

CHILD SOLDIER USE 2009

Child soldiers currently are being used to fight in the following 14 countries:

Afghanistan

Insurgent groups, including the Taliban and other armed groups, recruit and use child soldiers. The UN Secretary-General has received reports of child recruitment from all regions of the country, particularly from the south, south-east and east. Some children have been used for suicide attacks, including a May 2008 incident involving a 12-year old boy. There are numerous reports of children recruited by the Taliban in Pakistan, some of whom end up in Afghanistan.

The UN also reports recruitment of children by the Afghan National Police in the north, south, and south-east, including cases of boys aged 14. There are also unconfirmed reports of children in the ranks of the Afghan National Army.

Parties using children:

Taliban
Insurgent groups
Afghan National Police

More information:

Secretary-General's Report to the UN Security Council on children and armed conflict in Afghanistan (November 2008)

<http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/No8/534/13/PDF/No853413.pdf?OpenElement>

Child Soldiers Global Report 2008 – Afghanistan

<http://www.childsoldiersglobalreport.org/content/afghanistan>

Burma

Human Rights Watch has documented widespread forced recruitment of children by Burma's national army, the Tatmadaw, in separate investigations in 2002 and 2007. Army recruiters frequently recruit children through force and coercion, including boys as young as eleven.

Tens of thousands of children are likely engaged as soldiers, including in combat operations against armed ethnic opposition groups. Children also serve with some of the armed ethnic opposition groups, although in far smaller numbers.

Parties using children:

Tatmadaw Kyi (National Army)
United Wa State Army
Kachin Independence Army

Karenni Nationalities People's Liberation Front
KNU-KNLA Peace Council

*other non-state armed groups also use children, but little evidence that they are below age 15.

More information:

Child Soldiers Global Report 2008 – Myanmar:

<http://www.childsoldiersglobalreport.org/content/myanmar>

“Sold to be Soldiers: The Recruitment and Use of Child Soldiers in Burma”

(Human Rights Watch, 2007)

<http://www.hrw.org/en/node/10621/section/1>

Secretary-General's Report to the UN Security Council on children and armed conflict in Myanmar
(November 2007)

<http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/No7/574/91/PDF/No757491.pdf?OpenElement>

Central African Republic

Hundreds of children, some as young as 12, serve with rebel groups, including the APRD, UFDR and FDPC.

AFRD rebel commanders readily admitted to Human Rights Watch in 2007 that they had many children in their ranks, including some as young as 12, and that many were armed and participated in combat. Human Rights Watch also directly observed children in APRD units.

A January 2007 UN assessment mission reported seeing numerous children in UFDR ranks, and witnesses told Human Rights Watch that they have seen child soldiers with the rebels during the October-November 2006 offensive, including children as young as 14. In May 2007, UNICEF secured an agreement from the UFDR to release some 400 children from its ranks.

Parties using children:

Popular Army for the Restoration of the Republic and of Democracy (Armée populaire pour la restauration de la République et la démocratie, APRD)

Union of Democratic Forces for Unite (Union des forces démocratiques pour le rassemblement, UFDR)

Democratic Forces for Central Africa people (Forces démocratiques pour le peuple centrafricain, FDPC)

More information:

“State of Anarchy: Rebellion and Abuses against Civilians” (Human Rights Watch, 2007)

<http://www.hrw.org/en/reports/2007/09/13/state-anarchy>

Child Soldiers Global Report 2008 – Central African Republic

<http://www.childsoldiersglobalreport.org/content/central-african-republic>

Chad

An estimated 7,000-10,000 children are fighting with the Chadian armed forces and Chadian and Sudanese rebel forces. Human Rights Watch has documented the recruitment of child soldiers by members of the Chadian National Army at most of the large displacement sites in southeastern Dar Sila region. Recruitment visits to these sites increased in frequency in the immediate aftermath of the attempted Chadian rebel coup d'état in February 2008. Children as young as 12 were recruited into the Front Uni pour le Changement (United Front for Change, FUC), a rebel group that was incorporated into the ANT under an agreement reached in December 2006.

In 2008, children in Sudanese refugee camps in eastern Chad were also subject to recruitment by Sudanese rebels with the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), which receives backing from the Chadian government.

Parties using children:

Chadian National Army (Armée Nationale du Tchad, ANT)

Justice and Equality Movement (JEM)

More information:

Briefing to UN Security Council on Chad and Central African Republic
(Human Rights Watch, December 2008)

<http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2008/12/08/briefing-un-security-council-situation-chad-and-central-african-republic>

Secretary-General's Report to the UN Security Council on children and armed conflict in Chad
(August 2008)

<http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/No8/436/66/PDF/No843666.pdf?OpenElement>

Child Soldiers Global Report 2008 – Chad

<http://www.childsoldiersglobalreport.org/content/chad>

Early to War: Child Soldiers in the Chad Conflict (Human Rights Watch, July 2007)

<http://www.hrw.org/en/reports/2007/07/15/early-war>

Colombia

Thousands of children serve in Colombia's irregular armed groups. The majority serve in the FARC guerrillas, with smaller numbers in the UC-ELN guerrillas. The number of children in pro-government paramilitary forces is currently unknown, though recruitment is ongoing. Human Rights Watch investigations have found that these guerrilla and paramilitary forces train children as young as eleven to use assault rifles. Commanders order children to kill, mutilate and torture. Children who try to desert may face summary execution.

Parties using children:

Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN)

Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP)

Paramilitary groups that have not participated in the demobilization process

More information:

Child Soldiers Global Report 2008 - Colombia

<http://www.childsoldiersglobalreport.org/content/colombia>

Democratic Republic of Congo

At the height of DRC's war, the UN estimated that more than 30,000 children were fighting with various parties to the conflict. While most of these children have been released or demobilized, a recent resumption of hostilities in eastern DRC has brought increased child recruitment.

In late August 2008, the Congolese army (Forces Armées de la République Démocratique du Congo, FARDC) and the rebel group led by Laurent Nkunda, the National Congress for the Defense of the People (CNDP), resumed heavy fighting in north Kivu. The Congolese army has sometimes been aided by pro-government militias, including the Coalition of Congolese Patriotic Resistance (PARECO) and other Mai Mai groups, as well as by a Rwandan armed group, the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR), some of whose leaders participated in the 1994 genocide. All parties to the conflict in north Kivu have forcibly recruited and used child soldiers. Reliable reports indicate hundreds of children have been recruited between August 2008 and January 2009, primarily by the CNDP and Mai Mai militia. Eyewitnesses reported to Human Rights Watch that the CNDP recruited children as young as 12.

In northern DRC, the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), an armed group that originated in northern Uganda, abducted more than 160 children during attacks between December 24, 2008 and January 13, 2009. Many of the victims were killed or abducted in three simultaneous attacks on December 24 and 25, 2008, according to witnesses interviewed by Human Rights Watch.

Parties using children:

Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo (FARDC, the government armed forces)

National Congress for the Defense of the People (CNDP) (forces loyal to Laurent Nkunda)

Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR)

Font nationaliste et intégrationnaliste (FNI)

Mai-Mai groups in North and South Kivu

Lord's Resistance Army (LRA)

More information:

DR Congo: LRA Slaughters 620 in ‘Christmas Massacres’ (Human Rights Watch, January 17, 2009)

<http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2009/01/17/dr-congo-lra-slaughters-620-christmas-massacres>

Letter to UN Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict regarding the DRC (Human Rights Watch, December 10, 2008)

<http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2008/12/10/letter-un-security-council-working-group-children-and-armed-conflict-regarding-drc>

Secretary-General’s Report to the UN Security Council on children and armed conflict in the DRC (November 2008)

<http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/No8/595/42/PDF/No859542.pdf?OpenElement>

Child Soldiers Global Report 2008 – Democratic Republic of Congo

<http://www.childsoldiersglobalreport.org/content/congo-democratic-republic>

India

A Human Rights Watch investigation in late 2007 and early 2008 found that Naxalite rebels in Chattisgarh use children as soldiers. Naxalites induct children as young as six into children’s associations, and use children as young as 12 in armed squads that receive weapons training and may participate in armed encounters with government security forces.

Government security forces have also employed children as “special police officers,” using them as guards and deploying them in anti-Naxalite operations, including armed encounters, though few were under age 15.

Parties using children:

Naxalites (Maoist rebels)

*Children are still believed to be part of government forces, but no recent documentation of children under 15.

More information:

Dangerous Duty: Children and the Chhattisgarh Conflict (Human Rights Watch, September 2008)

<http://www.hrw.org/en/reports/2008/09/05/dangerous-duty-o>

Iraq

Insurgent groups use children as combatants, including to plant roadside bombs and act as decoys in suicide car bombings. Little concrete documentation due to insecurity.

Parties using children:

Insurgent groups

More information:

Child Soldiers Global Report - Iraq

<http://www.childsoldiersglobalreport.org/content/iraq>

Occupied Palestinian Territories

Fatah, Hamas, Islamic Jihad and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine have all used children as messengers, couriers, and in some cases, fighters. At least ten children carried out suicide attacks in Israel or the Occupied Territories between 2000 and 2004, though none were documented between 2004 and 2007. Little current documentation is available regarding possible use of children under age 15.

More information:

Child Soldiers Global Report 2008 – Occupied Palestinian Territory

<http://www.childsoldiersglobalreport.org/content/occupied-palestinian-territory>

Philippines

Children are recruited by rebel forces, including the New People's Army, Abu Sayyaf Group, and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). Child recruitment is also reported by some paramilitary forces linked to the government, including the Citizen's Armed Force Geographical Units (CAFGU), but needs further investigation.

Parties using children:

Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF)

New People's Army (NPA)

Abu Sayyaf

More information:

Secretary-General's Report to the UN Security Council on children and armed conflict in the Philippines (November 2008)

<http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/No8/312/61/PDF/No831261.pdf?OpenElement>

Child Soldiers Global Report 2008 – Philippines

<http://www.childsoldiersglobalreport.org/content/philippines>

Somalia

Thousands of child soldiers are part of factional militias in Somalia and were used in intense fighting in 2006 and 2007, including by the Transitional Federal government, and factions of anti-government forces, including the Union of the Islamic Courts and the Al-Shabaab group. Some reports indicate that children as young as 9 were recruited.

Parties using children:

Transitional Federal Government (TFG)

Union of the Islamic Courts (ICU)

Al-Shabaab group

Alliance for the Restoration of Peace and Counter Terrorism (ARPCT)

Local militias

More information:

Secretary-General's Report to the UN Security Council on children and armed conflict in Somalia (May 2008)

<http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/No8/348/38/PDF/No834838.pdf?OpenElement>

Child Soldiers Global Report 2008 – Somalia

<http://www.childsoldiersglobalreport.org/content/somalia>

Sudan

In Southern Sudan, thousands of children fight with the Sudan Armed Forces and the Sudan People's Liberation Army, including some cases of children as young as 9. In Darfur, the Sudan Armed Forces, the Janjaweed militias, Sudan Liberation Army factions and paramilitary forces all use child soldiers. The Lord's Resistance Army also has child soldiers in Sudan.

Parties using children:

Darfur:

Sudanese Armed Forces

Justice and Equality Movement (JEM (Peace Wing))

Sudan Liberation Army (Minni Minawi), SLA (Abu Gasim), SLA (Peace Wing), SLA (Abdul Wahid)

Popular Defence Forces (PDF),

Chadian rebel forces

Government of the Sudan-allied militias

(Janjaweed) and the central reserve police.

Southern Sudan:

Sudan Armed Forces

Sudan People's Liberation Army

More information:

Secretary-General's Report to the UN Security Council on children and armed conflict in Sudan (August 2007)

<http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/No7/492/69/PDF/No749269.pdf?OpenElement>

Child Soldiers Global Report – Sudan

<http://www.childsoldiersglobalreport.org/content/sudan-o>

Thailand

Separatist insurgents called Pejuang Kemerdekaan Patani (Patani Freedom Fighters) have recruited hundreds of ethnic Malay Muslim children as messengers, couriers, scouts, and in some cases, combatants in the increasingly violent insurgency in Thailand's southern border provinces. The National Revolutionary Front-Coordinate (Barisan Revolusi Nasional-Koordinasi, BRN-C) has systematically targeted under-18s for recruitment and used them in a variety of roles, including to support armed attacks. Recent reports indicate that some paramilitary forces linked to Thai authorities, such as Ruam Thai Group (Thai United Group), recruit and provide military training to Buddhist Thai children.

Parties using children:

Pejuang Kemerdekaan Patani (Patani Freedom Fighters)

National Revolutionary Front-Coordinate (Barisan Revolusi Nasional-Koordinasi, BRN-C)

More information:

Child Soldiers Global Report 2008 - Thailand

<http://www.childsoldiersglobalreport.org/content/thailand>

Child Recruitment and Use in Southern Thailand – Briefing Paper (Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, December 2008)

http://www.child-soldiers.org/Southern_Thailand_Briefing_Paper_December_2008.pdf

Uganda

Over the past 20 years, the rebel Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) has abducted more than 30,000 boys and girls as soldiers, often forcing girls into sexual slavery. Although many have died in battle or been released, an unknown number are still held in camps in Sudan. In December 2008 and January 2009, the LRA carried out massacres and abductions in northern DRC, abducting at least 160 children.

The Ugandan government has recruited children into its forces, the Uganda People's Defense Force (UPDF), and into Local Defense Units.

Parties using children:

Lord's Resistance Army (LRA)

Uganda People's Defense Forces (UPDF)

Local defense units

More information:

Secretary-General's Report to the UN Security Council on children and armed conflict in Uganda (June 2008)

<http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/No8/376/76/PDF/No837676.pdf?OpenElement>

Child Soldiers Global Report 2008 - Uganda

<http://www.childsoldiersglobalreport.org/content/uganda>