



**Mission Viejo High School Model United Nations**  
**29<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference**  
***“Through the Fire the Spirit is Forged”***

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**Topic Synopsis**

UNICEF, Children in Armed Conflict

*“It is very difficult to live in war. You just wait for the moment you will die.”*

*– Sanel, 12-year-old boy, Bosnia and Herzegovina*

**I. Background**

Armed conflict and other means of war-like antics happen worldwide, exposing children at a young age to the gruesome and negativity that combat brings to their lives. In the 1990s, over two million children died from the wrath of armed conflict within their nation. It is stated that twenty million children also had to flee their abodes in hopes of escaping the dangerous world they call reality.

Unfortunately, child soldiers exist wherever there is armed conflict. Children, under the age of eighteen are being forced into combat, either as a child soldier, a cook, messenger, porter, and sometimes even as a spy. Girls are often taken and forced into brutal marriage and sex at an early age. These child soldiers are often taken from their home, seized on the streets, or abducted from orphanages in order to spend the rest of their childhood in combat. Child armament is unfortunately common in multiple countries, but is significantly prevalent in Africa, Afghanistan, Colombia, India, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Uganda.

A child in armed conflict is a major problem to the world because thousands of children each year unnecessarily die through horrible means. About 8 thousand to 10 thousand are killed or maimed by land mines each year, and more than 250,000 children participate in global combat yearly. Taking children out of their childhood and placing them into a world of negligence, horror, and violence is something that needs to be suppressed as quickly as possible.



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## **II. UN Involvement**

Efforts between multiple NGOs, The United Nation’s Children’s Fund (UNICEF), and vital United Nations subcommittees have all made valued attempts with positive ramifications towards solving this issue. Nations should be accountable for solving the problems within their own territory, and should do everything in their power to solve the issues at hand. For example, nations such as Sierra Leone, Afghanistan, Angola, Cambodia, Thailand and Sri Lanka, have made great efforts to somewhat make a ‘positive dent’ in such a large international problem. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission made awareness of the experiences these children were tangled in, which then gave rise to a committee strictly focused on improving the issue of children in armed conflict throughout Sierra Leone in 2004.

In the Great Lakes Region of Africa, a gathered effort through the United Nations and NGOs reunited around 70,000 child soldiers with their family members in 1994 and 2000. United Nations peacekeeping forces have also initiated Child rights training in hopes of protecting these children in conflicted territory.

The Afghan Government returned around 1 million children back to school, with the support of humanitarian aid groups and other NGOs. The main principle is, change can be made. Nations must first collaborate amongst themselves to conjure methods to solve the problems within their nation alone. Through the assistance of NGOs, humanitarian aid groups, subcommittees, and many more organizations and agencies, it is possible to greatly improve the conditions of this issue.

## **III. Possible Solutions**



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There have been multiple international laws passed that have proposed to facilitate the efforts of solving this issue. The problem with these laws is that although they may be documented, they are not being enforced. There are many solutions that can be implemented to reduce the rate of Children in armed conflict. To begin any movement for change, awareness must be made. Advocacy through the mass media would definitely be a primary outlet to spread the awareness of the harm and trauma that this issue brings to children around the world. Through the help of NGOs, and many other humanitarian aid groups, such as Amnesty International, the issue of children in armed forces can be significantly decimated. The use of documenting and monitoring child rights abuse, and using various methods of human rights reporting both locally and internationally would prove extremely beneficial.

#### **IV Bloc Positions**

**ASIA-** Asia has made some progress towards reducing the amount of child soldiers in combat; however, according to the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers reported that despite their efforts, there is still an extremely large amount of children in war.

**LATIN AMERICA-** In Latin America, number of child soldiers still appear to be dramatically increasing. The Government of Bolivia has stated that even children as young as 14 have been seen to be fighting. Half of the Bolivian army is below the age of 17.

**EUROPE-** As this is an extremely demoralizing issue, Europe has been attempting to help solve their countries issue of Children in war. Although many agencies have been attempting to help Europe rid of the children active in war, it has still been a thriving issue throughout Europe.



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**AFRICA-** Africa is filled with poor, developing countries and is of the many continents with the highest rate of children in combat. Like many other nations, Africa is in dire need of outside support.

**MIDDLE EAST-** Along with the previous Continent of Africa, the Middle East is yet another territory that suffers from the highest rate of children in armed conflict. The Middle East tends to view children in combat as something that does not need to be solved, and is benefiting their nation.

### **V. Guiding Questions**

1. Does your country suffer from morbidly high rates of children in armed conflict?
2. Is your country willing to solve this issue in their country and in others as well?
3. Has your country taken any steps to reduce the rates of using children in war?
4. Does your country offer any plausible solutions to solve this problem in third world countries?
5. What is the first thing your country would do to initiate change to this problem?

### **LINKS:**

<http://www.un.org/rights/concerns.htm>  
<https://sites.google.com/site/childsoldiersinafrica/home>  
<http://www.un.org/children/conflict/english/actions.html>



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<http://www.cfr.org/human-rights/child-soldiers-around-world/p9331>

<http://library.thinkquest.org/06aug/01032/text/solutions.html>

<http://www.worldbank.org/afr/wps/wp23.pdf>

<http://www.un.org/children/conflict/documents/SixgraveviolationsBooklet.pdf>