

Children Soldiers in Africa

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### **Introduction**

The life of child soldiers in Africa is extremely hard and dangerous; they are used as messengers, porters and spies. Child soldiers are children who participate in a war. This terminology is closely associated with black boys i.e. Africans. Advances in weaponry, including the proliferation of small arms and automatic now favors greater involvement of children in armed conflict. Kids of 10 years can easily use modern Kalashnikov or M-16 rifles. Since the 1980s, the employment of children soldiers has been increasing at a drastic pace. The paper will discuss some of the measure problems and issues relating to children soldiers in Africa.

### **Discussion**

Stats reveal that in Africa alone, 120,000 children and adolescents under 18 years are recruited in armed forces. Despite the improved situation in many conflict zones in Africa, there has been brutal exploitation of children on this continent by the command of the armed forces and armed political groups. The steps taken by African governments and the international community in connection with the problem of child soldiers are clearly inadequate and ineffective.

Children and adolescents tend to be easier to recruit than that of adults. Typically they are forcibly recruited but young people sometimes also join voluntarily in armed groups. In general, child soldiers come from poor communities, children separated from their parents and seek shelter, children from refugee camps, and displaced or street children. Under these circumstances, these young kids get involved in war with prospects to to secure their livelihoods, to bring them social recognition and / or a feeling of power that they had never

considered unarmed. Some of them seek revenge, because their relatives had been killed by the enemies

These children are exposed to similar stresses as of adult soldiers, but are usually more susceptible to ideological indoctrination, intimidation and disciplinary measures. Child soldiers are often used in wars primarily with small arms without high training costs. Children are also involved in laying or defusing land mines. In addition Girls are often abused for sex or coerced to marriage with soldiers.

Thousands of children in Africa are being recruited to serve in the army or rebel movements. In many African countries, the use of child soldiers is for granted. Often children volunteer to be involved in war since they are supplied with the military equipments or seek the safety of a group. But the African life is the fact that thousands of children to be forced before holding the weapon in the war. From the perspective of armed groups, the fact of recruiting children is a convenient way to have a mass of soldiers malleable that are easy to monitor. On the psychological level, it's easy to brainwash them and obtain their obedience by using terror measures. Also, when playing spies, a child goes unnoticed and makes the activity more efficient.

### **Conclusion**

Abuse and coercion of children in the armed forces is unfortunately a painful truth in Africa. The political will of states as well as pressure from NGOs play a decisive role in neglecting this abuse. These children should be reintegrated to the community life which can be done by gathering actions from a global perspective. There should be peace agreements that include measures for the release and reintegration of child soldiers in their cities and provide support for affected children to alleviate their suffering and to promote social reintegration.