

2007 State Department Human Rights Reports on Child Soldiers

On March 11, 2008, the U.S. State Department released its annual Country Reports on Human Rights Practices. The 196 reports detail information compiled by domestic and international human rights groups, Foreign Service Officers abroad, academics, activists, jurists and journalists that work to recount human rights conditions around the globe. These annual reports point “to the areas of progress and draw attention to new and continuing challenges” in the human rights realm, and are to be “used as a resource for shaping policy, conducting diplomacy and making assistance, training and other resource allocations.”

While each report has traditionally assessed internationally recognized human rights as per the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, including respect for the integrity of the person, civil liberties, political rights and workers rights, the report also includes a section on the use of child soldiers. In accordance with the Foreign Relations Authorization Act of FY 2003, the human rights reports include a description of the “nature and extent of the compulsory recruitment and conscription of individuals under the age of 18” by all armed groups in every country, and the steps that have been taken by the governments of the respective countries to eliminate such practices. The reports must also list which countries have ratified the Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which:

- Requires states to “take all feasible measures” to ensure that members of their armed forces under the age of 18 years do not participate in hostilities;
- Prohibits the conscription of anyone under the age of 18 into the armed forces;
- Requires states to raise the age of voluntary recruitment from 15 and to deposit a binding declaration of the minimum age for recruitment into its armed forces;
- Prohibits the recruitment or use in hostilities of children under the age of 18 by rebel or other non-governmental armed groups, and requires states to criminalize such practices.

This year’s reports highlight the child soldiers issue in 30 countries. The most egregious cases of child soldier use continue in Burma, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Sri Lanka, Sudan and Uganda. The reports reveal use and recruitment of child soldiers by government and government supported forces in eight countries: Afghanistan, Burma, Chad, DRC, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Sudan and Uganda. The reports also describe child soldier recruitment and use by non-state groups in 21 countries: Afghanistan, Burma, Burundi, Central African Republic, Chad, Colombia, DRC, India, Israel, Iraq, Kenya, Nepal, Niger, Pakistan, Philippines, Rwanda, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Thailand and Uganda. The reports also mention successes in protecting former child soldiers and discuss disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) of child soldiers in nine countries: Afghanistan, Burundi, Central Africa Republic, Chad, Democratic Republic of Congo, Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Sri Lanka and Uganda. Below are excerpts from the 2007 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices on the topic. For the full reports please see: <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2007/>. To view a summary table of Child Soldiers in the Human Right Reports, please see: <http://www.cdi.org/PDFs/2007HRreportTable2.pdf>.

Afghanistan

There continued to be reports of the Taliban and insurgents using child soldiers; however, exact numbers were unobtainable. A 2003 presidential decree prohibited the recruitment of children and young persons under the age of 22 into the army; in the middle of 2006 the government changed the legal recruitment age to 18. There were unconfirmed reports of children under 18 falsifying their identification records to join the national security forces, which was a large-scale source of new employment opportunities. The UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) maintained that efforts to assist the government in creating a national birth registry and ID system would greatly mitigate this problem. There were no reports of forced child conscription by the government; however, Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN) and the AIHRC [Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission] reported that children younger than 18 were being recruited and in some cases sexually abused by the ANP and militias. Additionally, there were reports of Taliban forces using children younger than 18, including as suicide bombers.

Warlords and Taliban leaders were reported to be involved in the sexual exploitation of young men. Rule 19 of the Taliban Rule Book, updated in 2006, states, "Mujaheddin are not allowed to take young boys with no facial hair onto the battlefield or into their private quarters," implying that sexual exploitation of young men was a possibility.

Beginning in 2004 an estimated 8,000 former child soldiers were demobilized under a UNICEF-initiated program. Since 2004, more than 15,000 children affected by war have been supported through UNICEF's reintegration project in 28 provinces. During the year UNICEF supported educational and skills training for more than 2,691 demobilized child soldiers and other war-affected children (approximately 800 of whom were girls) in six provinces.

Belarus

The National Adoption Center reported that there were approximately 32,900 orphans in the country...As an alternative to orphanages, the law allows military units to adopt and train orphan boys between the ages of 14 and 16. While the children are not enlisted in the military, they must comply with military rules, wear a uniform, and obey orders. They have the option to join the unit upon reaching the draft age of 18.

Burma

Violence and societal discrimination against women continued, as did recruitment of child soldiers...

Armed insurgent groups and cease-fire groups also recruited child soldiers.

In her November 16 report on the use of child soldiers in Burma, UN Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict Coomaraswamy cited evidence that the both the government army and several armed insurgent and cease-fire groups, including

the United Wa State Army, Kachin Independence Army, Karenni National People's Liberation Front, Democratic Karen Buddhist Army, Shan State Army-South, Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army, and Karen National Union Peace Council, recruited child soldiers.

Coomaraswamy's report stated that, despite the government's official policy of prohibiting the recruitment of children under the age of 18, there was enormous pressure to increase army recruitment rates, which led to a pattern of underage recruitment into the military. The report stated that often children were lured into joining with promises of food and shelter. Some children were recruited from the street from brokers who received up to approximately \$32 (40,000 kyat) for each recruit, while others were reportedly detained by the police and offered the choice of joining the army or going to jail. Coomaraswamy also cited the practice of "prerecruitment," in which underage children were taken to army bases and used in noncombatant capacities until they reached the age of majority and were enlisted. Age verification remained a significant problem, since many children did not have reliable proof of age.

According to Coomaraswamy's report, children can join the Wa State Army and work in noncombatant positions at the age of 12 and serve in combatant positions at age 15. She cited credible reports of uniformed and armed children in the Wa State Army, including witnesses who reported children as young as nine under arms.

Coomaraswamy cited reports of a Kachin Independence Army (KIA) policy mandating that each family contribute one child for military service regardless of age. She recounted a report that early in the year, KIA recruited a 15-year-old girl when she returned home from her school in Myitkyina, Kachin State. The girl's family had not yet contributed a child to the KIA, and neither of her siblings was living in the village. At year's end the girl remained in KIA custody.

Coomaraswamy stated that the Karenni National People's Liberation Front had a reputation for having many children in its ranks. Her report stated that children had reportedly been used to search for landmines laid by other armed groups, but she acknowledged difficulty in verifying these reports in detail. She also stated that the UN had received credible reports indicating the presence of uniformed and armed children in and near Democratic Karen Buddhist Army camps.

According to Coomaraswamy, the UN received reports of frequent sightings of children being forcibly taken and used by armed groups in Shan State, including the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army and Shan State Army-South. She also cited reports from several sources indicating that the Karen National Union Peace Council, a breakaway faction of the KNU [Karen National Union] active in Karen State, had recruited children from a refugee camp and villages in the border areas early in the year.

Coomaraswamy's report stated that the UN did not receive any reports during the year of recruitment or use of children by the Karen National Union or Karen National Liberation Army, Karenni National Progressive Party, or Karenni Army.

The use of child soldiers remained a problem, although the number of child soldiers was not known. The official age of enlistment in the army is 18 years. The government stated that its official policy is to avoid conscripting child soldiers; however, numerous recruiters reportedly ignored the policy.

During the June 25-29 visit of UN Special Representative Coomaraswamy, the regime appointed an official in the Ministry of Social Welfare to work with his counterpart on the UN Country Team on problems pertaining to children and armed conflict. The government also appointed an official in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to work with UNICEF [UN Children's Fund] on the child soldier issue. The official from the Ministry of Social Welfare is responsible for matters pertaining to the release and reintegration of child soldiers, while the Ministry of Foreign Affairs official is responsible for monitoring and reporting. In September the government established a technical level working group on the monitoring and prevention of child recruitment. The Committee for Prevention Against Recruitment of Minors for Military Service also agreed to develop, in coordination with UNICEF, a plan for reintegrating into civilian society children affected by armed conflict. However, numerous international NGOs and diplomatic observers reported that a more robust monitoring and training mechanism was needed to address the child soldier problem adequately.

Although authorities allowed Coomaraswamy to meet with representatives of the United Wa State Army, they prevented her from meeting with representatives of the Karen National Liberation Army and Karenni Army, both of which were listed in the UN Secretary-General's 2006 Security Council Report as using child soldiers.

On October 31, Human Rights Watch published a report entitled *Sold to be Soldiers: The Recruitment and Use of Child Soldiers in Burma*, which detailed numerous specific instances of child soldier recruitment and use in the country.

On November 16, Coomaraswamy presented her report on children and armed conflict in the country. The report stated that the UN had received numerous credible reports about violations of international humanitarian law, human rights law, and military directives resulting in the recruitment and use of children by some government military units and several nonstate actors, including the United Wa State Army, Kachin Independence Army, Karenni National People's Liberation Front, Democratic Karen Buddhist Army, Shan State Army-South, Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army, and Karen National Union Peace Council. However, the report stated that the government had shown increasing interest in addressing underage recruitment and cautioned that it was not able to provide a full picture of the breadth and depth of these violations due to limited access to conflict areas and the lack of guaranteed protection for monitors and victims of violations.

Burundi

In September 2006 the government concluded a cease-fire agreement with the Party for the Liberation of the Hutu National Liberation Front (PALIPEHUTU-FNL or FNL), with

which it had been engaged in hostilities since 1994, and began demobilizing an estimated 3,000 former FNL combatants. The government continued to integrate members of former rebel groups, including the CNDD-FDD [National Council for the Defense of Democracy–Forces for the Defense of Democracy], into the National Defense Forces (FDN). From 2004 to December 2007 the government demobilized more than 24,400 former combatants that included members of the regular army, some former rebels, and more than 3,000 child soldiers.

Despite the cease-fire and the general lack of hostilities between the government and the FNL, abuses by the FNL against civilians continued and occurred primarily in FNL traditional strongholds of Bujumbura Rural, and the northern provinces of Bubanza, Cibitike, Muramvya, and Kayanza. These abuses included killings, kidnappings, rapes, theft, extortion, the forcible recruitment of children as soldiers and the use of forced labor.

Unlike the previous year, APRODH [The Association for the Protection of Human Rights and Detained Persons] reported no child soldiers being held by the government in prisons or communal jails, and the government released dozens of child soldiers held in its custody in 2006.

Under the law the minimum age for military recruitment is 16, although the government stated that no one under 18 was recruited. Through year's end, a project sponsored by the government and the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) demobilized approximately 3,041 child soldiers from the government security forces as well as from former rebel groups. According to UNICEF, security forces no longer used children as soldiers for combat, although other sources reported that children continued to serve in the security forces as spies and porters and to perform menial tasks. HRW [Human Rights Watch] reported only one incident of a child soldier in the FDN; the child worked as a cook and claimed to be 16 years old.

The Ministry of Defense instituted a disciplinary policy regarding the use of children by soldiers to perform menial tasks. Although there have been no recent reports of child labor in military camps, the policy remained in effect; however, access to camps was generally unrestricted and civilians, including children, easily entered and departed. Soldiers using children to perform menial tasks were subject to punishment and dismissal.

Local NGO League Iteka reported that the FNL continued to recruit children into their ranks, and UNICEF confirmed the presence of 129 child soldiers in a December visit to an FNL camp near Bujumbura.

Of the 65 former FNL soldiers held in government custody, 25 were released in February, and 40 others were released later in the year. According to the government, there were no former child soldiers being detained. Although the government failed to reintegrate them into society in accordance with international standards, several NGOs and UNICEF provided the children skills training or educational assistance. Many were reunited with

their families or placed in school. HRW [Human Rights Watch] stated that there could be large numbers of children still engaged with the FNL in need of demobilization and reintegration.

The FNL continued to use and recruit child soldiers; however, the government claimed it no longer recruited anyone under 18 years of age.

During the year the country was a source and transit country for children trafficked for the purpose of forced labor and child soldiering. Trafficking of children as child soldiers was a large problem during the civil war, but the FDN claimed it no longer recruited or used child soldiers. However, the trafficking of child soldiers by the FNL within the country remained a problem.

The government continued to provide assistance to former child soldiers from the FDN, six former rebel groups, and Guardians of the Peace (a civilian paramilitary force recruited by the army during the war).

There continued to be reports of children engaging in forced or compulsory labor, and of trafficking in children. The use of child soldiers was no longer a problem with government forces, but the FNL continued the use of child soldiers.

Central African Republic

According to HRW [Human Rights Watch], numerous APRD [Popular Army for the Restoration of the Republic and Democracy] groups included soldiers as young as 12. In addition the UFDR [Union of Democratic Forces for Unity] rebel movement admitted that many child soldiers fought with it. AI also reported that UFDR forces actively recruited children.

However, during the year the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) negotiated with UFDR rebel leaders in northeastern CAR to demobilize child soldiers within their ranks; these efforts culminated in a joint ceremony with UN, government, and international officials in the town of Gordil in June. UNICEF and other observers noted that, while the child soldiers were willing to demobilize and were anxious to attend school, their communities were lacking in the most basic infrastructure

Credible evidence appeared during the year that both the UFDR and APRD rebel groups recruited and used child soldiers.

Chad

Human rights abuses included ... including killings and use of child soldiers

Rebel groups, ethnic-based militias, Darfur-based militias, and bandits committed numerous human rights abuses. These abuses included...use of child soldiers.

The law prohibits the use of child soldiers; however, child soldiers were used by the ANT [Chadian National Army], Chadian rebel groups, village self-defense forces, and armed groups from Sudan operating in the border region. As in the previous year, there were reports that the army forcibly recruited children; the reports were covered by the media, which attributed them to human rights organizations and eyewitnesses.

Children were recruited from refugee camps along the eastern border by armed groups from both Chad and Sudan. For example, a UN report noted that, in January, 39 children were recruited by Sudanese armed groups from Briedjing refugee camp.

On May 9, the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the government signed an agreement to identify and demobilize children in the Chadian military; however, the program was reportedly suspended in November. As of July, 425 child soldiers had been demobilized.

The government and other armed groups continued to use child soldiers.

Colombia

The FARC [Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia] and ELN [National Liberation Army] committed the following human rights abuses: ...widespread recruitment of child soldiers;

New illegal groups committed numerous human rights abuses. The last United Self Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC) block demobilized in August 2006, but AUC members who refused to demobilize, AUC members who demobilized but later abandoned the peace process, and other criminal groups remained the object of security force action. (The new illegal groups, which the government also described as new criminal groups, consisted of demobilized paramilitaries who returned to violence, individual paramilitaries who never demobilized, common criminals, and narcotics traffickers primarily involved in criminal activity. These new groups lacked the organization, reach, and military capacity of the former AUC and focused primarily on narcotics trafficking and extortion rather than fighting the FARC or ELN. In these circumstances, it was often difficult to determine responsibility for abuses committed.)

The AUC demobilization led to a reduction in killings and other human rights abuses, but paramilitaries who refused to demobilize and new criminal groups continued to commit numerous unlawful acts and related abuses, including: political killings and kidnappings; physical violence; forced displacement; subornation and intimidation of judges, prosecutors, and witnesses; infringement on citizens' privacy rights; restrictions on freedom of movement; recruitment and use of child soldiers; and harassment, intimidation, and killings of human rights workers, journalists, teachers, and trade unionists.

Guerrillas used children as soldiers. The Ministry of Defense estimated that 4,620 FARC members and 1,330 ELN members were minors and that most guerrilla fighters had joined the guerilla ranks as children. Human Rights Watch reported that there were

approximately 11,000 child soldiers, stating the percentage of those in the FARC and the ELN had increased relative to those who may have joined new criminal groups.

Although there were no reports of forced child labor in the formal economy, several thousand children were forced to serve as FARC or ELN guerrilla combatants or members of new illegal groups, prostitutes, or coca pickers.

Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)

Security forces recruited and retained child soldiers and compelled forced labor by adults and children.

Armed groups continued to commit numerous, serious abuses – some of which may have constituted war crimes – including unlawful killings, disappearances, and torture. They also recruited and retained child soldiers, compelled forced labor, committed widespread crimes of sexual violence and other possible war crimes.

Armed groups operating outside government control kidnapped numerous persons, often for forced labor, military service, or sexual services. Many of the victims disappeared.

Military preparations during the year, and the fighting itself, led to further depredations against civilians by several members of security forces and armed groups, led to further recruitment of child soldiers...

Security forces and armed groups continued to recruit and maintain child soldiers in their ranks. According to a UN independent expert's report in August, there was continued recruitment and use of children in security forces and by armed groups during the first six months of the year. Perpetrators included government security forces, FARDC [Congolese Armed Forces] forces allied with renegade General Nkunda and not under central command authority, Mai Mai militia, and the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR), composed primarily of Hutus from neighboring Rwanda, including many who perpetrated the 1994 Rwandan genocide.

During the year MONUC [UN Mission in the Congo] estimated that FARDC forces in the east continued to use approximately 200 children as soldiers and porters.

Some mixed brigade commanders recruited or tolerated the use of children as soldiers during the year. More than 200 children remained in five mixed FARDC brigades at the time of the brigades' disintegration in August, and their circumstances following August were unknown. Children who were part of the FARDC mixed brigades were deployed with their units, some of which were subsequently involved in active combat against the FDLR in North Kivu Province.

Mixed brigade commanders Colonel Faustin of Delta Brigade and deputy commander Colonel Baudouin of Charlie Brigade, as well as former Ituri District militia leader Bosco Ntaganda, were uncooperative in releasing children under their command in North Kivu

Province. Bravo commander Colonel Sultani Makenga and Lieutenant Colonel Mulomba forcibly recruited child soldiers. According to HRW [Human Rights Watch], on March 22 Makenga attempted to prevent child protection workers from removing eight children from a military camp in Kitchanga, North Kivu Province. He allegedly dragged six children from the protection workers' vehicle and beat the other two. Three of the six later escaped to UN peacekeepers. The status of the other three children remained unknown at the end of the year.

Armed groups maintained and recruited child soldiers, including by force, and sometimes threatened and harassed humanitarian workers.

HRW and the UN Group of Experts on the DRC accused forces loyal to Nkunda of having recruited and used children as combatants. In 2007 pro-Nkunda troops reportedly recruited an unknown number of Congolese children for soldiering from refugee camps in Rwanda. In December MONUC accused Nkunda's forces of forcibly recruiting several hundred children, including some demobilized (former) child soldiers, from schools in North Kivu Province for use as soldiers.

In October the Congolese government transferred Germain Katanga, a former leader of the FRPI [Front for Patriotic Resistance in Ituri], to the International Criminal Court (ICC) on various charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity, including killings, using child soldiers, and forcing women into sexual slavery.

Former Ituri militia leader Thomas Lubanga, whom the DRC surrendered to the ICC in March 2006, remained in custody at The Hague at the end of the year on charges of enlisting and conscripting child soldiers. His trial was scheduled to begin on March 31, 2008.

According to the UN Group of Experts in the DRC, the FNI [Front for National Integration], the FRPI, and the MRC [Congolese Revolutionary Movement] have consistently recruited and used children within their ranks and continued to do so during the year.

Various Mai Mai, community-based militia groups in the provinces of South Kivu, North Kivu, and Katanga continued to commit abuses against civilians, including killings, abductions, and rapes. According to the UN Group of Experts on the DRC, the use of children as soldiers by Mai Mai in North Kivu Province was endemic.

According to the report, the number of cases of child abduction in eastern DRC remained high between June 2006 and May 2007. Abducted children were recruited as soldiers in 30 percent of the cases, raped in 13 percent, and subjected to forced labor in 2 percent. In 17 percent of reported cases, the children abducted were formerly associated with armed groups and were detained by the FARDC in order to gather information about the groups or to extort money from family members. In 38 percent of the cases, the reasons for abduction were not known.

The constitution forbids involuntary servitude and child soldiering; however, existing laws do not prohibit all forms of trafficking.

The majority of reported trafficking was conducted in the country's unstable eastern provinces by armed groups outside government control. Indigenous and foreign armed groups, notably the FDLR, and, to a lesser extent, government security forces, continued to abduct and forcibly recruit Congolese men, women, and children to serve as laborers (including in mines), porters, domestics, and sex slaves, although at a much reduced rate from previous years.

Unintegrated government military units and armed groups continued to recruit and maintain child soldiers in their ranks.

The international NGO [non-governmental organization] Save the Children reported that during the latter part of the year armed groups in the east recruited children “in record numbers” to serve as soldiers and sex slaves.

Military authorities took no action against commanders who employed child soldiers. Eight children who were identified by child protection officers in South Kivu Province in the ranks of a FARDC unit led by a Captain Mulenga in March 2006 remained in the unit, and no action was taken against him. Colonel Jean Pierre Biyoyo, the only person convicted by a Congolese court for recruitment of child soldiers, escaped from Bukavu prison in South Kivu Province in June 2006. He reappeared in March in Bukavu as part of a FARDC delegation and had been promoted to Lieutenant Colonel. He served during the year with the mixed brigades in North Kivu Province, reportedly as an aide to General Nkunda, and remained with Nkunda's forces after the mixed brigades disintegrated.

The government's antitrafficking programs were limited and lacking in resources. Following accusations of incompetence and corruption, it disbanded CONADER, the national disarmament agency, which was charged with demobilizing child soldiers, in mid-2007 and transferred its functions to the defense ministry.

The government has demobilized more than 29,000 children from security services and armed groups since the end of the war in 2003; however, most credible sources, including UNICEF and CONADER, estimated that at least 3,000 children had yet to be demobilized, principally from the ranks of armed groups, which sometimes held them as prisoners.

The government, in coordination with MONUC, reached agreements with militias in Ituri District, General Nkunda in North Kivu Province, and Mai Mai in North and South Kivu provinces that included provisions for the demobilization of child soldiers; however, the groups did not generally respect the agreements.

In February and March, nearly four dozen children were removed from Peter Karim's FNI militia, based in Ituri District after his forces surrendered to the FARDC. During a

June 14 demobilization, child protection officials identified 31 children among the FNI fighters.

According to the UN Group of Experts on the DRC, the use of children as soldiers by Mai Mai militia in North Kivu Province was endemic. In South Kivu Province in June, child protection NGOs identified 20 children among 60 Mai Mai in Kilba, 19 among 40 Mai Mai in Runingu, and several dozen in Kabumbe. The majority were ex-combatants. Some had joined voluntarily in hopes of receiving demobilization payments.

Security forces and armed groups also used children, including child soldiers, for forced labor in mines.

Republic of Congo

With support from international organizations, the government provided economic and counseling support to former child soldiers.

Cote d'Ivoire

Unlike in previous years, there were no reports that pro-government militias and rebel forces recruited and used children as soldiers on either a voluntary or a forced basis.

During the year government militias and rebels continued to use child soldiers; however, there were no reports during the year that either group recruited new child soldiers.

Eritrea

There are a few uncorroborated stories of street children being taken to camps for skills training, but it is likely that only children approaching 17 years of age were actually conscripted. The number of street children was small but growing.

India

Civil society and media alleged there was trafficking in child soldiers by Naxalites and "Salwa Judum" activists. NGOs in Chhattisgarh also criticized the practice of hiring teenage children of police personnel slain in Naxalite attacks as "Bal-police (child police.)" The children were not given actual policing duty but ran errands in police stations. Several such "Bal-police" continued to be employed in police stations in Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh.

Israel and the Occupied Territories

The IDF [Israeli Defense Force] used minors as human shields; Palestinian terrorist groups used minors to conduct attacks, smuggle weapons, and act as human shields.

Iraq

Some NGOs have reportedly had difficulty implementing projects addressing child labor due to threats from gangs and militias that allegedly use children on the streets as fighters or drug sellers.

Kenya

There were reports of children joining gangs and militia, and of the Mungiki gang recruiting young boys from schools. On June 18, police ambushed a group administering oaths and providing military training to armed youths. The Mt. Elgon area district commissioner warned parents to turn in their children who had joined the Sabaot Land Defense Force or face prosecution.

Liberia

Despite international and governmental attempts to reunite children separated from their families during the war, there were still many children who lived on the streets in Monrovia. It was difficult to tell who were street children, former combatants, or IDPs [Internally Displaced Peoples] . Nearly all children had witnessed atrocities during the 14-year civil war, and some children had committed atrocities.

Nepal

The November 2006 peace agreement forbade the use of children under the age of 18 as soldiers in the armies of either side; however, the Maoists continued to recruit large numbers of children after signing this agreement. At year's end the United Nations Mission in Nepal (UNMIN) was in the process of verifying the status of People's Liberation Army combatants in the cantonments and disqualifying those under 18. On December 22, UNMIN completed the second stage of verification. According to UNMIN's press release on December 27, 2,973 combatants were judged to be under age 18 on May 25, 2006, and 8,640 combatants did not appear for the second round of verification.

Niger

The MNJ [Niger Movement for Justice] committed arbitrary killings and other abuses, including the use of children for intelligence gathering.

There are reports that the MNJ used children to gather intelligence on government security forces.

Pakistan

There were reports during the year that religious militants forcibly recruited child soldiers. The BBC reported that children as young as 11 were kidnapped by pro-Taliban

militants in Tank and Dir. Children as young as 12 reportedly were being trained as suicide bombers.

On March 28, police and Taliban militants clashed in Tank after officials at a boy's high school resisted militants' efforts to recruit students from the school. According to press reports, the militants later kidnapped the principal, whom they suspected of alerting the police, and attacked Tank. The ensuing clash reportedly left 25 militants and one paramilitary officer dead.

Paraguay

Special rapporteur Nowak noted in November 2006 that he had received allegations of beating and degrading treatment of military conscripts, such as a form of hazing known as "descuereo," which involves forcing individuals to carry out extreme forms of exercise as punishment. In January, 17-year-old Air Force recruits Cristian Recalde and Victor Jose Coronel complained about this form of punishment; as a result, the military eliminated a special provision allowing recruits aged 17 to serve with parental consent and required that recruits be 18 years of age.

Philippines

In addition to killing soldiers and police officers in armed encounters, the New People's Army (NPA, the military wing of the Communist Party, CPP) killed local government officials and ordinary civilians, including through the use of landmines, and were suspected by the government in many of the killings of leftwing activists. The NPA also used child soldiers in combat roles. Terrorist groups committed bombings that caused civilian casualties; these groups also used child soldiers.

During the year the NPA and the ASG [Abu Sayyaf Group] targeted children for recruitment as combatants and noncombatants. The NPA claimed that it assigned persons 15 to 18 years of age to self-defense and noncombatant duties; however, there were reports that the NPA continued to use minors in combat. During the year the Philippine Interagency Committee on Children Involved in Armed Conflict reported nine child soldiers rescued by or surrendered to the government. On March 1, seven NPA rebels surrendered to the military in Davao City; at least two were minors. One child claimed she and 13 other child soldiers in the NPA camp carried firearms. On August 9, a 16-year-old boy, who claimed to be a member of the NPA's propaganda arm, surrendered to police authorities in Davao del Sur.

The ASG also recruited teenagers to fight and participate in its activities. There were reports that a significant number of ASG members staffing the groups' camps were teenagers. The AFP [Armed Forces of the Philippines] stated that some Islamic schools in Mindanao served as fronts to indoctrinate children and that the ASG used children as couriers and spies.

Rwanda

...recruitment of child soldiers by a DRC-based armed group, trafficking in persons, child labor, and restrictions on labor rights occurred.

The UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) received reports of recruitment of children for forced labor or child soldiering from a Rwandan camp for Congolese refugees by a DRC [Democratic Republic of Congo]-based armed group.

The government continued to accept former combatants who returned to the country from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) as part of the ongoing peace process between the two countries. A total of 6,676 former combatants from armed groups in the DRC, including 671 former child soldiers, had been demobilized and peacefully resettled in Rwanda since the beginning of the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration program in 2001. During the year 202 adult former combatants from armed groups and 50 children were demobilized; 1,667 RDF [Rwandan Defense Force] soldiers were demobilized in December. With international support, the government's Demobilization and Reintegration Commission, the lead agency for the reinsertion of returned former combatants, placed such persons in a two-month reeducation program at demobilization and reintegration centers in the Northern Province. There also was a center solely for former child combatants in the Eastern Province. After the two-month reeducation period, each adult former combatant was given approximately \$90 (50,000 Rwandan francs) and allowed to return to his village. Returnees who were accused of committing genocide and were over 25 years of age (or 14 years old at the time of the genocide) were subject to gacaca trials.

During the year there were reports that an armed group from the DRC recruited children from Rwandan refugee camps for use as combatants or forced laborers.

The government continued to support a demobilization and reintegration program. During the year 50 children who had served as soldiers in the DRC received care and reintegration preparation from the Muhazi demobilization center for children in the Eastern Province.

The country was a source for small numbers of women and children trafficked for sexual exploitation, domestic labor, and soldiering.

During the year there were reports of a DRC-based armed group recruiting and trafficking Congolese from refugee camps for use as forced laborers or child soldiers in the DRC.

There were reports indicating that an armed group based in the DRC recruited children from Rwandan refugee camps for labor and soldiering in the DRC.

There were reports of a DRC-based armed group recruiting children in refugee camps to be used as combatants or forced laborers.

Sierra Leone

On July 19, the SCSL [Special Court for Sierra Leone] sentenced Alex Brima, Brima Kamara, and Santigie Kanu, senior commanders of the AFRC [Armed Forces Revolutionary Council], to 50 years, 45 years, and 50 years respectively. The three were found guilty on 11 of 14 charges, including murder and extermination, the recruitment of child soldiers, sexual violence and rape, malicious mutilation and amputation, slavery, and pillage during the country's civil war. The court's sentencing was the first in the SCSL's history for the crime of the recruitment and use in hostilities of child soldiers.

On October 9, the SCSL sentenced Moinina Fofanah and Allielu Kondewa of the Civil Defence Force (CDF) to six and eight years imprisonment, respectively, for unlawful killings, physical violence and mental suffering, pillage, and collective punishment. In addition, Kondewa was found guilty of enlisting child soldiers. Fofanah and Kondewa were sentenced to six and eight years in prison respectively.

Somalia

...recruitment of child soldiers...[was] also [a] problem.

The recruitment and use of children in militias and other fighting forces was a longstanding practice in the country and continued during the year. Children continued to be recruited into militias on both sides of the conflict by the TFG [Transitional Federal Parliament] and its related forces, as well as by clan militias and antigovernment groups. This recruitment was on occasion forced. Local human rights organizations reported that antigovernment groups paid children \$20 (400,000 Somali shillings) to lob grenades and other explosives at TFG-allied militias and international peacekeepers.

In July the UN Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict called on all parties to stop recruiting children and demobilize those serving as soldiers. In some administrations in Somalia, like that of Jowhar, authorities committed to demobilize child soldiers with UNICEF's [UN Children's Fund] assistance.

The TFG pledged to address the issue of child recruitment when ministers signed the Paris Commitments in February; however, all parties to the conflict continued to recruit child soldiers during the year, including the TFG. UNICEF implemented a public outreach program with radio broadcasts to highlight the problem of child soldiers.

The Somaliland Constitution contains no minimum age for recruitment into the armed forces, but there were no reports of minors in its forces; however, an inadequate system of birth registration made it difficult to establish the exact age of recruits.

All parties to the conflict recruited and used child soldiers.

The recruiting and use of child soldiers was a problem.

Sri Lanka

Credible reports cited unlawful killings by government agents, assassinations by unknown perpetrators, politically motivated killings and child soldier recruitment by paramilitary forces associated with the government

Both the LTTE [Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam] and the Karuna group (also known as TMVP [Tamil Makkal Viduthalai Pulikal], or Pillaiyan group) used minors in battle. The Karuna group and the LTTE also continued to recruit child soldiers forcibly, while intimidating and using violence against civilians.

The LTTE instituted a “one family, one fighter” policy, forcing each family to provide at least one member, including children, to the LTTE. By year's end most sources indicated that the “one family, one fighter” policy targeted those 18 years or older. The UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) noted a significant reduction in reported child recruitment by the LTTE. While the trend indicated that the LTTE was eliminating the recruitment and use of child soldiers, it had not complied with the promise to end the use of all minors by year's end. UNICEF reported that the LTTE forcibly recruited (or rerecruited) 160 children during the year with an average age of 16 years. At year's end 205 children remained in LTTE custody, including 1,224 who were recruited as children but were over 18 at year's end.

According to UN sources, there was limited progress during the year in the release of children recruited by both groups. A UNICEF-supported action plan sought to rehabilitate former LTTE child soldiers through release and reintegration. Under this program there were to be three UNICEF-supported transit centers. Two of the transit centers, in Batticaloa and Trincomalee, never opened because of a lack of releases by the LTTE. By mid-year the LTTE no longer controlled these areas. UNICEF supported the establishment of a transit center in Kilinochchi for child recruits released by the LTTE, which remained open, but UNICEF noted that its use was limited and declining.

The Karuna group continued to recruit children, some forcibly after abduction. Karuna cadres used coercion, extortion, rape, and murder to force children and adults to join their ranks. Karuna operatives often bribed parents to allow their children to join the Karuna group, and punished parents or children if they resisted.

Unlike the LTTE, UNICEF statistics indicated that child recruitment by the progovernment Karuna group did not decline. The UNSR (sic: UN Special Rapporteur) on Children and Armed Conflict reported and cited evidence that government forces were at times complicit in the recruitment of children. During the year, UNICEF reported that the Karuna group recruited and rerecruited children for use as child soldiers, especially in Batticaloa district for a total of 251. This was more than in 2006, although the rate of recruitment was down from its peak in late 2005. Some previously recruited child soldiers reached 18 years of age while continuing to serve in the Karuna group. UNICEF figures show that at the end of the year, 160 children were still serving in the Karuna forces, and 69 who were recruited as children were now over age 18.

Sudan

The government's human rights record remained poor, and there were numerous serious abuses, including...forced military conscription of underage men [and] recruitment of child soldiers....

Antigovernment and insurgent groups also committed numerous, serious abuses [including] recruitment of child soldiers.

An estimated 15,000 Dinka women and children were abducted, mainly from 1983 to 1999; thousands of these remained unaccounted for at year's end. Observers believed that some of those abducted in the past were sold into de facto slavery as forced laborers, while others were drafted into the military. In some cases the abductees escaped or eventually were released or ransomed; in other cases they were killed.

The Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) kidnapped children in Uganda and brought them into Southern Sudan. For example, on March 28, armed men alleged to belong to the LRA abducted six girls ranging in age from 12 to 17 years old. The girls remained missing at year's end.

The Government of Southern Sudan generally did not interfere with privacy, family, home, or correspondence in the south. Unlike in the previous year, southern militias, especially the South Sudan Independence Movement, did not forcibly conscript citizens, including children.

Darfur - The conflict worsened due to increased attacks by rebel groups on humanitarian workers and civilians, the continued factionalization of rebel groups, and intertribal warfare. The use of rape as a weapon and the recruitment of child soldiers continued to be widespread.

Recruitment of child soldiers remained a serious problem in Darfur. In August the UN issued the *Report of the Secretary-General on Children in Armed Conflict in the Sudan*, which cited credible reports that the SAF [Sudanese Armed Forces], government-aligned Popular Defense Forces (PDF), janjaweed, central reserve police, and numerous Darfur rebel groups including the JEM [Justice and Equality Movement], the SLA [Sudanese Liberation Army]/Minawi, the SLA/Wahid, the SLA/Peace Wing, and the SLA/Abu Gasim recruited child soldiers. The UN report also cited recruitment of child soldiers by Chadian rebel forces operating inside Sudan. Darfur rebel groups also reportedly recruited child soldiers in the Sudanese refugee camps in Chad.

The UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) worked to raise awareness of the law and of the dangers in using child soldiers. In June, UNICEF signed an action plan with SLA/Minawi that committed the group to identify locations of child soldiers.

Unlike in the previous year, the UN received no credible reports that the SAF and SPLA [Sudan People's Liberation Army] recruited child soldiers, according to *the UN Report of*

the Secretary-General on children in armed conflict in the Sudan. However, both the SAF and SPLA failed to prevent children from voluntarily associating with armed groups aligned with their forces.

For example, the UN confirmed the presence of children at the SPLA Kilo 7 barracks in Unity State in 2006; the children did not leave the barracks until July 2007.

There were reports that SAF-aligned militias continued to recruit child soldiers.

Government-aligned militias and rebel forces conscripted or accepted young men and boys into the aligned militias in Darfur.

In the IDP [internally displaced persons] camps in Darfur and refugee camps in Eastern Chad, rebel groups often conscripted teenage males. Conscripts faced significant hardship and abuse in military service, often serving on the front line. There were reports that abducted, homeless, and displaced children were discouraged from speaking languages other than Arabic or practicing religions other than Islam.

During the past 20 years, the LRA kidnapped more than 20,000 Ugandan children, took them back to the northern part of Uganda, and forced them to become sex slaves, porters, or soldiers. Many of the victims were killed. The LRA also abducted citizens while raiding towns in Southern Sudan. The government permitted the Ugandan army access to Southern Sudan to pursue the LRA. Although Ugandan military operations have significantly reduced LRA numbers, the LRA continued to operate in the south and to hold child abductees, despite its August 2006 signing of an agreement to cease hostilities; such LRA attacks restricted humanitarian activities.

There were reports that government and government-aligned militias conscripted children and accepted children as soldiers.

Thailand

During the year the government arrested hundreds of suspected militants, some of them juveniles, and in some cases held them for a month or more under provisions of the emergency decree and martial law.

There were reports that separatist groups recruited teenagers under the age of 18 to carry out attacks.

Togo

During the year the government took significant steps to advance human and political rights, including the organization of generally free and fair legislative elections and the July passage of the Child Code, which prohibits child trafficking, child prostitution, child

pornography, the employment of children in armed conflict, and other worst forms of child labor.

On July 6, the government put into effect the country's first Child Code, which the National Assembly passed on June 25. The code provides for the protection of children's economic, psychological, and moral rights and includes national and international standards intended to protect children. The code prohibits child trafficking, child prostitution, child pornography, the employment of children in armed conflict, and the worst forms of child labor, including the selling of children for sexual exploitation, forced labor, or servitude.

Uganda

The LRA [Lord's Resistance Army], which conducted its activities from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), continued to hold children that it had forcibly recruited from Uganda.

In contrast with 2006, there were no reports of LRA abductions in northern Uganda. In previous years, the LRA forced abducted children and young adults into slavery as laborers, soldiers, guards, and sex slaves.

The government denied allegations of underage recruitment into the army, including that of the UN Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict who estimated that 5,000 children were serving in the armed forces in June 2006. The government claimed that some minors might have falsified birth documents to meet the 18-year age requirement of the military.

The LRA regularly abducted and conscripted thousands of children in previous years; however, there were no reports of such activity during the year, and there were no further reports of UPDF interrogations of former LRA child soldiers. Children abducted by the LRA in previous years were used as laborers, soldiers, guards, and sex slaves. In addition to being beaten, raped, and forced to march until exhausted, abducted children were forced to participate in the killing of other children. Most LRA rebels were children between the ages of 11 and 16.

Improved security in the north eliminated the practice known as "night commuting," where children traveled from conflict areas or IDP [Internally Displaced Peoples] camps each night to urban centers to avoid abduction by the LRA.

The UPDF has child protection units in all the districts and, along with government agencies, worked with NGOs to reintegrate thousands of LRA abductees into society.

Unlike in previous years, there were no reports that the UPDF [Uganda People's Defense Forces] used former LRA child soldiers on reconnaissance and intelligence missions, nor were there new reports of the LRA abducting children into virtual slavery.

The government also cooperated with the ILO [International Labor Organization], foreign governments, and NGOs in several initiatives to combat child labor, including the education and reintegration of children into their communities.

United Kingdom

The armed forces accept recruits from age 16, but they are not deployed on operations until age 18.

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