

**FORUM:** Social, Humanitarian and Cultural (SOCHUM)  
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### *Background*

On the 30th of August 1999, the UN adopted resolution 1261 and was the first to condemn the use of children in armed conflict. Yet between 2005 and 2022, more than 105,000 children were recruited by nations to participate. Many are abducted and forcibly recruited, while some hope to escape poverty by joining the military. The term 'child soldier' refers not only to children in direct combat – many girls and boys are also used and exploited as messengers, cooks, spies, and even suicide bombers. Child labour is also often used to make and operate dangerous weaponry. Children are also often seen as more easily indoctrinated and coerced into participating in dangerous situations. Vulnerable groups such as those displaced in refugee camps and orphans are most likely to be recruited into armed conflict. In addition, girls are especially vulnerable to gender-based violence and sexually exploited by male fighters. As a result of this, children in many cases are thus forced to live with life-long disabilities if they did not suffer a fatal injury in combat. Many more experience lifelong PTSD, depression, anti-social and disruptive behaviour, drug abuse, and cognitive impairment.

### *Current situation*

Around the world, children are still at risk of exploitation in armed conflicts. The conflict in Sudan since 2023 has seen a rapid rise in the use of child soldiers, particularly in Darfur and east Sudan. Yemen has seen at least 1800 cases of child recruitment since 2010. The problem in the past years has not only continued but is reportedly on the rise in conflicts in Colombia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Lake Chad basin, Mozambique, the Sahel, Somalia, Syria and Haiti. According to a U.N. Group of Experts, the use of child soldiers has reached alarming levels by 2024 due to the conflict between the Mouvement du 23 mars (M23) and the Rwanda Defense Force (RDF). In particular, M23 has been systematically abducting children in conquered territories and targets refugee camps for 'recruitment'. Despite efforts by the UN and human rights groups, the issue still persists to this day. Delegates should consider methods to reduce child recruitment, move children out of vulnerable exploitative environments, and address the potential physical and psychological impacts.