

Children in insurrection with special reference to the ethnic insurrection of Sri Lanka

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According to the Geneva Convention, of 1948 and its amendments, as well as Article 38 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in the decade ending 1999, participation in armed conflict, even on a voluntary basis, by children below the age of eighteen is an offence. It is estimated that nearly two million child soldiers were killed in the armed conflict throughout the world. According to estimates by the UNICEF, there are around 500,000 children fighting in various wars throughout the world.

Sri Lanka's political sphere is characterized by left-wing insurrection as well as ethnic insurrection since the early 1970s. The first is sphere headed by the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) led by the Sinhalese youth, while the second is waged by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) predominantly comprised of Tamil youth. The significant phenomenon in the armed conflict is the involvement of children in both forms of insurrection. However, participation of children in the LTTE's insurrection is protracted, organized and therefore significant. According to media reports nearly fifty percent of the pupils have left school to join the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE).

The main objective of the proposed study is to examine and analyze the causes, patterns and role of children in the armed conflicts in Sri Lanka. The study also focuses on the impact of being recruited, trained and participation in combat on the children. The study is based on secondary sources such as books, articles published in journals, the print and electronic media and government reports. Key informant interviews will be conducted with service personnel and those involved in the rehabilitation of children engaged in combat. The data collected through the above-mentioned will be analyzed using macro methods. The study will attempt to find out, the causes and patterns of child involvement, the procedure of child recruitment, the role of the children in the insurrection and the responsibility of the governments and the NGO's in finding solutions to the problem.

Key words: Child soldiers; Insurrection; JVP; LTTE; Child rights