles and Guidelines on Children, www.unicef.org/mali/media/1561/file/ParisPrinciples.pdf. Accessed 07 July 2026.

As Syria's Children Step Out of the Shadows of War, Securing Their Future Is More Critical than Ever, UNICEF, www.unicef.org/press-releases/syrias-children-step-out-shadows-war-securing-their-future-more-critical-ever-unicef . Accessed 7 July 2026.

At a Glance EPRS | European Parliamentary Research Service, www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/ATAG/2023/757582/EPRS_ATA(2023)757582_EN.pdf . Accessed 25 June 2026.

Cambridge Dictionary | English Dictionary, Translations & Thesaurus, dictionary.cambridge.org/. Accessed 28 June 2026.

Chart: The World at War in 2023 | Statista, www.statista.com/chart/21652/countries-with-armed-clashes-reported/. Accessed 19 July 2026.

Child Soldiers - an Overview | Sciencedirect Topics, www.sciencedirect.com/topics/social-sciences/child-soldiers. Accessed 25 June 2026.

Child Soldiers Prevention Act: Security Assistance Restrictions | Congress.Gov | Library of Congress, www.congress.gov/crs-product/IF10901. Accessed 07 July 2026.

Children under Attack | Unicef, www.unicef.org/take-action/campaigns/children-under-attack. Accessed 07 July 2026.

Committee on the Rights of the Child | Ohchr, www.ohchr.org/en/treaty-bodies/crc. Accessed 07 July 2026.

Conflict in Ukraine - How UNICEF Is Helping Children - UNICEF UK, www.unicef.org.uk/what-we-do/emergency-response/conflict-in-ukraine-how-unicef-is-helping-children/. Accessed 08 July 2026.

Convention on the Rights of the Child | Unicef, www.unicef.org/child-rights-convention. Accessed 07 July 2026.
“Education under Attack 2022.” Education Under Attack 2022, eua2022.protectingeducation.org/. Accessed 26 Aug. 2026.

The Fund for Peace, fundforpeace.org/. Accessed 19 July 2026.

The Geneva Conventions and Their Commentaries | ICRC, www.icrc.org/en/law-and-policy/geneva-conventions-and-their-commentaries . Accessed 07 July 2026.

Graça Machel and the Impact of Armed Conflict on Children | Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/en/about/the-mandate/mandate/the-machel-reports. Accessed 07 July 2026.

Home | Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/en . Accessed 07 July 2026.

International Humanitarian Law - European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations, civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/what/humanitarian-aid/international-humanitarian-law_en. Accessed 07 July 2026.

International Humanitarian Law and International Human ..., www.icrc.org/sites/default/files/document/file_list/ihl-and-ihrl.pdf. Accessed 07 July 2026.

Killing and Maiming of Children Is a Grave Violation. ..., www.facebook.com/unicef/posts/killing-and-maiming-of-children-is-a-grave-violationinternational-law-is-clear-c/1277593737738542/. Accessed 19 July 2026.

Lubanga | International Criminal Court, www.icc-cpi.int/drc/lubanga. Accessed 07 July 2026.

Monitoring and Reporting on Grave Violations | Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/en/tools-for-action/monitoring-and-reporting. Accessed 29 June 2026.

More than 300,000 Grave Violations against Children in Conflict Verified Worldwide in Past 18 Years,

www.unicef.org/press-releases/more-300000-grave-violations-against-children-conflict-verified-worldwide-past-18. Accessed 29 June 2026.

Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict | Ohchr, www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/optional-protocol-convention-rights-child-involvement-children. Accessed 25 Aug. 2026.

"Resolution 1612 (2005) /." United Nations, digitallibrary.un.org/record/554197?v=pdf. Accessed 25 Aug. 2026.

Restoring Education after Armed Conflict: An IHL-Guided Framework - Humanitarian Law & PolicyBlog,blogs.icrc.org/law-and-policy/2026/03/26/restoring-education-after-armed-conflict-an-ihl-guided-framework/. Accessed 07 July 2026.

S/RES/1261 (1999), www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/CAC%20SRES%201261.pdf . Accessed 25 Aug. 2026.

Safe Schools Declaration – an Inter-Governmental Political Commitment to Protect Students, Teachers, Schools, and Universities from the Worst Effects of Armed Conflict, ssd.protectingeducation.org/. Accessed 07 July 2026.

Security Council Resolution 1882 (2009) [on Children and Armed Conflict] | Refworld, www.refworld.org/legal/resolution/unsc/2009/en/69295. Accessed 07 July 2026.

The Six Grave Violations – Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/six-grave-violations/. Accessed 07 July 2026.

Stccanada. "What Are the Six Grave Violations against Children?" Save the Children Canada, 3 July 2026,

www.savethechildren.ca/what-are-the-six-grave-violations-against-children-in-times-of-conflict/. Accessed 25 Aug. 2026.

Sudan Appeal | Unicef, www.unicef.org/appeals/sudan. Accessed 03 July 2026.
UNICEF Annual Report 2023 | Unicef, www.unicef.org/reports/unicef-annual-report-2023. Accessed 07 July 2026.

"UN80: France and the UN—A Cooperation Serving All." *United Nations Regional Information Centre for Western Europe (UNRIC)*, 2025, https://unric.org/en/un80-france-and-the-un-a-cooperation-serving-all/.

UNICEF Annual Report 2024 | UNICEF, www.unicef.org/reports/unicef-annual-report/2024 . Accessed 07 July 2026.

UNICEF Ukraine, www.unicef.org/ukraine/en. Accessed 07 July 2026.

United Nations S/RES/1998 (2011) Security Council Distr.: General 12 July 2011, www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/CAC%20S%20RES%201998.pdf. Accessed 07 July 2026.
Unterm, unterm.un.org/unterm2/en/. Accessed 27 June 2026.

The Vancouver Principles, www.international.gc.ca/world-monde/issues_development-enjeux_developpement/human_rights-droits_homme/principles-vancouver-principes.aspx?lang=eng. Accessed 07 July 2026.

What Is International Humanitarian Law? | International Committee of the Red Cross, www.icrc.org/en/document/what-international-humanitarian-law. Accessed 25 June 2026.

Media Bibliography

The Fund for Peace, fundforpeace.org/. Accessed 19 July 2026.

Stccanada. "What Are the Six Grave Violations against Children?" Save the Children Canada, 3 July 2026, www.savethechildren.ca/what-are-the-six-grave-violations-against-children-in-times-of-conflict/. Accessed 25 Aug. 2026.